

Media Work and Public Value: Producing Public Service Television under State Control in Colombia.

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To Olivia...

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Abstract

This project, based on a study of television producers in Colombia, is an ethnographic exploration of the working conditions of cultural production within a highly contextualized environment such as public service television under state control, using Señal Colombia TV channel as case study. I examine how cultural production is affected by governmental structures and dynamics, whilst exploring the conditions and processes of public service television production, and how television producers experience these processes at an individual level.

My primary question is to determine how the production of public service television under state control impacts producers' practices and perceptions regarding the value and outcomes of their work. In this context, precariousness, autonomy, good work, power and public value have emerged as central areas of constant tension. I link issues regarding cultural work and public value in a media production analysis, obtaining direct empirical data that provides an in-depth description of the current public media production context under state control in Colombia. To explore these intersections, the project brings together interviews, focus groups, and participant observation.

The findings exposed that the internal dynamics of both the nation and the organisation significantly affect the concept of public value, making it an ambivalent, uncertain and ill-defined notion. Where governance is state-driven, workers, regardless of their role, subscribe to dominant narratives and discourses that justify their work, and thus contribute to keeping themselves under prescribed creativity.

In general, the present study provides a holistic account of cultural work study, focusing on what occurs to cultural work in various contexts of control, and the individual reactions to these contexts. The analysis of cultural work in this context, also broadens current knowledge on the concepts of network sociality and good work under clientelism, and in a non-free-market.

Keywords

Cultural production; cultural work; public service media; public value; clientelism; bureaucracy; precarity; networking; Señal Colombia; Colombia.

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List of Abbreviations

ANTV	<i>Autoridad Nacional de Televisión</i> (National Television Authority)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CCI	Culture and Creative Industries
CE	Commissioning Editor
DTT	Digital Terrestrial Television
EGM	<i>Estudio General de Medios</i> (General Study of Media)
FG	Focus Group
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IP	Independent Producer
IV	Interview
MINCULTURA	<i>Ministerio de Cultura</i> (Secretary of State for Culture)
MINEDUCACIÓN	<i>Ministerio de Educación</i> (Secretary of State for Education)
MINTIC	<i>Ministerio de Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación</i> (Secretary for information and Communication Technologies)
NPM	New Public Management
OFCOM	Office of Communications
PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
PSM	Public Service Media
PSTV	Public Service Television
PSMS	Public Service Media System
PVM	Public Value Management
RTVC	<i>Radio Televisión de Colombia</i>
SC	<i>Señal Colombia</i>
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UK	United Kingdom

1. Introduction

I used to work in the television industry in Colombia, progressing from production assistant to director and then consultant. Most of my work was for local or regional public service broadcasters, while some of it was for the national public service media system. I spent seven years in this field before deciding to move to academia, motivated by the strong belief that prospective public service TV practitioners should develop a robust knowledge of, and sense of commitment to, the aims of public service broadcasting. Furthermore, I wished to contribute to strengthening both the critical and practical skills which seemed lacking among TV practitioners, whether of long standing or new to the field.

I realised early on that the medium was highly politicized, which had strong effects on the channels' scheduling and production practices. For example, most of the programmes I was responsible for were financed mainly by government offices that not only dictated the contents and focus of each production, they sometimes even selected which characters should appear. Besides, certain co-workers were non-media professionals who had obtained their positions by means of clientelism; some of them (friends or relatives of politicians, or volunteers from political campaigns) were hired as sound or camera assistants, others even as production assistants or directors. This strongly affected not only the technical quality but also the standard of content. Moreover, the fact that staff contracts were subject to changes in the political administration left little room for meaningful processes or TV scheduling stability; which had a repercussion on producers' disposition and attitudes towards work, as well as on the audience's perception of the channel.

This situation motivated me to raise awareness about the material conditions under which public service television aims should be achieved, and how media practitioners put themselves in the position of simultaneously negotiating both their personal and professional goals with the actual opportunities offered by the organisation to achieve personal and institutional goals. However, when searching for literature related to public service provision through media, I realised that the local references were more

focused on the normative and ideal notion of public service television, and few acknowledged the pressures and tensions of producing PSTV under state control; moreover, I found no literature from the region that highlighted media production practices in a politicized context, while there is considerable research on the relationship between commercial media and the government. Local works mainly focus on the relationship between the creative economy, the market and regulations, but no works were found that addressed the material conditions under which this work is performed.

It became apparent that in the local Colombian context, the notions of PSB were not theoretically related to the working conditions of producers, nor to their agency as individuals. All the available literature was either on the political economy of public service broadcasting and its texts, or statistical readings on the rise of the creative industries in the region. Waisbord and Szurmuk (2011) offer an explanation for this, saying that in Latin America, “the study of culture has been divorced from a close inspection of the linkages between cultural, political, and economic processes, and from the articulations between high and low culture. Consequently, the political underpinnings of the enterprise of cultural studies, as outlined by Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, have been in the background”. (2011, p. 1). Furthermore, the application of the notion of value to public service production practices was non-existent, hence I had to base my frameworks of analysis on theoretical approximations to topics of media work and public value from Anglo-North literature. Fortunately, by doing so I was able to develop a set of categories for my analysis based on now traditional concepts linked to my main topics, such as precarity, network sociality, good work, and public value that have not been widely studied in countries from the Global-South.

Broadly, I decided to conduct a study that provides the empirical evidence for these topics, specifically through the answering of the following questions:

- a. How is the relationship between the Colombian government and producers represented through daily TV production practices?
- b. How is the notion of public value understood and developed through public service television production practices?

- c. How do producers negotiate their skills and professional expectations with public service aims? and
- d. How do narratives about public service mesh with what producers *actually* value personally and professionally?

This thesis, therefore, aims to understand how and under which conditions public service television is produced under state control in Colombia. In order to identify the influences on public service TV producers' work, it is necessary to study the processes available to them, to identify the driving forces that lead them, and the role of media workers within them. The importance of studying the production of public service television in a context of state control derives from the central role of media in our society, and the discourses of value that surround and legitimize public service provision, hence the relevance of acknowledging the influences that shape the production of media texts in the public service. Indeed, this thesis is concerned with the analysis of production practices within a public service TV channel: Señal Colombia, and considers the way these practices are affected by governmental structures and dynamics. In so doing, it explores the conditions and processes of public service television production and how television producers experience this process at an individual level.

Based on the premise of a relation of dependence between the channel and the Colombian government, as the Colombian public media system is owned and financially supported by the state, this research investigates how that relationship plays out. In particular, it questions the ways the government influences the development of public service TV outcomes, and how this affects producers' autonomy. Drawing on literature from creative labour, media production studies, political economy, and cultural studies, this thesis analyses the relationship between the Colombian government and producers at Señal Colombia, and the ensuing conditions of work. It identifies areas of tension between autonomy and government, and describes how producers adapt, so as to both cope with and resist government constraints, as well as the ways in which this setting affects development activities.

In this chapter I outline the context of my research. Firstly, I describe the major topics that I will draw upon throughout this thesis, such as public service broadcasting, public value, and creative work. Since my analysis is based on a particular case study in

Colombia - the national public service TV channel Señal Colombia - I focus my discussion specifically on the conditions in this country, but my observations hold true for many other Latin American and public service TV channels in Global-South countries. In the final section of this chapter I define my research questions and objectives, and provide an outline of the structure of this thesis.

1.1. Framework for Analysis

Three major topics are intertwined herein to develop my research: public service media, public value, and creative work. This, following Miller (2010), is to develop a “radical contextualization that acknowledges the shifts and shocks that characterize the existence of institutions and programmes: their ongoing renewal as the temporary property of productive workers and publics, and the stasis as the abiding property of unproductive businesspeople. It must combine political economy, ethnography, and textual analysis”. (2010, p. 147).

According to McQuail et al. (1993), public service media were created as a service with the concrete task of protecting the national and social interests. For Born and Prosser (2001), the role of public service media in society is to act as an observer and promoter of plurality and diversity while striving to protect cultural features. The underlying values of media for public service have remained virtually unchanged since John Reith created the templates for PSB in the UK, in the late 1920s. To inform, educate and entertain; this summarizes the purposes of PSB. In practice, how media systems work to achieve those aims differs from one country to another, depending on the political, economic and social conditions that shape their outcomes.

Nowadays, in a media context ruled mainly by market interests and where audiences have countless options to satisfy their needs, PSB struggle to justify their existence, relying solely on the principles of public service and intrinsic value. Furthermore, the constant debates on PSB funding, especially in Europe, have forced broadcasters to develop new managerial strategies that allow them to preserve their contents in the public interest, while playing in the market arena. The debates regarding public television funding try to promote the need for a separation between budgets and

political or commercial constraints, so that public broadcasters can isolate themselves from political and market interferences. These struggles are summarized by Martin and Lowe: “the institution struggles with the pressure to be both popular and to provide a comprehensive service that might not always be liked by the majority or even wanted by some. This balancing act creates significant complexity for a fair, comprehensive and robust measurement of ‘public value’” (2014, pp. 20-21). The measurement of public value has been acknowledged as the most accurate means of assessing the outputs of public institutions.

The creation of public value is what Moore (1995) denominated the building and strengthening of institutional trust and legitimacy, through the organisation’s commitment to working for the common good: this notion suited the needs of the BBC, by both offering a rational justification for its existence and describing itself as an up-to-date institution capable of facing any challenge. The notion of public value is highly relevant for this thesis as the case study relates to a state organisation which seeks to promote a non-tangible good, a service whose impact cannot easily be measured. Moreover, because Señal Colombia aims to produce television in the public interest then it is assumed that the channel’s managerial structures might follow guidelines and perform activities that will result in the production of something valuable for the public: ‘quality’ and/or ‘popular’ ; programmes whose value should be appreciated by the audience.

But this is only one of the challenges faced by PSB institutions. Internally, media workers have seen a continuous shift in their working dynamics, which is the same throughout the media field in general: there has been a constant transition from in-house production, with full-time staff, to outsourcing and buying from independents, and the new international division of cultural labour (NIDCL) “has seen production of TV shows go off-shore” (Miller, 2010, p. 68). These practices have had a massive impact on workers’ lives, to the point that at work:

“We have to come to terms with the challenges and opportunities of contingent unemployment, precarious labour, and a structural sense of real or perceived job insecurity... In the portfolio lifestyle, careers are a sequence of stepping stones through life, where workers as individuals and organizations as collectives do not commit to each other for much more than the short-term goal, the project at hand, the talent needed now” (Deuze, 2007, pp. 2-3).

Deuze summarizes what has become a common media work experience for almost every individual actively pursuing both the means for survival and opportunities for self-realisation; however, this description has mostly been applied to jobs in the private sector, as if by working in the public sector, employees could remain immune to these realities. But as this research demonstrates, not only has the current workplace precarity permeated public work for some time, in the Colombian context these conditions are aggravated precisely by its tight connection to the government. Considering the challenges for PSM and the continuously changing labour dynamics, understanding the ways in which media professionals cope with these dynamics becomes more relevant, as do the values and discourses that become embedded in the current media production systems.

Furthermore, there is an increasingly compelling need to provide local readings on these topics; as noted earlier; most of the available literature and theory come from empirical works based on Global-North countries, which have little in common with countries from the Global-South. However, it is important to note that in Latin America there has been a considerable rise in the study of the economic impact of creative industries on local economies, due to importing cultural development models from London and Barcelona, for example (García Canclini & Villoro, 2013a, Banks & O'Connor, Forthcoming, 2017). Nonetheless, these models have responded to local characteristics that can hardly be applied or transferred to the Latin American context with the expectation of obtaining similar results. Or, as Mato stated:

“If our English-speaking colleagues, or their Latin American students educated in English, only seek to identify the influence of certain English written cultural studies in the practices of Latin American intellectuals, they will not be able to see the specificity and diversity of related fields in Latin America. Worse, in such a way, they would only contribute to building mirroring images of themselves and they will lose the opportunity of learning from differences rooted in specific social contexts, with an emphasis on the plural”. (Mato, 2003, p. 792).

On the subject, Yúdice also argues that we must consider that in ‘First World’ contexts, basic needs have already been addressed, allowing public and private room for the development of cultural industries, whereas in our Southern context, social priorities are more compelling (2003). Still, creative industries have had an important impact on

local economies, having generated revenues worth US\$2,250 billion in 2013, exceeding “those of telecom services (US\$1,570b globally), and surpassing India’s GDP (US\$1,900b). Within this total, the top three earners are television (US\$477b), visual arts (US\$391b), and newspapers and magazines (US\$354b)” (UNESCO, CISAC, E&Y, 2015, p. 7); hence the imperative is to know what the local perspective offers regarding the existent data on cultural work, not with the intention of simply ‘applying’ foreign theories to a local context, but to unveil and acknowledge what the region has to offer, in order to expand the current scholarship on the topic.

1.2. Research Questions

My primary question is to determine how the production of public service television under state control in Colombia impacts producers’ practices and perceptions regarding the value and outcomes of their work. In order to meet this objective, it is necessary to examine the practices and working conditions of TV producers, by analysing the production process. A review of the literature concerned with, firstly, media and cultural production as a process in a specific structural setting, and secondly, notions of public service media and value, have revealed analytical themes which have guided the research interests of this thesis. In this context, precariousness, autonomy, good work, power and public value have emerged as central areas of constant tension. It is my intention to link issues regarding cultural work and public value in a media production analysis, so as to obtain direct empirical data that can provide an in-depth description of the current public media production context under state control in Colombia. To date, media production analysis and creative work in the Latin American region are essentially neglected areas in media and communication research; however, previous studies from Anglo-North traditions have provided in-depth insights into different production cultures which significantly developed my understanding of how creative work is played out and what values are linked to it.

In contrast to existing studies about media production and creative work, which have mainly focused on analysing production practices and cultures in a market-driven context, I chose a non-profit media system as a specific stage for both media production and value creation. My research focuses on the experiences and perceptions of public

service television producers working under state control. This choice was based on the lack of studies on this specific context of cultural production and on the recent debates regarding the value of public service media. My thesis focuses on the processes and conditions within a national public service TV channel in Colombia which faces specific constraints. Its producers' dependency on the state for both financial and editorial matters, combined with the pressure to achieve a stable career as media professionals, is a particularly worthy research subject when exploring the tensions between autonomy, creative work and state control.

The overarching research question of this thesis is:

How does the production of public service television under state control in Colombia impact on producers' practices and perceptions about the value and outcomes of their work?

Following a review of existent theory and research relevant to this topic, it was possible to specify the general question and divide it into **four sub-questions**, which combine two levels of analysis, organisational and subjective:

1. *How do working conditions impact TV producers' experiences and perceptions of work?*

This question includes both a macro-organisational level of analysis but also focuses on the subjective level of the individual experience.

2. *How are power and control played out in this context and how do they affect producers' perceptions and experiences of their work and outcomes?*

Again, I identify how macro structures work, then move into a more subjective and situated analysis, to see how these structures affect individual conditions.

3. *In what way do governmental structures in the public television system constrain or enable producers' autonomy?*

This question first addresses a macro-organisational level of analysis, focusing on the relationship between the state, the TV broadcaster and the producers. I

then identify the various influences on the production process and determine how producers respond to them as individuals.

4. *How is public TV production guided by the idea of producing value, and how does this notion mesh with actual practices?*

Here I ask how state and producers understand the notion of value and how this guides their actions and perceptions, also focusing on the values held by both the organisations and the producers.

1.3. Thesis Outline

Based on the premise that to understand media we must study its production contexts, my thesis examines the development processes for public service television, making links between organisational structures and the autonomy of producers. I explore this through the following chapters:

In chapter 2 I review the relevant literature that influenced the formulation of my research questions and the focus of my analysis. I discuss existing theoretical concepts and empirical work from a cultural industries perspective, combining political economy and cultural studies approaches in specifying the analytical framework. I also outline the main arguments and recent debates about public service broadcasting and introduce the concept of public value for assessing it. Finally, a review of public service broadcasting in Colombia and the Latin American tradition of cultural studies both contribute criteria for the localisation of the analysis.

Chapter 3 explains the methodological design of my research and argues that an ethnographically-inspired approach is the most suitable method to address my research questions. In this chapter I further describe the processes and actors involved in public television development and provide information on the selection and profile of the case study and the participants in this research. I also explain how I structured the analysis of the data and reached a set of relevant themes, which are presented through a coding system.

Chapter 4 describes the characteristics of working conditions and discusses the institutional responses of producers to the structural setting. I focus on how working conditions affect the experiences and perceptions of producing public service television. Therefore, I highlight the relationship between producers, the organisation and the state, and contend that producers, on the whole, seem to accept that precarity, nepotism and clientelism are guiding principles in their milieu. This acceptance is enforced by narratives of value of the outcomes of the channel, and the forging of strong bonds between members of the media field.

Chapter 5 focuses on the tensions arising from such forms of networking, emphasizing the manifestations of power within them. The way networks and working conditions are determined within the Colombian Public Media System - and its channel, Señal Colombia - are manifestations of the different ways power is played out through top-down mandates imposed by clientelistic practices, for example, or by more horizontal relationships at the core of these networks. In this chapter I explore how power relationships operate among Señal Colombia workers and discuss how the exercise of their autonomy configures discourses and practices of power. Therefore, I focus particularly on the relationship between disciplinary power, governmentality, symbolic power and social capital; concepts that represent different manifestations and understandings of power, which help to describe how power relations are experienced in the field of cultural production. Combined with the notion of bureaucracy, these characteristics lead to an understanding of the dynamics of public service television production in my case study.

Chapter 6 expands on the notion of good work, in order to understand how producers reconcile their motivations with the actual contents they are allowed to produce in a public channel that is under state control. This particular work environment makes us wonder how they can exercise and negotiate their own autonomy as media professionals (if they do so at all). Notions of good work and *autonomy* have been regarded as essential characteristics of cultural work, autonomy being one of the main components of the notion of good work. I explore these concepts in the light of other notions linked to them, such as independence, creative and workplace autonomy, and professional identity. I emphasize the balance between ethical and financial drives for

cultural producers, which can compromise not only the cultural product and the philosophy of good work behind it, but also the cultural workers' discourses and narratives about their autonomy and professional identity.

In chapter 7 I turn my attention to the notion of public value, which has been applied in certain European countries to analyse the production of value of media outcomes. I am interested in the domestic understanding of this notion, and how those understandings influence narratives of work and production practices. Firstly, I discuss definitions of value and link them to notions of quality and legitimacy applied to PSB. Then I describe the managerial trends that pursue the production of value and their tools to measure such production. I also focus on the structural conditions under which Señal Colombia must operate (lack of indicators regarding the production of value, governmental apathy, political interference and clientelism) which undermine the channel's attempts to produce value.

Finally, chapter 8 presents the conclusions of my study and summarizes its central findings regarding the production of value from a public service medium under state control, linking them to the original research questions. It further develops the comparative element of this study and the international dimension of producing public television under state control, along with the implications of my work for further research.

2. Creative Work, PSB, Value and Latin America – Setting the Scene

In the following, I outline the theoretical background of this thesis and the academic debates it draws upon and contributes to. In particular, I focus on those theoretical approaches and concepts that have informed the choice of this thesis' research subject and guided the formulation of its research questions. Further reference to relevant literature is made in conjunction with the discussion of my research findings in chapters 4 to 7, based on the themes that emerged from the analysis.

After a brief review of political economy and cultural studies approaches for the study of media production, I position my own research in the middle ground, since I agree with Hesmondhalgh, Cottle and D'Acci that, in order to reach a deeper understanding of the process of the production of culture, it is necessary to acknowledge and integrate all the actors involved in the process. A central theme in my research is the analysis of the relationship between state and public media production, particularly how that relationship affects the perceptions and experiences of cultural workers (TV producers in my case study). Furthermore, recent debates about the role and relevance of public media spark questions about the embodiment of notions of public value in organisational and professional dynamics, and its effects on cultural outcomes. There is hardly any examination of production cultures and television production under state control and very little exploration of cultural work in Latin American countries. Instead, the topic is predominantly approached from Anglo-North perspectives with an explicit focus on the conditions of cultural work and production cultures in market-led contexts.

In my analysis, I discuss how the values that have commonly described cultural work are materialised in the personal and professional values of public television producers and what impact the state has on this. Therefore, this thesis links the analysis of organisational production structures with the individual experience of TV producers and their outcomes, in order to explore how state control constrains or enables their autonomy in the production of public TV. In doing so, I commence this chapter by

situating my research in a middle ground position between cultural studies and political economy approaches. Then, I examine some seminal media industry studies and their methodological and theoretical contributions to the field. A subsequent section focuses on relevant understandings linked to the notion of public service media, and the challenges it is facing. This section works as a bridge between the two previous fields (media industry studies and public service broadcasting), and it focuses on the concept of *public value*, as the most common measurement to assess PSB outcomes. The second part of this chapter situates the case study for this research in the Latin American context, and describes the main characteristics of the public service media system in Colombia, stressing political and organisational features.

2.1. Media Industry Studies and Creative Labour: Between Political Economy and Cultural Studies

In this study, it is argued that broader patterns of power and control influence the production, distribution and consumption of public service television in Colombia, hence a closer look is taken at production processes and how these are influenced by the context of state control. Simultaneously, these influences are contrasted with television producers' perceptions and experiences within the organisation in question. These two approaches require a standpoint that combines both political-economy and cultural studies traditions, with the aim of offering different levels of insight and, thus, a more in-depth understanding of how public service television is produced under state control in Colombia and how television producers negotiate their professional autonomy to survive and succeed in this environment.

Political-economy and cultural studies traditions have been the most common theoretical approaches for the study of media industries. Political-economy focuses on exploring the larger scale processes and rationales of media structures, and how these might be in the service of the powerful. Issues of regulation, ownership, production, distribution, power and control are particularly central to this approach, based on the view that, by understanding these factors, the ideological messages behind media contents can be revealed, which simultaneously reinforce the existing structures of

power (Mosco, 2009). Though used for numerous media studies, this approach has been faulted for being narrow and deterministic, and criticised for its lack of interest in the study of audiences, texts, and issues related to the subjectivity of both producers and recipients of the media messages (Garnham, 2011; Dwyer, 2015). On the other hand, cultural studies approaches focus on issues of “textuality, subjectivity, identity, discourse and pleasure in relation to culture” (Hesmondhalgh, 2007, p. 42), emphasizing the impact of cultural discourses on the creation of meaning, based on the interpretative capabilities of individuals. Just as political economy approaches, cultural studies have likewise been criticised for what was deemed an abandonment of the structural factors that influence the production of media (McChesney R. , 2004), nonetheless, both approaches have made significant contributions to our understanding of media from the points of view of both macro and micro levels, as they “share the same critical evaluation, yet focus on different objects of study” (Meehan, 1999, p. 150). In chapter 5, a political-economy approach is used to describe the nature and role of the organisational structures in the television industry I am studying, with a focus on the power relationships played out within the organisation, but in combination with participants’ perceptions and experiences.

Some scholars argue that separating cultural and political-economy perspectives when approaching the understanding of media industries leaves gaps that hinder a broader grasp of the topic (Cottle, 2003; D'Acci, 2004; Hesmondhalgh, 2010). Hence, the mixed approach offered by middle range theories can provide deeper understanding, by connecting both structural contexts and daily production practices. For instance, Lotz and Newcomb (2002) suggested five levels at which media industries should be studied: national and international political economy and policy; specific industrial contexts; particular organizations; individual productions, and individual agents. Cottle adhered to this spirit by suggesting that the field needed “other approaches and levels of insights” (2003, p. 5), and that more depth could be obtained by understanding organisational dynamics and settings, as well as the way in which producers negotiate and engage with them. Accordingly, Cottle suggests “three levels” for the empirical exploration of media production:

“Micro-level of cultural milieux and interactions of producers situated within norm-governed and hierarchical production settings and the relationships entered into with technologies, professional colleagues and outside sources;
The meso-level of impinging organisational cultures, corporate strategy and editorial policies informing production practices and the reproduction of conventionalised (and changing) cultural forms, and
The macro-contexts and surrounding regulatory, technological and competitive environments conditioning the operations and output of media organisations at global to local levels”. (Cottle, 2003, p. 20)

The field of critical media industry analysis (Havens, Lotz, & Tinic, 2009), which argues for including a mixed approach, has proposed a middle-range theory to address the study of media industry practices. This follows Julie D’Acci’s model (2004), which reorganises cultural spheres – cultural artefact, reception, context and production - by allowing them to interchange in circulation, thus interacting in different forms that contribute to the development of singular outcomes (Figure 1). D’Acci’s model departs from the original one developed by Stuart Hall (1980), and takes into account Johnson’s model of circuit of production, circulation and consumption of cultural products (1986), as well as Open University’s model of the Circuit of Culture (1997). Her model operates with four dimensions: production, cultural artefact, reception, and socio historical context; it also inscribes the researcher as part of the model because he or she produces a version of the articulation of the four dimensions (Figure 1). D’Acci’s analysis is not limited to the cultural product but to every dimension inscribed in it.

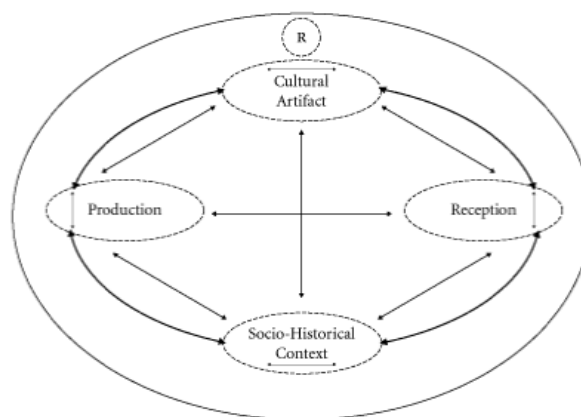


Figure 1 Julie D’Acci’s Circuit of Media Study (2004, p. 432)

Critical media industry studies understand culture in an anthropological and aesthetic sense (du Gay, 1997a; du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997), studying how the market side of the industry changes and flows according to previous considerations of artefacts, audiences and practices, and how texts are shaped by these. Furthermore,

this approach views power as a privileged discursive form that leads to the understanding of media. In sum, the critical media industry approach seeks a way of complementing the voids left by observing only one point of view –that of political economy or cultural studies- by taking from each framework that which is most appropriate for the topic of research.

Although Wasko and Meehan (2013) and Oakley and O'Connor (2015) consider that the idea of middle range theories for studying dynamic aspects of media industries is not necessarily new, they welcome advocates for critical media studies, their growing concern for the production of culture and their interdisciplinary thinking when researching the field: "scholars, working in the contextual tradition are keenly aware that research must address not only media corporations and markets but also the people whose collective labour create media artefacts themselves, and the people who engage with or are exposed to those artefacts" (Wasko & Meehan, 2013, p. 153). My aim here is to link the production process with its effects on producers' subjectivity, I therefore merge political economy's emphasis on organisational structures with cultural studies focus on the individual, so as to provide a more holistic understanding of the context of public service television production under state control in Colombia.

Now that I have established the theorizations that emphasised the relevance of studying media industries from a more holistic point of view, in the following section I proceed to examine some seminal studies of cultural work that have used mixed approaches, and have contributed to setting the ground for current knowledge in this field.

2.1.1. Studying Cultural Industries and Cultural Work

The field of industry media studies has been gaining relevance over the past couple of decades, although its focus has been on scholars' radars since the first half of the 20th century. Some of the most relevant works for this research will be outlined chronologically in this section, focusing on their general contribution to the field of media production studies and their potential application to the study of production practices inside public television media in Colombia.

At the onset of media industry studies, early works on Hollywood, such as Rostein's study (1941) and Powdermaker's ethnography (1950), focused on above and below the line film industry practitioners' tolerance of very rough working conditions so as to attain some degree of recognition by making a name for themselves in the industry. In this context, both elite and blue collar workers were alienated in different ways by the production processes. These studies developed the first known approaches to insights of the Hollywood production industry under a sociological umbrella, by conducting interviews and through observation. More importantly, these works offer a theorization of the concept of *alienation* in the workplace, where profits motivate individuals to trade freedom for success (Mayer, 2009). According to Mayer, Rostein's and Powdermaker's work not only contributed to the acknowledgement of how the economy constrains artistic and creative efforts, but also set an important framework for the social analysis of media industries.

In a similar sociological vein, Schlesinger and Gitlin's methodological contributions have been considered highly significant. Schlesinger (1978) offers a sociological view of how the production of news is influenced by constraints of time, market conditions, corporate ideology and discourses of professionalism, among others. He conducted direct observation in the newsrooms of the British Broadcasting Corporation from 1972 to 1975. His aim was to contrast theories of news production with actual practice inside the BBC. This work is considered a foundational text for British Cultural Studies due to its contribution to the use of ethnographic approaches within the media industry, as well as to his findings on how ideologies in the professional field act as determining factors for the production of culture (Stokes, 2003).

Likewise using an ethnographic approach, Gitlin (2000) set out to analyse the production techniques and strategies that launched programmes into American prime time, by developing a non-theoretical approach for studying the television industry in the United States. Gitlin spent seven months interviewing 200 practitioners from that industry and conducted observations of their network dynamics. He produced a lengthy description of both media industry practices and the role of its practitioners in the production of culture. His work has been acknowledged not only for its methodological contributions

to cultural studies, by examining the connections between multiple features of the industry, but also for reinstating the interest of academic research in television, by demonstrating that its dynamics were responding to more diverse purposes than merely marketization.

More recently, and using a similar methodological approach, Julie D'Acci's work on gender and television production (1994) has been acknowledged for its profound analysis of the production process of a television series by conducting extensive interviews and observations, and for its understanding of the construction of meaning by analysing viewers' correspondence. D'Acci provided a complex framework and evidence for determining that meaning is being constantly negotiated in every step of the production circuit, and that representations are thus defined by specific socio-historical contexts. The fact that D'Acci conducted this study taking into account both sides of the television phenomena (producers and audiences) gained her special recognition in the field of critical media production studies (Havens, Lotz, & Tinic, 2009).

To explore the cultural practices and systems of beliefs behind media production was also an objective for Caldwell (2008), who spent ten years conducting an ethnographic study inside film and video studios in Los Angeles. Over this period, Caldwell studied worker artefacts, developed field observation of production practices, interviewed film and television workers and also linked his data with an economic analysis of the industry. Through his findings, Caldwell provided evidence of how the industry is constituted by social groups which share interpretational frameworks that are displayed in their outcomes. His work is relevant not only for his outcomes but also for his theorization of the application of ethnographic methodologies to media industry studies. In general, all these works studied production conditions in market-led media fields, leaving aside the public sector, whose dynamics and specificities can contribute to an expanded knowledge of cultural work and production cultures.

Among the available literature that has drawn on public contexts as the setting for analysing work, the studies conducted by Dornfeld (1998) and Born (2004) are prominent. Scholarly attention to PSB has focused more on contextual issues, such as

regulations and funding variations, than on their organisational and professional practices. However, among the available literature, Barry Dornfeld's work on a series from the Public Broadcasting System of the United States stands out due to his detailed description of production practices inside the public television industry (Dornfeld, 1998). He worked as a researcher for a documentary series from 1989 to 1991, analysing the relationship between children and media; at the same time, as an anthropologist, he explored the world of television production and the negotiations behind its outcomes. Through this study, he was able to recognise the manifestation of producer's subjectivities and professional beliefs in their outcomes, and how they had to be negotiated with other professionals involved in production, while managing to balance scientific information and entertainment.

Georgina Born's study of the BBC (2004) is more related to public service television production, but with a similar effort to understand how personal contexts affect professional practices. In this work, she focuses on "the situated ethics and aesthetics" of producers in documentary, drama and current affairs. Through an ethnographic approach from an anthropological standpoint, Born developed an in-depth description of how production of television is mediated by the producer's intentionality and agency, and their daily struggles to maintain some measure of creative autonomy in an increasingly ideologically restricted environment and changing management regime. Born spent four years (from 1996 to 1998, with a follow-up from 2001 to 2003) observing production processes, interviewing producers and workers in general, writing field diaries and analysing content, with which she developed a solidly evidenced understanding of production constraints and flows within the BBC.

The study of workers' agency has gained significant relevance within the field of cultural work studies, with McRobbie's (2002), Ursell's (2000), Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011), along with others mentioned throughout this thesis, standing out. In an analysis of labour and practitioner's perception of their working conditions, McRobbie's (2002; 2002a) and Ursell's (2000; 2006) works draw our attention to the distinctive challenges of working in the cultural industries. McRobbie studies the tensions and negotiations that young fashion designers must make between their personal goals and working conditions, in order to succeed in their careers. With this work, McRobbie discusses the

challenges and strategies for cultural workers, focusing on issues such as self-employment and the pressures emanating from the “club culture” to allow entrepreneurs to perform tasks in the cultural production chain. In similar terms, Ursell provides in-depth analysis of working conditions in the cultural industries, focusing on aspects such as casualization of the labour force, low incomes, and difficulty of access.

More recently, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) carried out a study on work and occupations in the television, music recording and magazine publishing industries. The authors interviewed 63 managers and workers, and applied participant observation. Their empirical data was complemented by textual analysis of products and trade press. Hesmondhalgh and Baker questioned whether cultural work is “good or bad”, by comparing the experiences that three cultural industries offer to their workers. Their analysis suggests that there is no predictable way to determine quality of work in the cultural industries, where contradictory conditions prevail in the existent tension between culture and economics, to which media practitioners must respond accordingly. This work specifically sets the ground for my study and the question about participants’ experiences and perceptions of the idea of producing good work, which is developed in chapter 6.

Collectively, these studies outline a critical role for the study of cultural work, where it is evident that “the labouring lives of people working in the cultural and creative industries are now firmly on the research agenda” (Banks, Gill, & Taylor, 2013, p. 4). As Banks et al. (2013) recognise, there are both optimistic and pessimistic voices regarding the features of cultural work. For example, Florida (2002) emphasizes the glamorous aspect of working in the culture industries, where flexible conditions, self-expression and autonomy, and recognition, among other qualities, are seen not only as a job plus, but also as desirable qualities in anyone aspiring to work in it. In contrast to Florida’s “beatific notion of creative work” (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 6), there is a body of scholars who have critically examined the flaws behind this allure. For example, Beck describes the creative working environment as “mysterious” and uncertain (Beck, 2005). A broader perspective was adopted by Lee (2012), who argues that creative work is characterized by self-exploitation, long hours and de-unionized work. In addition, Lee views the narrative of glamour and success associated with creative work as a façade for

“exploitation, insecurity, and raises question marks over the long-term sustainability of a creative career” (2012, p. 483). For Lee, these features contribute to emotional pressures such as intense instability and anxiety, which are now commonly associated with creative work.

In view of the above, for Banks et al., critical discussion on creative labour has mostly engaged with its conditions of precariousness, inequality, informality, and privacy takeover (2013, pp. 4-5); regarding the former category, Banks argues that “in cultural work (...) to not surrender one’s person to the work and all its demands is to endanger the prospect of producing anything of value at all” (Banks, 2014). Oakley and O’Connor acknowledged this commitment of the whole self to work, this process of individualization that makes the worker fully responsible for his/her success, working conditions and satisfaction. They summarize this idea arguing that “maintaining a self-reliant sensibility is necessary in creative labour economies, where self-employed, project-based workers are personally responsible for maintaining a steady flow of paid work, accessed through informal networks or assumed to hinge on possessing a distinctive personal brand” (Oakley & O’Connor, 2015, p. 307). This argument proved valid in my research context, and my findings showed similar tendencies among public service TV producers (see chapters 4 and 6).

However, this does not necessarily mean that cultural workers are unaware of the complex reality of their industry, nor are they performing their roles unwillingly or under false pretences. Moreover, for some cultural workers, the idea of producing something that can be of use for the public, the idea of doing good work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011), fosters a greater sense of fulfilment and enjoyment of their work. For example, in Born’s study of the BBC, she found that the notion of public service shaped not only production practices but also producers’ perceptions of their own roles and outcomes (2004). In his research of a group of factual TV producers, Lee studied the ethical value added to the cultural product due to the workers’ commitment to their job. He found that there was a moral core behind the production of public service television, where workers were not only motivated by their own professional goals but also by their belief in public broadcasting aims (Lee, 2012). He noted that “this passion can lead to pervasive forms of self-exploitation, through overwork and over attachment to work, but it also

displays a deep ethical concern with the quality of culture that they produce and its social impact” (Lee D. , 2012, p. 483). This “tendency” in cultural workers, is explored in chapters 4 and 6.

Considering working conditions, but more in relation to cultural workers’ perceptions and values, Bennett’s (2015) work focuses on how the notion of *public service* is understood by television producers, and how that understanding motivates the way they work and the contents they produce (2015, p.110). He argues that, although the television industry shapes the professional identities of producers, it does not really adjust practices towards the production of contents in the public interest; he concludes that the idea of public service media is alive as long as producers believe in it (2015, p.120). Unlike Lee and Bennett, for Oakley and O’Connor this idea of founding cultural practices on cultural value adds to the dignity of the cultural worker, but fails to explain when, or under which circumstances, that moral significance can be more valuable than economic gain (Oakley & O’Connor, 2015). However, this debate helps to situate the present study in a specific frame of scholarship where the focus is to understand how the agency, the autonomy of cultural workers is being exercised, and how external conditions, such as regulatory frameworks and media systems, are materialized into daily production practices, subjective perceptions and understandings of the role of cultural producers (see chapters 4, 6 and 7).

Together, these studies provide important insights into the study of media industries and creative labour in particular. However, as Hesmondhalgh argues: “there is still a need for greater conceptual development in cultural studies of production (...) explore the complex relations between culture and economy (...) pay much greater attention to interventions that draw on social cultural theory, both classical and contemporary, as well as of course continuing the empirical work that is being carried out” (2010, p.159). As these studies mostly represent a European vision of what it is like to work in the cultural industry, there is a need to establish their applicability to small countries from the Global-South, where neo-liberalism is the economic model but other socio-political and cultural contexts add to what we already know about cultural labour. Therefore, while my study is conducted in light of these studies, and draws on their insights, I need to move my focus beyond them, and examine how creative labour and production is

played out in a Latin American, and specifically Colombian, context. But before I focus on these specificities, in the following section I draw on notions of PSB and value, with the intention of situating the institution I am studying, Señal Colombia, within the theorisation that has justified the provision of public media service so far.

2.2. Public Service Broadcasting: Values and Challenges

This section will outline some of the remits associated with public service broadcasting, and the most common struggles PSB faces to fulfil its aims. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this study adheres to the idea that there is a set of moral and ethical values behind the production of public service media, with a particular interest in television; therefore, to a certain degree, these values guide not only practices but also producers' motivations for working in this field.

According to Mc Quail et al. (1993), public service media were created as a service with the concrete task of protecting the national and social interests. For Born and Prosser (2001), the role of public service media in society is to act as an observer and promoter of plurality and diversity, while striving to protect cultural features. The underlying values for public service media have remained virtually unchanged since John Reith created the templates for PSB in the UK, in the late 1920s. To inform, educate and entertain, summarizes the purposes of PSB; in practice, how media systems work to achieve these aims differs from one country to another, depending on specific political, economic and social conditions that shape their outcomes. My intention here is to develop an understanding of what PSB is, along with the topics of recent debates regarding the operation of public media systems. Then, I will focus on how these ideas apply to the Latin American context and to Colombia in particular.

In order to maintain a sole understanding for the purposes of this text, the terms PSB and public service media (PSM¹) will be used interchangeably, with the meaning provided by UNESCO:

“Public broadcasting is defined as a meeting place where all citizens are welcome and considered equals. It is an information and education tool, accessible for all and meant for all, whatever their social and economic status. Its mandate is not restricted to information and cultural development - public service broadcasting must also appeal to imagination, and entertain. But it does so with a concern for quality that distinguishes it from commercial broadcasting” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 5)

Scannell (1990) states that the idea of television as a public service was conceived at the time the first broadcasting committee was created in England, during the early 1920s. By then, public broadcasting services were defined as a public utility with enormous social and political potential, for which reason they should be under the indirect control of the state through the licence fee, to avoid it becoming an “unrestricted commercial monopoly”. But it was John Reith, the first director of the BBC (from 1927 to 1938) who laid the foundations of the concept of PSB, stating that it should always maintain high standards by promoting educational programmes, not just entertainment. PSB would also spread knowledge, adopt a high moral tone and endorse social unity. Reith also acknowledged the potential of media to inform and enlighten democracy by broadcasting contrasting contents, so viewers could gain a broader vision of public issues and thus become better-informed citizens. For Reith, radio and then television should be kept as a monopoly under the BBC control, because it would be the only guarantee for achieving public service aims. He ideally proposed that diverse types of contents were offered, so as to reach all types of viewers, from every age group and socio-economic status.

¹ Over recent decades, the transition of media contents from analogue to digital platforms has broadened the panorama of media. Nowadays, what we recognised as broadcasters (radio and television stations) can disseminate their contents through the internet and create convergent material (web pages, blogs, social networks, digital channels, etc.) related to these contents. Thus, the idea of “broadcasting” is not sufficient for defining what television and radio stations can now do. Still, we can use the term broadcasting to refer to television and radio signals that are air-transmitted, but as Jakubowicz (2010) argues, it can make reference to and old concept of PSM provision; instead, he argues, the term PSM would be “technologically neutral” and would also gather a wider idea of the ways which media disseminate their contents, how these converge in different platforms, and how audiences can use them and also be part of their production (Jakubowicz, 2010). However, the evolution of the concept, although it does not change the aims of PSB, includes new ways in which media –television, in this case- can interact with their audiences; as Henry Jenkins puts it, “it represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content” (Jenkins, 2008, p. 3). Nevertheless, both terms maintain in their intrinsic meaning the rationale that originated the concept of PSB: a public utility with the purpose of improving the knowledge of viewers for the sake of society (Scannell, 1990).

Without maintaining that there is a unified model of public broadcasting McCauley, Artz, Halleck and Paterson (2003) summarize the features for PSB in Europe as: “a comprehensive coverage remit; a generalized mandate; pluralism; a cultural mission; a central place in politics; and noncommercialism” (McCauley et al, 2003). Besides, PSB should also feature “general geographic availability; concern for national identity and culture; independence from both state and commercial interests; impartiality; range and variety; and substantial financing by a charge on users” (McCauley et al, 2003). Though European public broadcasters vary in the way they are governed –from public corporations (BBC), to corporate systems and independent broadcasting councils (Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands), to state-dependent systems (Greece, Italy, France) – their initial creation and operation responded to the need to develop national social cohesion through production, distribution and programming of audiovisual contents, which also embraced, to a greater or lesser degree, a Reithian ethos for broadcasting, which preceded the introduction of private commercial television. With local specificities, these aims also gave birth to adapted PSB versions in the Global South.

Nowadays, in a media context ruled mainly by market interests and where audiences have countless options to satisfy their needs, PSB struggle to justify their existence relying solely on the principles of public service or its intrinsic value. Jakubowicz (2010) describes this situation by cataloguing the biggest challenges that PSB are facing, listing them in three fields: technological, sociological, and cultural. Jakubowicz claims that the digitization of media has promoted convergence, dynamics that have changed the old patterns of communication and have given relevance to the role of audiences as producers of contents themselves. Regarding the sociological field, the environment for the funding of PSB has changed dramatically, mainly because of the neoliberal view that products must respond to the demand of the consumers and, therefore, the latter must pay for what they want. For instance, in describing the public broadcasting system in the US, McChesney (1999) maintained that public funding has been seen as a major threat to commercial media systems, not only because PSB does not need to be subsidized by advertising, representing an “unfair” field for competing with contents, but also because of the professional autonomy and independence of journalists working for PSB, who are allowed to approach and examine issues overlooked by commercial

media (McChesney R. , 1999, p. 113). Unlike most public broadcasters in Europe, public TV in the US was born as an alternative to the firmly established private commercial TV channels, whose main purpose was to entertain. In that scenario, US public broadcasting had the mission to enlighten society, with a philosophy focused on transforming television viewers into active citizens (Ouellette, 1999), through non-commercial and educational contents, not supported by advertising, which is also the case for most Latin American countries, and Colombia specifically. In order to maintain its remit and its aims away from market pressures, US public broadcasting receives funds from donations, foundations, corporations, government agencies and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). This type of funding is viewed as a threat to commercial media, as it is argued that public service broadcasters have it too easy, and do not need to comply with advertisers' pressures and ratings; however, what can be considered an advantage for PBS has also kept some broadcasters struggling for survival, and principally, for audience loyalty. Nevertheless, there are public broadcasters that combine funding from both commercial and public sources, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, which are 100% state-funded but also accept limited sponsoring and advertising.

The constant debates on PSB funding, especially in Europe, have forced broadcasters to develop new managerial strategies that allow them to both preserve their contents in the public interest while they play in the market arena. The debates regarding public television funding tried to promote the need for a separation between budgets and political or commercial constraints, so public broadcasters could isolate themselves from political and market interferences. According to Ouellete (2002) and Aufderhide and Xie (2012), although the American model of public broadcasting has guaranteed some degree of independence, it has also brought a lack of formality to television production; American public channels have very little control over the programmes they broadcast, leaving the techniques and narrative aspects to the individuals or communities that produce them. This, of course, represents a major demonstration of diversity and independence but, for Aufderhide and Xie, it has also been a drawback in the pursuit of engaging audiences. A similar situation is seen in Colombia, where public television channels are subject not only to state funding, but also to changes in the

government administration, hence public channels have very little opportunity to consolidate their programming, since they receive new editorial guidelines following every administrative change, losing an important portion of their viewership during these transitions.

Notwithstanding how problematic the topic of funding is for PSB debates, Jakubowicz argues that “the most important challenge” resides in the socio-cultural field, which is related to the audience’s approach to the institution, their expectations from it, and the needs the institution can fulfil. Jakubowicz states that to respond to this challenge, public service media (PSM), must be reconfigured “to enable them (PSM) to stay relevant to their audiences and to respond to audiences’ needs in ways they will recognize as useful and interesting” (Jakubowicz, 2010, p. 196). Regarding this, Ouellette (1999), whose work focused on public media in the USA, argued that PSB contents do not respond to audience needs and expectations, but instead, that analytical-rational discourses are the most common contents of its programming. She recognizes that PSM have promoted normative contents on behalf of democracy and the empowerment of audiences, but this sort of critically-oriented programming has ended up undermining the idea of enlightenment of the general audience, by excluding less educated viewers.

These and other debates are part of the everyday challenges PSM face, struggling to find convincing arguments to justify their importance and relevance to society. As will be seen in the following section, one of the main arguments to defend the role and remit of PSM in Western European countries is the notion of public value. The concept of public value is presented below, as a useful category for analysing how goals for PSB are set and then assessed. Furthermore, the notion of public value will be instrumental to understand how the organisation studied herein, Señal Colombia, and its employees’ practices can contribute to a better viewing experience for citizens, and how its producers understand and apply this notion to their professional activities.

2.2.1. PSB and the Notion of Public Value

In Europe, public service broadcasters have recently been required to remind society and governments about their role in the consolidation and development of democratic practices. In response, according to Collins (2006, 2007) and Moe (2010), the BBC

adopted the notion of public value (BBC, 2004; BBC Trust, 2012a) to defend their legitimacy within society, on which their case for funding through viewers paying a license fee depends (Collins, 2007a). The creation of public value is what Moore (1995) denominated the building and strengthening of institutional trust and legitimacy through the organisation's commitment to working for the common good; this notion suited the needs of the BBC for both offering a rational justification for its existence and for describing itself as an up-to-date institution, capable of facing any challenge.

For Meynhardt "(p)ublic value is value for the public. Value for the public is a result of evaluations about how basic needs of individuals, groups and the society as a whole are influenced in relationships involving the public. Public value then is also value from the public, i.e., "drawn" from the experience of the public" (Meynhardt, 2009). For Moore and Meynhardt, value is created according to the quality of the relationships between individuals and society: "(...) primacy in defining public value must be reserved to citizens and their representatives acting through the political process – not the aims of professionals, not the wishes of the clients. They must become agents of collective rather than individually defined purposes" (Moore, 1994, p. 302). Moore questioned the goal of public managers, what they were supposed to produce, and how their performance would be assessed (Moore, 1995). His vision responded to the increasing need to establish a better relationship between institutions and the people. The establishment of this relationship is essential to the doctrine on public value, since the outcomes of public institutions under this notion are achieved through a participatory process that, according to Knoll "addresses the definition, provision, and evaluation of public services. Based on this understanding, public service provision is not purely a reaction to market failure but much more a proactive search for and creation of public value" (Knoll, 2012, p. 18). This participatory process is based then on the possibility for citizens to both contest what institution offer as public service and co-produce new services with them, which are more adjusted to public needs.

To assess the public value of a given project, Moore developed a model to evaluate whether it project was being proposed under what he called a *strategic triangle* which included 1) support and legitimacy, 2) the public value sought to produce, and 3) operational capabilities (Moore & Khagram, 2004, pp. 5-6). The first leg of this model is

also understood as an “authorizing environment”, and relates to the socio-political relations that the public manager builds in order to ensure and maintain the organization’s goals. A second component of the model, the public value outcomes, refers to the intended results which, following an assessment process, will determine whether the enterprise successfully achieved its goals. Finally, the operational capacities are the production activities, the resources needed to accomplish the organisation’s aims. Moore’s idea was adopted and adapted by the BBC, which reconfigured the model into a test with the purpose of assessing its public service remit. According to the BBC Trust (2012a), the notion of public value creation is used to denominate the building and strengthening of institutional trust and legitimacy, through the organisation’s commitment to working for the common good; this concept is what public service broadcasters have been trying to use as the outstanding justification for their continuity; their role in the promotion and conservation of national and cultural features, as well as their existence as a living example of freedom of expression is what supports their need for public funding.

Consequently, the BBC Trust developed a Public Value Test that consists of two elements: public value assessment, and market impact assessment. The purposes of the market impact assessment are to recognise “if the BBC’s proposals will affect the demand for, and supply of, competing services; and to assess the extent to which they may distort competition” (OFCOM, 2007, p. 11). The purposes of the public value assessment are to determine whether reach, quality and distinctiveness, impact and cost, and value for money are the drivers of every proposed public service from the BBC (OFCOM, 71-72). According to Lowe and Martin (2014), the relevance of Moore’s development resides in its strong emphasis on citizen engagement instead of customer satisfaction, and in the process of creating public value with a particular focus on responding to socially valuable outcomes, rather than on market conditions (2014, p. 24).

The public value test developed by the BBC but with local modifications, has also been applied to German and Norwegian PSB (Moe, 2010), but at the time of writing, when searching Hispanic literature regarding the public value concept, it is evident that there is an understanding of *public value* as something intrinsic, inherent to the media

contents produced in the public interest; however, the term *public value* also has a different usage from the BBC's (Fuenzalida, 2005; Fernández & Martínez, 2015). In the Hispanic case, the term public value refers to what is termed ***social profitability*** (*rentabilidad social*). This term first appeared with a similar connotation to *public value* during the COPEAM (Conférence Permanente de l'Audiovisuel Méditerranéen/ Permanent Conference of the Mediterranean Audio-visual Operators) 2004, when keynote speaker Carmen Caffarell, former Director of Radiotelevisión Española (RTE), stated that radio and television should contribute to society by promoting democratic systems and cultural diversity, and by creating room for general coexistence, while adapting to upcoming times. In this sense, she insisted on the need for researching audience response and reconsidering the rationale for justifying the existence of public service television, emphasizing its social profitability rather than its economic profitability (Ortiz, 2005, p. 80). Following that, a model for assessing the social profitability of media in Spain was created in 2009: IRCOM (*Indice de Rentabilidad Social en Comunicación/ Social Profitability of Communication Index*). This index measures media impact in terms of social profitability, according to six indicators: management; social capital; territorial interaction; programming; online presence, and infrastructure (Universidad de Málaga. Laboratorio de Comunicación y Cultura, 2013). However, this index is not applied outside Spain, but the notion of *social profitability* remains in use in almost every Hispanic narrative associated to the assessment of public service broadcasting activities, particularly when providing a justification to retain state funding for public media (Esteinou, 2008; Fuenzalida, 2012; Arroyo, Becerra, Castillejo, & Santamaria, 2013; ANTV, 2014).

Both the notion of public value and its Hispanic version, social profitability, prove relevant for this thesis as the case study relates to a state organisation which seeks to promote a non-tangible good, a service for which impact cannot easily be measured. Señal Colombia aims to produce television in the public interest, and therefore it is assumed that the managerial structure that contains the channel follows guidelines and performs activities that should result in the production of something socially valuable for the public: high-minded programmes whose value should be determined by the audience. Some of the categories considered by Moore in his *strategic triangle*, as well

as indicators from the PVT, served as frames to categorise the most relevant themes that emerged from the empirical study conducted. However, beyond expecting to apply a given model to a local context, in chapter 7 I emphasize the specificities of my case study, focusing on the factors that add and subtract value to public service television in Colombia, with an emphasis on organisational structures, as well as institutional and professional narratives of the notion of value.

In the following section, I draw on the specificities of PSM in Latin America, in order to set the local scene and its main features in terms of how these systems are conceived and developed.

2.3. Public Media Systems in Latin America

Latin America has followed its own path for developing public media systems and although the history of PSB in the region is relatively short, it has not been exempt from struggles akin to those faced by PSB in other parts of the globe. For Fox (1988), PSB in Latin America has been characterized by the singularity of its political context, due to the dictatorial regimes that held power in several countries during the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. This context also shaped academic approaches and ideas regarding media, which focused their efforts on revealing concentration of media ownership and the propagandistic use of PSM by the government.

These features were used by Marquez-Ramírez and Guerrero (2014) to categorise Latin American media within Hallin and Mancini's (2004) models of media systems, placing it under the "liberal tradition". To categorise media systems, Hallin and Mancini (2004) developed a matrix of three models (Table 1): the **polarized pluralist, the democratic corporatist, and the liberal**. The polarized pluralist (or Mediterranean) model comes from Hallin and Mancini's definition of those systems which have no control over media concentration, are subsidized by the government, highly polarized and with low levels of professionalism. The democratic corporatist or North/Central European model limits media concentration, is democratically controlled, has partial governmental funding but high levels of state intervention, combined with respect for freedom of expression and high standards of professionalization and self-regulation. This model is found in Austria,

Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. Finally, the North Atlantic or Liberal Model, which is found in the United States, Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom, represents a democratically regulated system; it is politically pluralist, highly professionalized and responds to a long history of democratic tradition.

Media systems in Latin America do not strictly fit any of these models. However, they are a useful framework to examine the singularities of the region by analysing their similarities and differences. To add some local colours to Hallin and Mancini's model, Guerrero and Marquez-Ramirez (2014) argue that Latin American media systems could fit in the liberal tradition, but that certain local specificities must be considered before labelling them:

- History of authoritarian or dictatorial governments;
- Increasing concentration, privatisation and deregulation of media promoted by the influence of neoliberal policies and economies;
- Political polarisation and clientelism;
- Absent or weak public broadcasting media.

After observing media policies in ten Latin American countries, and contrasting their policies with global trends, Márquez-Ramírez and Guerrero concluded that, in the region, "media policy has less to do with global trends than with political actors' agendas and their discourses that mutate and adapt to local circumstances, often in the contentious environment of highly polarized politics" (2014, p. 55). For the authors, the characteristics of the region respond to an idea of "a predominantly liberal commercial model that has been captured by economic and political interests and thus challenges much of the existing assumptions about liberal markets" (2014, p. 297) The authors use the term 'capture' to emphasize how the watchdog role of journalism is now limited and determined by values not associated with journalism, such as market logics or partisan political and individual interests. From then on, they label the Latin American media system model as "captured liberal".

Table 1 Three Models of Media Systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004)

	Polarized pluralist/ Mediterranean	Democratic Corporatist/ North Central Europe	Liberal (North America, United Kingdom)
Newspaper	Low-circulation; elite oriented	High circulation	Medium circulation
Political Parallelism	High parallelism; external pluralism; politics/broadcast	External pluralism; party press; PSB autonomy	Neutral commercial press; internal pluralism
Professionalization	Weak journalism; political activism not differentiated	Strong professionalization; institutionalised self-regulation	Strong professionalization; non-institutionalized
Role of the State	Strong state intervention	Strong state intervention; strong PSB	Market dominated; weak PSB

In acknowledging some of the specificities of Latin American media, Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002) recognised that media systems do not have a strong tradition of a critical press, due to the lack of an organized civil society, and the increasing personalization of politics. Fox and Waisbord (2002) have also acknowledged that there is not enough professionalization among journalists, and clientelism is a common practice inside media organizations; for them, this practice undermines any effort to promote a more democratic media system. In addition, there is a lack of media in the public service, a situation that, according to Fuenzalida (2000), has further complicated raising initiatives to develop the foundational values of PSB; instead, PSB are used as an instrument for political goals, where programmes are produced under low quality standards with the main purpose of fulfilling the government's need to inform audiences about governmental programmes. Silvio Waisbord (2013) offers a clearer description of this context: "State-owned television and radio stations rarely functioned as institutions organized around public principles. Because they have been directly under the Executive (at national, state and municipal) levels, they typically served as mouthpieces for sitting administrations. The lack of broad participation in the management and funding of state-run stations have further undermined its potential to serve the public at large". (2013, p. 7)

To this description, Marquez-Ramirez and Guerrero add:

"Family ownership of the media remains, media elite are part of de facto power structure at national and regional levels, mutual courtship among media and political elites prevail, smaller media organizations continue to be highly dependent on political advertising,

making them compliant to political agendas, and generally speaking, in all the countries the media play their watchdog role selectively, particularly at moments when their interests are threatened. (...) (P)ivate media in Latin America, ruled by global commercial logics rather than administered by the state, are subject to complicit intervention and interference, thereby preventing the emergence of competitive, healthy, diverse and plural markets, particularly in regard to broadcasting. In fact, clientelism prevails, poor law enforcements leaves journalists unprotected and subjugated to threat and risks, cultural industries appear to be protected only when political actors stand to gain, and the professionalization of journalism has meant a superficial change, passive reporting practices, or direct compliance with official and institutional agendas rather than supporting citizens and communities” (2014, p. 55)

As will be seen in subsequent chapters, these features are evident in the concrete organisational dynamics that not only mark the path for Señal Colombia’s activities, but also for the set of relationships of power among the state, the channel, and its employees. To read and interpret these relationships, I base my analysis on notions of **disciplinary power, governmentality, symbolic power** and **social capital**, concepts that represent different manifestations and understandings of power and which help describe the ways power relations are experienced in the field of cultural production.

To explain the field, different approaches to the concept of power are needed. There is a political economy approach that describes the set of norms and regulations that pass through the organisation and affect internal dynamics and producers’ practices, in a top-down manifestation of power; however, coercion can also be exerted from within the individuals, as self-regulating subjects (Foucault, 1999, p.162) when participants embody norms, join the structures that shape the field, and limit their freedoms in order to remain active in it. For Foucault “governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself” (1993, pp. 203-204). That is to say, power is not something imposed from one individual (or group of individuals) to another, but a networked relation between individuals who have normalised and internalised a set of behaviours, disciplinary norms and understandings that shape their conduct and their perception and judgment of the other’s. This Foucauldian notion of governmentality as a regime of self-discipline has been of remarkable importance to studies of cultural work to describe oppression in the field, as well as cultural workers’ choices for self-

exploitation. Finally, I use Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power (1992), which has also been applied to the study and understanding of power relationships in the media field. Bourdieu, drawing on notions of agency and structure, developed the theory of symbolic power addressing the processes through which power is obtained and used, defining it as "the power of constructing (social) reality" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 164). Accordingly, individuals sharing a cultural belief system create the foundation for symbolic power, and in this sharing they (consciously or unconsciously) adhere to the principles ruling the reality they live therefore legitimizing relations between agents. I use this approach to explain how participants deploy their capital as part of an inherited social structure, shown in their habitus and the ways they perform, above all in the way they form networks.

Combined with notions of clientelism and bureaucracy, these characteristics lead to the understanding of the power dynamics of public service television production in my case study. In what follows I describe how the historical relationship between media and the State in Colombia has been characterised by an intertwined and sometimes blurred connection, where it is difficult to determine where the state ends and the media begins. I will focus on the Colombian television broadcasting system, which has paradoxically been unregulated, while at the same time highly controlled by the state (Fox & Waisbord, 2002a). As will be seen, since its inception Colombian TV tried to offer diverse and plural contents, but by limiting non-official versions of reality, capturing every representation of the country produced by public TV, and moulding it according to a politic version of what could be said about the country in mass media.

2.4. PSB in Colombia, an Overview

To understand the context under which Señal Colombia and the Colombian television broadcasting system operate, it is necessary to describe the relationships within the system, with its political environment, in terms of how external factors are managed in the process of media content production (Gurevitch, Bennett, Curran, & Wollacott, 2005, p. 15). In this section, the relationship between state and the media will be reviewed, providing a historical account of socio-political contexts and media regulations that define that relationship today, focusing on the use of the public media

system by the state as a means to “maintain order and meet societal goals” (Wasko, 2005, p. 27).

Numerous recent studies have focused on the historical relation between the Colombian state and the media, with a particular focus on television. This is the case for Garzón-Barreto (2015), who documents some of the most important debates regarding the processes that created the current television regulation in Colombia. Garzon-Barreto emphasizes “discursive environments” whence were established the needs for regulating and democratizing the service: a) making the service universal, guaranteeing that everyone throughout the Colombian territory has access to the aerial signal; b) decentralizing the service, allowing regions to produce and broadcast their own contents; c) democratizing the service by allowing autonomous bodies to become real players in the regulation of the service; d) educating viewers as citizens. A similar approach was adopted by Vizcaino a decade ago (2005), in a study that focused on the political relationship between the state and the TV medium, with an emphasis on how the latter has been used more for private purposes than for the public interest. In his document analysis of press articles, he goes beyond the normative literature to draw attention to the debates and contexts that have driven the regulation of television in Colombia.

Vizcaino (2005) sees Colombian TV as a medium where administrative anarchy and confusion are the dominant features. Regarding the medium’s beginnings, he argues: “Public and private notions were so intertwined that controlling was almost unthinkable; concessions were awarded on personal reasons, without normative criteria” (2005, p. 130). Although attempts were made to create some structure, the main problem has never been addressed: the use of the medium for political purposes. In addition, Vizcaino considers that public television channels are not protected by regulation because “there is no notion of a public media system that articulates and strengthens the services provided. On the contrary, the state cuts out all operative and administrative capacity, treats the system as a commercial and industrial enterprise, but without its own resources; makes it dependant from the National Television Authority and doesn’t even propose legal solutions for its self-funding” (2005, p. 16). His vision of

the relationship between the state and the public media system are proved in my empirical study, as will become evident in chapters 4 and 5.

Paradoxically, there has been scant debate on this relationship, and such discussions have been inexistent since the late 90s. Academic studies are rarely taken into consideration by politicians, even less so by audiences. In general, there is an increasing apathy and disinterest in topics related to public service television in Colombia; although it is there, it does not form part of the general public's concerns. Nonetheless, there is a substantial history behind the current panorama of PSB in Colombia; the facts most relevant to this research are described in the following section.

2.4.1. Colombian TV: The Political Grounds

Benavides-Campos (2012) traces the relationship between the state and public broadcasting back to the period of *La Violencia* (The Violence, 1946-1958), a time that lasted over 10 years and was marked by a non-organised civil war between Liberal and Conservative partisans in rural areas of Colombia, which reached its climax on the 9th of April 1948, during what the press of the time termed *El Bogotazo*.

Conservatives were in power back then, but the Liberals held a majority in Congress. Although the government was attempting to build a coalition with the opposition, partisans from both sides were trying to gain political control in rural areas by means of atrocious violence. In the capital, Bogotá, Conservative politicians were striving to reach a deal with the opposition, but the Liberals would accept nothing less than ambitious reforms that addressed the country's social needs. Jorge-Eliecer Gaitán was the Liberal leader who embodied these needs, being the most popular politician among the masses. When Gaitán was murdered by a drifter on 9th April 1948, the government could not control the ensuing riots that left over 2,000 dead in the capital that day.

Conservatives accused the Liberal press of being responsible for the events of *El Bogotazo* and the increase in violence throughout the country that followed. The Conservative government of Laureano Gómez deemed the violence and the risk of a possible civil war to be threats to the establishment, hence created new mechanisms

for controlling civil liberties in 1949. One of these was a censorship law that remained in effect until 1957. The increasing oppression of the Liberal press by the Conservative government, the persecution of Liberals and the subsequent forcible closure of the Congress were the breeding ground for a coup d'état. In 1953, a coalition of moderate Conservatives, the armed forces, and the Liberal party, supported General Gustavo Rojas-Pinilla in overthrowing the government.

Rojas-Pinilla's government was expected to terminate the implementation of the censorship law but, on the contrary, the measures were toughened, adding stricter controls to the dissemination of information related to government activities or public servants, in an attempt to quell public criticism: "the publication of any sort of information, news, commentaries, cartoons, drawings, and pictures that denoted lack of respect towards the President of the Republic, or towards Head of States from friend countries was prohibited. The information that might affect the public order was also forbidden" (Fox, 1982, p. 176) Rojas-Pinilla's administration (1953-1957) assumed the task of restoring the country's public image after *El Bogotazo*. However, this task had already started during the Gómez administration, which created the Office for Press and State Information (ODIPE²).

According to Benavides-Campos, the Colombian government intended to reverse the negative image of past events by producing press releases, radio programmes and films that focused on other realities of the country, such as natural resources and tourism, avoiding any controversial issues. The main focus of this plan was to create press releases targeting newspapers in the United States, as well as producing short films to be released in Colombian cinemas, and later on via TV broadcast. There were not enough television sets in Colombia in 1953 for this propagandistic drive to consider it as the main media vehicle to promote a revised image of the country. Producing television was still an experiment: there were no studios or sets, only improvised locations; there were no clear scheduling concepts; most of the TV technicians and engineers were brought over from Cuba; talent was borrowed from radio (Benavides-Campos, pp. 125-126). In addition, the government did not establish a clear organisational structure for the

² Ten years later this office would be decentralised and renamed the National Institute for Radio and Television, INRAVISION

functioning of the TV system, leaving it dependant on other governmental agencies. However, the TV programmes produced were conceived according to the educational agenda of Rojas-Pinilla, who emphasized “principles of culture and good taste” (*Boletín de Programas*, No. 117, 1954, p. 37 in Ramírez L. , 2001).

As Benavides-Campos acknowledges, during the first years following the introduction of television in Colombian society, the medium was not deemed important for the political scenario, but it certainly was for the social and familial contexts, where dynamics shifted, adjusting routines and social practices around the broadcast schedules. In contrast, Ramírez (2001) argues that even though there was not an overt propagandistic use of the medium, it was fully controlled by the government in terms of contents and schedules, and therefore left little room for different representations of the Colombian social reality other than the official version. TV news reports emphasized the economic challenges the country faced at the time, so it could force-march the path to progress and modernisation. However, this twist in the agenda left a void in journalism, the national memory was fragmented, nothing was said about executions, expropriations or forced migration. As Benavides-Campos (2012) argues, this process created a sort of self-censorship that prevented violent confrontations between Liberal and Conservative partisans, supressing most of the real events that occurred during *La Violencia*, avoiding the formation of a truly informed public opinion. Furthermore, this process allowed the political system to consolidate its bipartisan structure, excluding the interests of minorities from being represented.

This is the context under which television in Colombia was launched, on 13th June 1954. Its precursor was Dictator Rojas Pinilla, who inherited and toughened the censorship regulation established in 1949. Hence, the early use of this medium as a means to promote Rojas-Pinilla’s political plan and foster a popular image of the dictator (Ramírez, 2001). The *La Violencia* period ended in 1958 with the establishment of the National Front³.

³ The National Front was a sixteen-year bipartisan arrangement under which parties would alternate in power, so they did not have to compete in elections. This arrangement also assigned seats in the Chamber of Representatives, the Senate, and high-level administrative appointments equally.

There were only two national television channels between 1954 and 1970: Cadena Uno and Cadena Dos. From 1954 to 1956 both channels were fully funded and operated by the state: “the government programmed, produced and transmitted what went out over Colombia’s airwaves. Content was based on a somehow elitist view of culture and included classical music and great works of literature. The Office of the President directed all news reporting” (Calero-Aparicio, 2002, p. 90). In 1956 the government spotted a significant economic opportunity: renting certain broadcast slots to commercial operators. The incursion of commercial players and the increasing audience demand for more entertaining and informative programmes displaced cultural and educational contents from these channels, with most of it being replaced by soap-operas and comedic programmes. In order to preserve the production of cultural and educational programmes, the government created a third channel in 1970: *Canal 11*. Unlike the other two, this one was fully funded by the state: its slots were not to be rented or put up for bidding. In 1995, the third channel was renamed Señal Colombia.

2.4.1.1. Political Clientelism and TV

As mentioned above, in 1958 the National Front began to govern the country in a political arrangement aimed at ending partisan violence. This agreement was evident in the distribution of news slots in TV channels, through concessions. According to López de la Roche (2010), since news programmes had more to do with the distribution of “perceptions and opinions about the political life, the state, the parties and its heads, they were jealously protected as a monopoly of the politic elites and the journalists associated with them” (2010, p. 63). Although the National Front agreement ended in 1974, this practice of assigning news programmes to political parties was kept blatantly in force until the onset of the 21st century.

From 1974 to 1982 there was a heated debate among political leaders, journalists and government agencies regarding this practice. For example, as stated by Luis Carlos Galán, a political leader at the time, “the issue of using television for political purposes represents one of the key points in the future of Colombian democracy because it is a needed step for achieving the political, social, and democratic growth of the country” (Galán, 1976, in Vizcaíno, 2005, p. 137). The government reacted accordingly, proposing

a new regulation for television, but the political concession of news programmes was maintained. This situation clearly affected ratings, which decreased by 20% (Vizcaíno, 2005). With these practices, the government was not necessarily censoring the political information of news programmes, but it was removing any indication of political standpoints from the national television programming. It was not just allocating programmes to Liberal or Conservative partisans, while neglecting the participation of the opposition, it was creating an apolitical representation of the country via broadcast television.

This process to a-politicize public media promoted a practice of continuous self-censorship and the complete eradication of public affairs from public TV programming, especially at Señal Colombia, with such contents being replaced by blunt views and diplomatic representations of the reality of the nation. "In the world represented by news programmes, every problem in Colombia is fixed; everything works; any scarcity is solved; there is no strike that is not solved within a couple of days" (Bibliowicz, 1979, p.131 in López de la Roche, 2010). Furthermore, with audiences indifferent to public media contents, the government had more room to control the institution for clientelistic purposes. The unpopularity of news programmes among audiences at the time, along with the state's control over the slots and the management of the beneficiaries of that control, forced the government to create new strategies that permitted new players to enter the game. Thus did public television in Colombia enter a new age, as a result of the first law deregulating the television service, in 1985, almost 30 years after its inception.

Colombian public broadcasting entered a new era in 1991, when a new Constitution was adopted, driven by a student-led movement that proposed the formation of a constitutional assembly, which was backed by the Liberal government of the time. With the constitution, the country entered a process of adjustment to the international opening of markets, adapting the public media system to international standards was one of the measures applied. One of the main highlights with regard to public television was the creation of the *Comisión Nacional de Televisión* - National Television Board (CNTV). With the new Constitution, it was envisaged that media would be free from control by the government in power, or any other dominant social or economic groups.

The CNTV was expected to play the role of an autonomous agency that regulated the television sector along with the airwaves, and furthered the interests of citizens by ensuring that they got the best from the TV service.

2.5. Señal Colombia

Señal Colombia is a public service television channel which is free-to-air and penetrates almost 90% of the Colombian territory. It has been on air under that name since 1995, but initially started operating under the name of Canal 11, back in 1970. From the outset, it dedicated its scheduling to educational and cultural contents, trying to follow the BBC model of broadcasting contents for enlightening audiences.

In 1994, the Ministry of Communications, foreseeing the new challenges for the commercial public channels and for the cultural channel, decided to reconfigure the latter channel's programming in order to provide it with a new image and, hopefully, better chances to gain audiences in the increasingly competitive ratings context. The production of programmes was the responsibility of INRAVISION and Audiovisuales⁴. Up till then, the programming of Señal Colombia was mostly formed by interviews and documentaries, in accordance with the purposes that gave rise to Audiovisuales back in 1976: "the production of programmes that relate to everyday life issues of the Colombian population: forced internal migration, environment, literature, human values, popular art, folklore, tourism, childhood, history, music, science, among others"⁵ (Ministerio de Cultura, 1998).

In 1995 Señal Colombia experienced a twist: for the first time since its creation in 1970, news programmes were added to its scheduling (Revista Semana, 1996). Four programme slots were allocated to prominent Colombian journalists and the rest of the

⁴ Both Inravisión and Audiovisuales were State Commercial and Industrial Enterprises, liquidated in 2004 and fused into a single enterprise: RTVC –Radio and Television of Colombia. "The State Industrial or Commercial Enterprises are public sector, incorporated, decentralised, administratively autonomous industrial and commercial corporations, each created by a specific piece of legislation, each of which has its own assets, funds, possessions, and properties, and whose operations are guided by private law. Rather than the service-oriented activities of the public corporations (...) the activities of the state-owned industrial and commercial enterprises are profit seeking and more business-oriented.

Each industrial and commercial enterprise is also assigned for coordination purposes to a specific committee or administrative department: however, the enterprise's level of autonomy is much higher. Each is also governed by its own by-laws and, with exception of the director, who is named directly by the President of the Republic, may hire its own personnel, establish its own job descriptions and schedules, and set its own salary scale". (Osterling, 1988, p. 126)

⁵ My own translation

programming was commissioned without being first put out to tender, as required by Law 80 of 1993, which dictates every contractual relation between the state and individual and/or artificial legal entities. The channel had a renewed and fresher image; the eyes of the public were on this new attempt at putting culture back on the TV menu. The new era of Señal Colombia started in 1994 with an annual budget of 600 million COP (around 165,000 GBP), it ended the same year with a budget of 12,000 million COP (about 3,200 million GBP) (Revista Semana, 1996a). It certainly was a major investment to foster culture. However, the fact that Roberto Posada, one of the journalists granted a news programme, was an advisor to then-president Ernesto Samper-Pizano (Revista Dinero, 1997), and that his contract granted him the highest remuneration among journalists at Señal Colombia –earning 117 million COP (31,000 GBP) per month while producing only three news clips lasting three minutes each, from Monday to Friday– raised suspicions and questions among the press (El Tiempo, 1996). Despite the heated debate, Posada and the other journalists kept their contracts for four years, until the end of Samper’s presidential term (El Tiempo, 1999).

The allocation of news programmes for political reasons, a deeply entrenched practice in television, had permeated the only channel that, due to its cultural and educational aims, had hitherto been free of it. However, this case was not about exerting any sort of political influence over audiences. Since Señal Colombia’s ratings were not substantial, it was evident that third parties’ interest in producing for the channel concerned using the channel for clientelist purposes; paying back political favours by offering jobs to those who had contributed with votes; permeating to who was granted the largest budget to spend. A press release from 1998 offers an example of how programming decisions were taken: The then Chief of Communications for the Minister of Culture, Juan Carlos Botero, reported that, despite the Ministry having an entire team of people dedicated to conceiving and shaping the programming of Señal Colombia, and that they had projects approved for production, political interests outside the Ministry had the last word on what would be scheduled.

Back in 1994, the scheduling of the channel was the responsibility of the Ministry of Communications, which invited the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education to join the project and contribute ideas for its scheduling. They were in charge of a daily

slot called *La Franja*. The ministries would create the concepts for the programmes and INRAVISION would put up bids for their production. In 2000, a year after completing the contracts for news programmes, the Ministry of Culture brought together a group of 120 organisations (state agencies, NGOs, community organisations, etc.) to develop a new programming plan for Señal Colombia. This plan was entitled PROCEM (National Project for the Promotion of Education and Culture through Mass Media) and “looks for the strengthening of cultural identity, diversity and memory; allows audiences to hear and see different faces, voices, topics and points of view; it opens doors for the expression of artistic qualities; it respects and promotes the participation from cultural minorities; it guarantees the interaction between the local, the regional, the national and the international⁶” (Rincón & Zuluaga, 2010). The production of news programmes was not mentioned in the document, though it was implicit following the previous experience that the channel would not produce current affairs or news programmes from then on.

Along with PROCEM, a new production handbook was designed⁷; hitherto the channel did not have one. The handbook included a detailed description of the production methods as well as the aims of Señal Colombia and was designed by a group from the Ministry of Culture that performed the previously unknown role of commissioning editor. The channel finally had a counterpart that actually supervised the production of the programmes and made sure that both the narratives and budgets were executed according to its aims. This production handbook and PROCEM are still in use today as the main guidelines for producing contents for Señal Colombia. The channel’s managers have used them to create and maintain a degree of homogeneity and institutional identity, while preventing the government from exerting direct influence on programming. Following PROCEM, Señal Colombia’s programming focused on representing the nation through stories about ethnicity and emphasizing cultural features, focusing on “national identity, pedagogy, citizenship education, audio visual quality, local and global information of public interest” (Revista Semana, 2015). Nonetheless, the programming was more a mix of contents without flow, a hotchpoch that did not respond to the logics of television scheduling and/or packaging. In 2001 the

⁶ My own translation

⁷ Available on <http://www.Señalcolombia.tv/industria/manual-de-produccion> Retrieved on 04/01/2016

channel was, once again, reviewing its programming strategy (Osorio, 2001), though this time with less interference from the former CNTV, but following recommendations from the Presidency and the Ministries of Education and Culture.

In 2004, a new era began for Señal Colombia: they did not have to produce their own contents as INRAVISION⁸ used to, but could outsource the production via public procurement. The channel, in association with the Ministries of Education and Culture, and under the supervision of the CNTV, designed the contents and formats; following which the projects were put out to bid. The production of the programmes was carried out under the channel's thematic and aesthetic direction (Rincón & Zuluaga, 2010). Although PROCEN works as a set framework for Señal's scheduling, the content of programming changes almost yearly. New programmes are released, others conclude their seasons and are not commissioned again; this dynamic responds to the state rules for public contracts. Since Señal Colombia is a commercial and industrial state enterprise, its organisation and management must abide by current regulations in public law. The current directive on public procurement (law 80 of 1993) states that each contract must go through 4 stages (Laguado-Giraldo, 2005):

1. Determine the necessity of the investment or expense
2. Call for proposals or put out for bidding
3. Evaluate the proposals
4. Award the contract to the winning supplier

This process is applied to activities as dissimilar as building a bridge or producing a TV series. At first glance, this process does not necessarily have to negatively affect the organisation of Señal Colombia; however, the entire process from determining the necessity until awarding the contract can take from three up to six months. Furthermore, in light of past experience in the adjudication of news programmes, it is not deemed wise to award a contract to the same person or production company twice in a row, despite having the qualifications, operational capabilities and knowledge on

⁸ In 2004, INRAVISION was declared unsustainable. It was no longer generating income from advertisers for the public TV channels since most of them migrated to the two private channels, the government -through the National Television Board (CNTV)- was then in charge of funding the institution's operation. Furthermore, the institution was being used by certain employees as a fast track to enrol in public sector pension schemes, increasing its operational budget. RTVC *Radio Televisión Nacional de Colombia* replaced INRAVISION and since then is in charge of producing, programming and managing the Colombian public TV network.

how to produce the programme. Usually, Señal prefers to put the programme out for bidding once again, to avoid any suspicion of their transparent management. This is the reason why Señal Colombia has only produced two programmes which lasted several seasons: *Los Puros Criollos* (four seasons) and *Expedición Cóndor de los Andes* (three seasons). The rest of the programming is made up of new releases or canned programmes that comprise between thirteen and fifty-two episodes.

In addition, the scheduling does not have a clear identity: one week it might be in response to a worldwide celebration, for example UNESCO or UN international years (2016 was the international year of pulses); and the following week Colombian national holidays (independence, religious celebrations); or thematic weeks: sports, AIDS, climate change. This arbitrary programming arrangement prevents viewers from establishing viewing routines with the channel, inhibiting the experience of a flow of contents (Williams, 2003). Furthermore, the channel is understood as an extension of the school calendar, therefore its programming also has 'holiday breaks' during the months of school holidays. There is a constant need for changing, renovating, that does not allow the scheduling to adapt to the very basic strategies for continuity in broadcast programming (Eastman & Ferguson, 2012).

To complicate things further for Señal Colombia programming (and for public television under state control), every four years, following the presidential elections, a new manager is appointed for RTVC, and with him or her come new directors for the public television channels. Furthermore, each and every government agency is expected to adapt their managing plans to the national development plan that is valid during that presidential term, prioritizing the topics of most importance for the government⁹. Señal Colombia has had some periods of stability that had helped the channel to engage viewers and gain both national and international recognition but, in general, its contents are not highly watched or consistently consumed by audiences¹⁰. Apart from political

⁹ In June 2015 one of the call for tenders for producing programmes for Señal Colombia required contents focused on "media, conflict and peace", in reference to the peace process with FARC guerrilla. See <http://www.rtv.gov.co/noticia/medios-conflicto-y-paz-tema-central-de-nueva-convocatoria-de-Senal-colombia>. Retrieved on 18/12/15

¹⁰ In June 2015 Señal registered the following rating: *Romeo y Buseta* 1.62% (rating) / 2.18% (share) *La Posada* 1.91% (rating) / 2.48% (share) *Giro de Italia* 0.78% (rating) 2.45% (share) *Miseñal al Aire* 0.69% (rating) / 1.69% (share). <http://www.rtv.gov.co/noticia/Señal-colombia-tercer-canal-mas-visto-del-pais> Retrieved on 14/12/15

scandals or media awards, Señal Colombia does not seek to address the national debate. Its contents rarely focus on current affairs or topics that are relevant for the daily lives of Colombians, concentrating on 'timeless', apolitical and non-controversial contents that have more to do with nostalgia and a sense of territorial belonging¹¹, than on providing useful information for illuminating viewer's democratic judgment. Certain commentators occasionally try to remind audiences that the channel exists, that its programming is worth watching, and so on, but apart from that, the channel remains silently on air.

These circumstances make the Colombian public broadcasting system an environment particularly worth studying, so as to understand how media production practices are developed under state control and its potential relevance for broader contexts. This study is an opportunity to develop an understanding of the processes and dynamics of producing cultural products (television programmes) that carry with them the responsibility of providing contents under the mandate of enhancing the democratic experience.

This review of the relevant literature on Colombian public service media production has highlighted several areas that require scrutiny. The primacy of historical analyses has neglected the production and its contexts, and the way in which governmental structures impact on the organisational practices and on producer's experiences and perceptions of their work, as well as on the content and form of audio-visual texts. In certain cases, generic analysis is linked to macro-structures of the public media system, but such links are not based on the empirical study of production processes. Central issues for debate concern the evolution of public television production as creative work, the social function of public television, and the role of producers within this context. These are relevant issues to investigate because public service television's claims to social value have implications for regulators', audiences' and producers' perceptions of media pertinence.

¹¹ "The formula for the channel's success, according to content advisor Paula Arenas, is to produce timeless, quality programmes; programmes that audiences enjoy and can watch time and again; programmes that can be sold to or exchanged with other Latin American public channels; programmes that can successfully participate in national and international TV festivals". (Revista Semana, *La Fórmula de Señal Colombia*. 2015)

3. Methodology

In the previous chapter I reviewed the theoretical foundations of this thesis and positioned my research within academic theories and debates. I now focus on the methodology of this study, which aims to offer a deeper understanding of how public service television is produced under state control in Colombia, by analysing how the Colombian media system works and how television producers manage and negotiate their personal and professional goals in this context. I begin from the assumption that, since the Colombian public media system is owned and financially supported by the state, the government in power uses this relationship to place public service TV channels at its service, thereby exerting pressures that limit producers' autonomy. This assumption is based on my professional experience working as a producer and director for a regional public TV channel, where I was responsible for producing contents related to the government's development plans. The research methodology and associated processes of data collection and analysis will either support or contradict this hypothesis. I begin with a brief overview of the context in which the case study takes place; I then present a review of the development stages of media production research; a subsequent section presents the rationale for selecting methods of data collection and, finally, the analytical approach is addressed and integrated into the research design.

3.1. Context

The public media system in Colombia is formed by two television channels, two radio stations and one web-based TV. According to Law 182 of 1995, public television is:

“(...) a public service subject to the ownership, reserve, control and regulation by the state, the provision shall, by grant to public entities referred to in this Law, individuals and organized communities in terms of Article 365 of the Constitution. Technically, it is a telecommunications service that offers programming addressed to the general public or a part of it; by simultaneously issuing, transmitting, disseminating, distributing, radiating and receiving audio and video signals” (Congreso de la República de Colombia, 1995.)

This paragraph clearly asserts that public television is controlled by the state, hence the justification for this research and the overall question it addresses namely **how the**

production of public service television under state control in Colombia both enables and controls producers' autonomy, and the resulting impact of that control on producer's practices and perceptions with regard to the value and outcomes of their work. Specifically, to reiterate, this research then aims to answer the following **sub-questions**:

1. How do working conditions impact TV producers' experiences and perceptions of their work?
2. How are power and control played out in this context and how do they affect producers' perceptions and experiences of the work and their outcomes?
3. In what way do governmental structures in the public television system constrain or enable producer's autonomy?
4. How is public TV production guided by the idea of producing value, and how does this notion mesh with actual practices?

To provide answer to these questions, I conducted a study under an inductive approach, relying on ethnographic methods. I selected a television channel from the Colombian Public Media System as a case study, Señal Colombia, primarily because it has been viewed as the standard-bearer of public service values in most of contemporary Colombian literature on public service media (Rincón & Barbero, 2001; Rincón & Zuluaga, 2010). This television channel is often cited as an example of quality programming by prominent scholars and journalists throughout the country, who identify the channel as a model for other regional and local public TV channels and endeavour to encourage audiences to avoid commercial TV and "give themselves the opportunity" to appreciate the quality Señal Colombia offers. For example, it is said that: "despite being plagued by politicians, Señal Colombia has allowed underground contents see the light, particularly contents produced by university students, that stand out because of their low budget, and mostly because of their ability to experiment, to have a good sense of humour; because of their narrative quests, and their innovative perspective on the topics addressed¹²" (Rincón & Barbero, 2001, p. 281). However,

¹² My own translation

Barbero has maintained a more critical and less idealist opinion of the channel, acknowledging both their achievements and shortcomings: “we have been arguing for years that public television doesn’t strictly mean cultural and educational contents. In a country such as Colombia, where commercial television has cancelled debates, reportages, opinion programmes, and where news are terribly biased towards their sponsors, what we need from public television is information, debates, opinion, chronicles” (in Díaz & Peña, 2010, p. 122).

For two consecutive years, Señal Colombia has won 11 categories in the national India Catalina¹³ Television Awards, the country’s most significant television awards event. According to an independent news report, “the channel’s formula for success is to produce contents that do not become outdated; contents that audiences enjoy and can watch again and again; programmes to be sold to or exchanged with other Latin American public TV channels; programmes that participate in national and international festivals and obtain good results” (Revista Semana, 2015a) Señal Colombia is the flagship of ‘quality’ public television in Colombia; it is the place where new professionals have the chance to produce contents according to their own artistic vision, and where audio-visual experimentation and risks are being taken (Rincón, 2013).

Señal Colombia scheduling is especially acknowledged for the quality of its children’s programming, as well as its documentaries. These genres attract independent producers to work with the channel, as they usually have creative ideas but not enough resources to produce them. Through public tenders, and sometimes through direct commissioning, independent producers are able to produce the contents of their choice that reflect their particular interests. Furthermore, independent producers acknowledge Señal Colombia as an important promoter of the Colombian audio-visual sector, as its commissions are vital for small media practices. However, the channel’s dependence on government funding can sometimes constrain the range of topics they can address, as well as the spectrum of points of view.

Señal Colombia has unique characteristics within the Colombian public media system, but the dynamics of the organisation also reflect what happens, to a lesser degree, in

¹³ The Colombian Version of the Emmy Awards, established in 1984.

Colombian regional and local channels with the same programming purposes and with a similar financial dependency on the government. Hence, understanding how public television is produced under state control using Señal Colombia as a case study can also foster a broader understanding of how most public television is produced and delivered in Colombia and throughout Latin America.

3.2. Media Production Research

As seen in the previous chapter, there is a well-established tradition of media production research that dates back to the early 40s with the works of Rostein (1941) and Powdermaker (1950) on Hollywood production cultures; works that developed the first known approaches to insights of Hollywood's production industry under a sociological umbrella. These studies were followed by others that focused on other aspects of media production, such as the dynamics inside newsrooms (Schlesinger, 1978; Gitlin, 2000 originally published in 1983); the circuit of production (D'Acci, 1994); systems of belief behind media production (Caldwell, 2008); public service television production (Dornfeld, 1998). More recently, there has been increasing interest in the specificities of media and cultural/creative labour (Ursell, 2000; McRobbie, 2002; Banks, 2007; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Ross, 2009; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Lee, 2012; Banks et al., 2013; Oakley, 2014; among others).

As for the specificity of studying media production in a public broadcasting service, there has been considerable academic discussion about the purposes and value of public service television, but few scholars or commentators have examined how these questions are materialized in every-day production practices. One of the seminal works in this area is Georgina Born's ethnographic study of the BBC and the network's internal processes during the change of its managerial model (2004). In this work, she focuses on "the situated ethics and aesthetics" of producers in documentary, drama and current affairs. Through an ethnographic approach from an anthropological standpoint, Born developed an in-depth description of how production of television is mediated by the producers' intentionality and agency, and their daily struggles to maintain some degree of creative autonomy in an increasingly ideologically restricted environment and under changing management regimes.

Similarly, Barry Dornfeld's work on a TV series from the PBS of the United States stands out due to his detailed description of production practices within the public television industry (1998). From 1989 until 1991, he worked as a researcher for a documentary series, analysing the relationship between children and media; at the same time, as an anthropologist, he explored the world of television production and the negotiations behind its outcomes. Through this study, Dornfeld recognised the manifestation of producer's subjectivities and professional beliefs in their outcomes, and how these had to be negotiated with other professionals involved in production, while managing to balance scientific information and entertainment.

More recently, Bennett, Strange, Medrado and Kerr (2012) conducted research that aimed to determine to what extent the notion of public service motivates the production of contents and the ways producers work. What they found was an established culture tied by shared beliefs, as well as economic demands and necessities, affected by a constant need for diversification from the companies they worked for, while workers' movement towards freelance labour kept them focused on their income rather than on the value of the public service outcomes. They concluded that "public service production cultures (are) invariably contingent, networked, and conjectural, shaped by an array of factors in play at any given moment of study." (Bennett, 2015, p. 127).

Bennett et al. (2012), Born (2004) and Dornfeld (1998) are approaches that form part of the more recent turn from media industry research towards creative/cultural labour studies. This turn to creative work explores, among other things "the consequences of casualization of employment, the nature of creativity, and the division of work roles as well as questions of ethics and diversity in media production" (Paterson, Lee, Saha, & Zoellner, 2015, p. 6). Banks et al. (2013) also argue that there are four key factors that contribute to this interest:

1. The rise of the 'creative economy' from the mid-90s, which "took centre stage in a seemingly unstoppable celebration in which they were hailed as engines of economic growth, motors of urban regeneration, and promoters of social cohesion and inclusivity" (2013, p. 1)

2. The celebration of entrepreneurship, creativity, and networking as features of avant-garde forms of work.
3. The increased individualization and “liberation” of creative workers which has left them without job security and subject to continuous uncertainty.
4. The extension of these features towards other forms of work.

Most of these studies were conducted under a cultural studies approach, as they emphasized questions about how creative workers/cultural producers exercise and inhabit power; there is also an interest in determining whether there are production cultures that share practices and narratives. Furthermore, under this approach, the most minimal interactions become relevant and provide crucial information about conditions of production (Paterson, Lee, Saha, & Zoellner, 2015). However, this approach is developed in combination with political economy standpoints that provide macro versions of the context being analysed, thus offering more complex scenarios for understanding the circuits of cultural production. Similarly, I have chosen a mixed approach that will allow me to both describe and understand how broader patterns of power and control influence production, distribution and consumption of public service television in Colombia, while I am taking a closer look at production processes and how they are influenced by the context of state control.

To do so, this study is based on an ethnographic case study of the Señal Colombia public TV channel. The research data is drawn from three main sources: **participant observation, focus groups and in-depth interviews**. The findings inform how commissioning editors and independent producers working for the channel negotiate their autonomy for delivering contents that answer both to the government’s needs and the producers’ professional and personal goals. Next I present the research design, commencing with a review of the ethnographic approach, followed by the methodological and analytical approaches for the thematic analysis.

3.3. Research Design: Case Study

This study delves into the detailed dynamics and practices inside the channel, based on a case study research design with an ethnographically informed approach. This

approach is fundamental to address the research sub-questions about perceptions and experiences of producers with regards to topics related to cultural/creative work and the production of public service media under state control. In this study, the context is fathomed not only through the researcher's personal observation, but also through participants' points of view. According to Schutz (1972), individuals have a unique experience of reality, in line with their socially contextual experiences and characteristics, which give meaning to their own understanding of reality. These views, as Creswell expresses, "are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individual lives (...) They also focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants" (Creswell J. , 2012, p. 8). From producers' responses, I will be able to submit a broad description of the context they are embedded in, and the nuances this gives to current understandings of both public service media production and creative/cultural work.

Accordingly, a number of Señal Colombia producers were observed during their working day-to-day lives and subsequently interviewed. For Creswell, through ethnography, the researcher can describe and interpret "patterns of values, behaviours, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group" (2012, p. 68). This methodology requires the researcher to be immersed in the setting, present in people's lives, in order to develop a profound description of the setting and, more importantly, to compare what participants say with what they actually *do*. This ethnographic approach refers to the importance of "studying *at first-hand* what people do and say in particular contexts" (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4). Hence ethnographic methods involve lengthy and constant contact through relevant methods, such as participant observation and interviews, complemented by the study of relevant documents about the setting under scrutiny. These methods inform not only the researcher's description of the situation, but also the participants' perceptions of the context. Furthermore, this method proves helpful in the study of an organisation such as Señal Colombia, since "every media industry study is a case study" (Newcomb, 2009, p. 268), meaning that, although particular organisations and media industries share many similarities, they each have their own particular dynamics and features; thus, the researcher must be aware of these

singularities and design a malleable research accordingly, so as to offer a comprehensive description and interpretation of it. The fact that I am interested in both the context and participants' perceptions of it makes the case study method the natural choice for my type of research, for, as Yin puts it: "a case study is an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., a "case"), set within its real-world context—especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2012, p. 4). Therefore, a case study design enables me to collect detailed information and insights that cannot be obtained by any other research design.

Taking Señal Colombia as a case study is the most appropriate means to grasp the complexities of producing public service television under state control in Colombia, because it is the most pertinent method when a researcher is addressing an open-ended question, and where data can be collected in a natural setting, favouring the study of the phenomena in context (Yin, 2012, p. 5). In addition, this research design allows me to use a variety of sources of data that will determine the consistency of its findings, as well as their internal and external validity. However, it can be argued that by solely studying this specific case, very little can be known about *general* television production practices under state control in Colombia. I am aware that this can be a limitation for the results presented in this study, but as previously noted, most local and regional public TV channels in Colombia follow not only Señal Colombia's practices, but are also regulated by the same laws, and, indeed, they often obtain commissions from the channel, a situation that allows them to mirror or adapt their own practices to Señal Colombia's requirements. Therefore, by understanding Señal Colombia's dynamics, a lot can be extrapolated about the Colombian public media system.

This case study is not only representative for the country and the Latin American region, where several TV channels share similar features with Señal Colombia (Arroyo, Becerra, Castillejo, & Santamaria, 2013), but it also adds to existing literature on dynamics of creative labour, where very few studies have focused on the production of public service television in small, Global-South' or non-Anglo countries. Therefore, this study not only contributes to the field by decentralising academic knowledge, but also, as Waisbord and Mellado suggest, weighs the suitability of "Western" theories and

frameworks to understand and define regional processes and phenomena (2014, p. 362) in other national and regional contexts.

It has been argued that one limitation of a case study approach is the lack of systematic procedures for data collection; that it is impossible to cover all the issues related to the case, and that there might be an excess of 'subjective' or non-replicable accounts, or data that is difficult to verify (Yin, 2003). However, Margaret Stacey's classical defence of "any piece of sociological research" upholds that any social setting can be studied as a local system or as communities of interest, as long as they "make it possible either (i) to test already existing propositions or (ii) to explore for hypotheses within a given conceptual framework. In particular one must expect that those studies should provide data in answer to questions about how particular aspects of society work" (Stacey, 1969, p. 134). Accordingly, data in this study does not derive from one single method, it is triangulated with other methods that reinforce the validity of the data collected. Material is consistently cross-checked and referenced, to facilitate the establishment of a reliable narrative. Furthermore, 'subjective' views and interpretations are, in fact, a major source of qualitative and experiential data, since this study addresses producers' perceptions, interactions and negotiations within the context surrounding their work. Therefore, participants' answers and the researcher's process of analysing the context strongly inform the results of this study: "The detailed observations in the case study method enable us to study many different aspects, examine them in relation to each other, view the process within its total environment and also use the researchers' capacity for '*verstehen*' (understanding human behaviour)" (Gummesson, 1989, p. 86). The overall question informing this thesis is strongly rooted in a qualitative case study approach, but the sub-questions are also connected to the specific methods that inform each of them. In the following section, these methodologies are reviewed in accordance with their relevance to and relationship with the research sub-questions. Participant observation of producers in their day-to-day activities; interviews with producers and other subjects involved in public service television, and focus groups with below-the-line practitioners are used to describe and interpret how public service television is produced under state control in Colombia.

3.3.1. Participant Observation

In addition to interviews, participant observation is likewise a common method to generate ethnographic data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This method is particularly useful in studying culture, norms, practices and customs that are revealed through researcher immersion in the routines of the participants of the study (Jorgensen, 1989). This method becomes more useful when supplemented with other methods; the researcher would then be able to inform a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated (Merriam, 2014, p. 136). One advantage of participant observation is that it proves highly useful in cases where very little is known about the research topic; it also helps provide better-informed reports than merely relying on self-reports from the participants. Additionally, it is a method that permits the researcher to gain “an intimate knowledge of (the) area of study that greatly reduces validity error” (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 80).

However, as argued by Merriam (2014), there are certain drawbacks associated with this method, such as the extent of the researcher’s subjective involvement with the participants and the situation observed, and how the researcher’s emotions may “contaminate” the analysis; or that participants might change their natural behaviour as a response to the presence of the researcher -Hawthorne Effect (Jones, 1992). This is based on the mistaken assumption that research should be wholly ‘objective’, and uncontaminated by any prior assumptions. However, all research is driven by preconceived assumptions, values and concepts – however minimally applied (Sayer, 2002). As stated earlier, this study acknowledges the researcher’s subjectivity and that every kernel of information is sifted not only through the researcher’s comprehension, but also through her personal experience as a former practitioner in the Colombian public media system. This subjective standpoint does not necessarily diminish an objective analysis of the case. On the contrary, it will help obtain a more refined and nuanced understanding. Further, the rigour in the process of data collection and analysis also vouches for the validity of the data. Participant observation was adopted in this study to obtain in-depth information about daily production practices, information that could also be collected through other methods, but can only be corroborated by being there, where and when it is taking place. Through participant observation, this study

offers answers to the sub-questions related to daily television production practices in Señal Colombia, and how these practices are related to discourses about cultural work and public service provision under state control. This method enabled a comparison between what producers say they do and what they actually do.

This is the most accurate method for revealing the significant details of daily media practices, details that not only contain the specificities of the job, but also the ways producers and individuals assume them and give them significance, because, as Hansen and Machin state: “(this method is) a powerful way to reveal and understand instances of human behaviour by placing them in cultural context and particularly as a way to draw out values and beliefs that otherwise often remain tacit, and therefore undetectable by other methods” (2013, p. 60). The participants who were observed work as commissioning editors, independent producers, managers, deputy-managers, directors, production assistants, presenters, cameramen and researchers; all them were observed in their natural contexts of work, be these offices or during fieldwork. This method informed about their behaviours and interactions within the organisation; their daily dynamics, and power roles. Specifically, it provided evidence of the presence of governmental discourses in daily practices; the presence of the notion of public and public value in production practices; negotiations of agency and power; agenda-setting, and role performing. It lasted over 12 weeks, taking place between November 2013 and February 2014.

3.3.2. In-depth Interviews

According to Grix (2010), interviews offer more flexibility for data collection since they provide for unexpected perspectives on the topic, as well as new ways of approaching it. In this study, in-depth interviews informed data for the sub-questions about notions of public value, producers’ interpretation of the relationship between the government and the channel, and how that relationship enables or disallows the exercise of their autonomy; and information about the producers’ perceptions of their own role within the public media system. In-depth interviews are a widely-used method to generate descriptions and interpretations of people’s worlds (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). This method allows the researcher to “talk to those who

have the knowledge of or experience with the problem of interest. Through such interviews, researchers explore in detail the experiences, motives, and opinions of other and learn to see the world from perspectives other than their own" (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013, p. 178). Similarly, Newcomb (1999) states that, through interviews, an important range of perspectives on the topic under study can emerge. He argues that participants approached through this technique, especially those who have been involved in the context studied for many years, "are able to point to changes caused by technological, financial or regulatory factors. In this way, they actually do some of the researcher's comparative work; one of the pleasures of interviewing is to discover how analytically aware practitioners are" (1999, p. 101).

Amongst the advantages of collecting data through in-depth interviews figure the detailed information collected and the quality of the face-to-face interaction, which cannot be obtained by other methods. This method allows the researcher to gain insight about opinions, motivations, and other personal or subjective considerations by the participant on any given topic. Nonetheless, disadvantages for this method include the fact that it is a very time-consuming process; several topics can emerge and it becomes difficult to compare it to other participants' responses; additionally, due to the size of the sample, results are unlikely to be generalized to similar populations; a further risk is the tendency of the researcher to "over-identify" with participants or "go native". However, in acknowledging the negative connotation of this approach, the researcher must emphasize her own reflexivity, working on her "analytic distance", as Green puts it: "insider researchers need to start by getting into their own heads; recognizing the ways in which they are like and unlike their participants; knowing which of their social identities may advantage and/or complicate the process." (2014, p. 5).

In this study, the subjects observed during the participant observation were also interviewed, in order to compare their accounts with some of their actions observed in the workplace. This was done to identify consistency or dissonance between people's understandings and their actions. However, it should be noted that there will not necessarily be a consistency between these elements regardless, but this is the most revealing feature of the empirical data, especially regarding power and reflexivity in the organisation, for example. Representatives from the government were equally

interviewed, to collect data regarding the official view of the relationship between the government and the channel. All the interviews were semi-structured and not-standardized, meaning that questions were customized according to the participant's position or expertise, granting the interviewees the freedom to address matters important to them, while the interviewer could also focus and guide the topic of the interview in line with the interests of the study. This process was held over a period of three months, during which 46 subjects participated, all them currently or formerly related to Señal Colombia. As already asserted, the interviews were not structured, but addressed topics related to each participant's experience in the media field; their motivations to enter the field and how they went about it; the satisfactions they obtained from it; their perceptions on the role of Señal Colombia in society; their narratives on the relationship between the government and the channel; and other questions that addressed the specificities of the participants' current relationship with both the channel and the government.

3.3.3. Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted to collect data about producers' perceptions and attitudes towards the relationship between Señal Colombia and the government. This method was carried out in two phases: the first consisted of an initial round with six participants at the very outset of the fieldwork. During this round, questions were asked regarding their understanding and interpretations of their own role, as well as their perception of the control exerted by the government. The second round was held after the participant observation had finalised, once the participants were more accustomed to the presence of the researcher. During the second phase, the same participants were yet again asked the same questions from the first phase, and some data from the participant observation was included, to permit a comparison of the two answers and prompt further reflective discussion.

In a focus group, participants who share similar characteristics or thematic interests are required to talk about a certain subject; here, the researcher does not act as an interviewer but as a facilitator. According to Lunt and Livingstone (1993), this technique is very useful for understanding social discourses and values about a particular topic.

For this method, I chose production assistants and others performing similar below-the-line duties. The fact that they were situated at the same level in the production hierarchy created a more relaxed atmosphere for conversation, eliminating the fear of speaking or revealing their true feelings in front of their superiors. Focus groups, being comprised of people who share characteristics and who might agree or disagree in their opinions on different matters, allow the researcher to create an environment “of stimulation of (daily conversational) routines but relatively inaccessible communicative contexts which can help us discover the processes by which meaning is socially constructed through every day talk” (Lunt & Livingstone, 1993, p. 9).

Whilst conducting the first day of participant observation, while simply taking a look around the spaces and circulation inside the channel’s facilities, I identified potential participants for the focus groups. These participants put me in contact with other potential participants for the same method. I spoke with each one in person, describing the objectives of my research, how I expected to collect the data and how their privacy would be respected, as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any given time without any explanation. In total, six participants agreed to participate in the focus group sessions. The participants were urged to keep everything they heard during these sessions confidential (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). The method of focus groups proved to be the best way to elicit information from below-the-line workers, because whenever I approached them with the intention of setting a date for a formal interview, they were elusive and wary, but once they were in groups, they gained confidence by having colleagues alongside who supported their opinions. I noticed this every time I approached them individually during lunch time at the canteen; they seemed to feel intimidated and fearful of being seen with me, but if they were in pairs or in groups, they were more open and less defensive, and suddenly willing to share their perceptions of the work, whether they had an opportunity to praise it or complain about it. Additionally, as they work for independent companies producing contents commissioned by the channel, and since they have more than one job, it was challenging to find any availability in their busy schedules. I then decided how to conduct both focus groups with a team of below-the-line workers based in Señal Colombia’s premises: it was easier for them to see me during their lunch break, so we set a date and met in a

small square just outside the channel (they frequented this place to meet and chat over a cigarette when they could), and conducted the focus group there. Interestingly, below-the-line workers felt more comfortable in groups, whereas when I suggested this method to commissioning editors, they rejected the idea, as most of them preferred to remain anonymous and keep their opinions from their peers, fearing political retaliations. This is not the case for below-the-line workers, all of whom are freelancers.

There are certain difficulties associated with the use of focus groups, one being the major risk of having an assertive participant who dominates the discussion; also, as noted by Smithson, there is “the likelihood of group dynamics obscuring some of the more controversial perspectives, for example the tendency for participants to reproduce normative discourses” (2000, pp. 103-104). I encountered this second situation, particularly during the first focus group, when participants were reluctant to offer their personal views and continually reproduced the ‘official’ discourse on what the channel does. However, during the second phase, once they were confronted with the answers they gave in the first phase, most of them became more open and communicative, as seen in the analytical chapters. This method allowed the study to gain insights into the group interaction, and the realities as they are defined in a group context (Frey & Fontana, 1993). Due to the participants’ characteristics, these focus groups informed the details of programme production and how the relationship between the channel and the government is perceived below-the-line. This useful supplement enhanced comprehension of TV practitioners’ understanding of their role within the public television industry; how they manage the relationship with the government; how they construct their own idea of the audience; and how they value their role in the production of culture. Throughout two sessions, the participants shared their opinions, perceptions, frames of reference and attitudes towards their daily work routines.

3.4. Sampling, Recruiting and Access

The process of gathering data is vital to research, not only because the information collected informs the evaluation and analysis of the phenomenon studied, but also because the process of collecting data itself can determine and shape the outcome. In

this study, due to the potential volume of data that could be generated by the three above-mentioned methods, it was essential to establish from the onset certain concrete criteria for selecting and recruiting participants. Initially, through purposive sampling, certain potential candidates for an in-depth interview were selected. In purposive sampling, the researcher deliberately selects an informant based on his/her qualities, by virtue of relevance, knowledge or experience. The researcher determines beforehand the desirable characteristics of potential interviewees, according to the topic to be studied (Bernard, 2002). This sampling technique was used to select government representatives, former Señal Colombia employees and independent producers.

Each potential participant was approached by e-mail, with a tailored letter explaining the purposes of the study and the relevance of their potential contribution. Upon receiving an affirmative reply, a meeting would be scheduled. Prior to the interview, each participant read and signed a form stating their consent. Some of them, notably independent producers, suggested the names of other potential participants, who were then contacted by telephone or by mail for a similar process. I managed to secure my first participants thanks to my prior relation with the media field; by then they had known me for several years even though we had not worked together. They also provided me with additional names of potential participants.

Although this snowball sampling is most commonly used to reach members of concealed populations (Atkinson & Flint, 2001), which was not necessarily the case, it proved the efficacy of this network in finding respondents who not only met the required characteristic, making them relevant for the study, but who were also willing to participate despite their relationship with the referring contact. However, it must be recognised that anonymity issues could well ensue from this technique, with certain participants recruited following a referral by other participants, albeit the referring participants never learned whether their referees ended up being contacted, or not. In addition, each in-depth interview was individual and participants' responses and identities were anonymized and concealed.

In-depth interviews were also applied to certain subjects in the participant observation, but the process of recruiting them was slightly different. I approached them a fortnight after beginning the participant observation, they were singled out due to their experience and role within the organisation. By the completion of the fieldwork, 46 subjects had participated. Table 2, below, summarizes some of their demographic characteristics, with information from it extracted into four figures (see Figure 2 to 5)

Descriptor	Gender	Age	Job Position	Social class	Monthly Income GBP	Years of Experience	High Education
IV1	M	30-39	Independent Producer	Middle	500-1000	5-10	Private
IV2	F	50-59	ANTV Representative	Middle	>5000	25-30	Private TOP
IV3	F	30-39	Programmer	Middle	1000-1500	10-15	Private
IV4	F	40-49	Sub Manager	Upper	2500-3000	15-20	Private TOP
IV5	M	40-49	Independent Producer	Middle	1500-2000	15-20	Private
IV6	M	40-49	Freelancer Director of Photography	Middle	1000-1500	15-20	Technical
IV7	F	40-49	Former Delegate Producer	Upper	2500-3000	20-25	Private TOP
IV8	F	40-49	Executive Producer	Middle	1500-2000	15-20	Private TOP
IV9	F	40-49	Ministry of Culture Representative	Upper	2500-3000	15-20	Private TOP
IV10	F	40-49	Executive Producer	Middle	1000-1500	15-20	Technical
IV11	M	30-39	Independent Producer	Middle	500-1000	15-20	Private
IV12	F	40-49	Executive Producer	Upper	1500-2000	15-20	Private
IV13	M	30-39	Independent Producer	Lower	1000-1500	5-10	Technical
IV14	M	30-39	Independent Producer	Middle	1500-2000	15-20	Public TOP
IV15	M	60-69	Independent Producer	Upper	2500-3000	>35	Private TOP
IV16	M	60-69	Independent producer	Upper	2500-300	30-35	Private
IV17	M	40-49	Commissioning Editor	Middle	1500-2000	15-20	Private
IV18	M	40-49	Freelancer Director	Upper	1500-2000	20-25	Public TOP
IV19	M	30-39	Freelancer	Lower	500-1000	10-15	Public TOP
IV20	M	40-49	Commissioning Editor	Middle	500-1000	0-5	Private
IV21	M	40-49	Coordinator	Middle	2500-3000	10-15	Private
IV22	M	40-49	General Producer	Middle	1500-2000	15-20	Technical
IV23	M	50-59	Programmer	Middle	1500-2000	20-25	Private TOP
IV24	F	40-49	Commissioning Editor	Middle	1500-2000	15-20	Public TOP
IV25	F	40-49	Executive Producer	Middle	1500-2000	15-20	Private
IV26	F	30-39	Executive Producer	Middle	1500-2000	5-10	Private
IV27	M	40-49	Commissioning Editor	Middle	1500-2000	20-25	Public TOP
IV28	M	40-49	Former Programmer SC	Middle	1500-2000	15-20	Private TOP
IV29	F	40-49	Former Coordinator	Middle	2500-3000	20-25	Public TOP
IV30	F	40-49	Commissioning Editor	Middle	1500-2000	15-20	Public TOP
IV31	M	40-49	Commissioning Editor	Middle	1500-2000	15-20	Public
IV32	M	50-59	Independent Producer	Middle	1500-2000	20-25	Private
IV33	F	60-69	ANTV Representative	Upper	>5000	30-35	Public TOP
IV34	M	40-49	Ministry of Culture Representative	Middle	1500-2000	20-25	Public TOP
IV35	M	40-49	Freelancer Presenter	Upper	1500-2000	5-10	Private
IV36	F	50-59	Former Sub Manager	Upper	1500-2000	25-30	Private TOP
IV37	F	30-39	Commissioning Editor	Middle	1500-2000	10-15	Private
IV38	F	30-39	Ministry of Culture Representative	Middle	1500-2000	10-15	Private
IV39	M	60-69	Former independent producer	Upper	1500-2000	20-25	Public TOP
FG Participant 1	M	30-39	Freelancer Production Assitant	Lower	500-1000	5-10	Technical
FG Participant 2	F	20-29	Freelancer Researcher	Middle	500-1000	0-5	Private
FG Participant 3	F	20-29	Freelancer Researcher	Lower	500-1000	5-10	Technical
FG Participant 4	M	30-39	Freelancer Production Manager	Lower	1000-1500	15-20	Technical
FG Participant 5	F	20-29	Freelancer Field producer	Lower	500-1000	5-10	Technical
FG Participant 6	F	30-39	Freelancer Production Manager	Middle	500-1000	5-10	Public TOP
FG Participant 7	F	20-29	Freelancer Production Assistant	Middle	500-1000	5-10	Private

Table 2 Participants Demographic Information

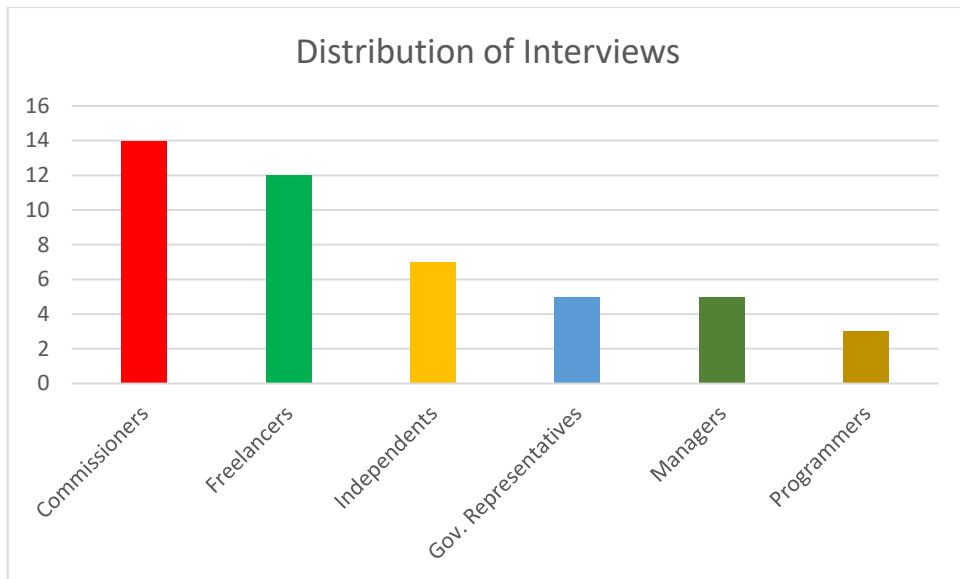


Figure 2 Distribution of Interviews

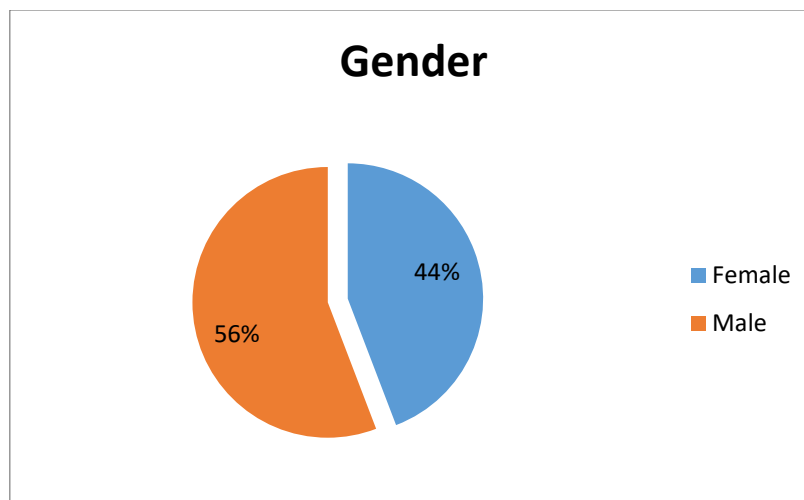


Figure 3 Gender of Participants

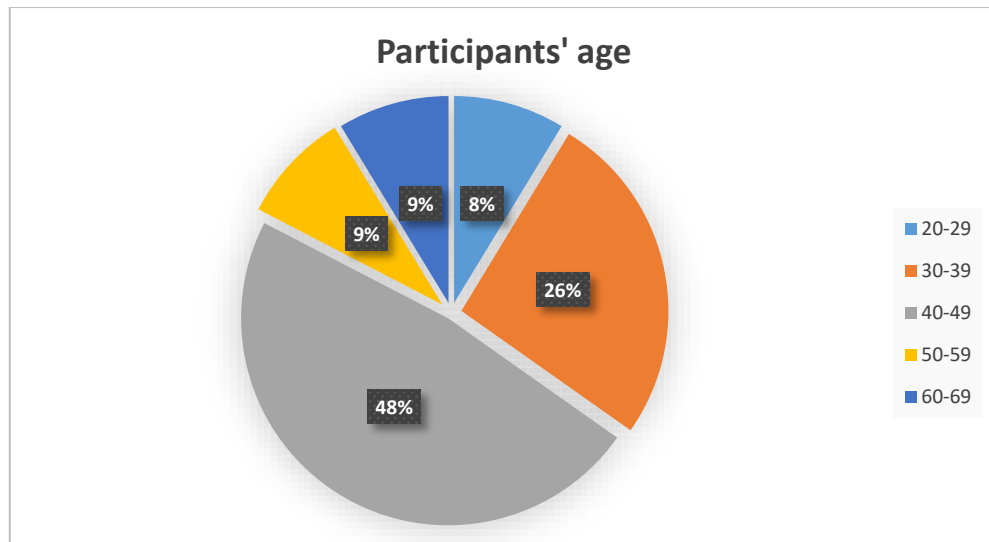


Figure 4 Age of Participants

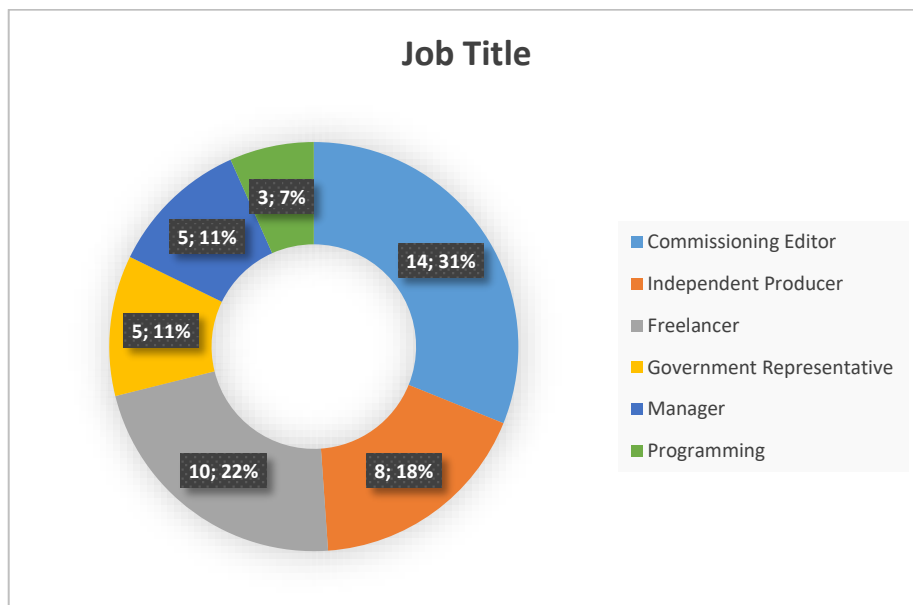


Figure 5 Job Position of Participants

Simultaneously with the process of approaching potential participants for the in-depth interviews, it was necessary to gain access to Señal Colombia, in order to conduct the participant observation. Since the channel is a governmental office, I required the help of a gatekeeper to gain access, and it was through his good graces that I was actually able to approach practitioners at the channel. As noted by Hammersley and Atkinson, attaining the gatekeepers' support is even more important than merely getting their help to gain access (2007). After the gatekeeper allowed me access to the premises, he informally introduced me to the team and explained the purpose of my presence.

During this introduction he did not mention that I once worked for the industry; only stating I was a PhD student researching how Señal Colombia produces TV, and that I would be going around, talking to them and taking notes on what I saw. In hindsight, this could have made me seem like a novice in media matters, or an inspector, but with every interview or interaction with participants, they realised that I was certainly neither of the two.

Although I had done some work destined for Señal Colombia, I never worked for the channel directly. Hence most of the participants did not know me personally, though they could identify my experience through the questions I posed; at some point or other they grasped that I had a deep knowledge of the industry and its dynamics, and that they needn't educate me on the basics of TV production. Indeed, once they realised this, several became much more open about disclosing their true perceptions, leaving aside the normative narratives and corporate discourses on public TV production. I never kept my previous professional experience from them, but I did not feel the need to bring it up every time I introduced myself. However, those who knew me from my previous posts helped me contact other potential participants, introducing me as a former colleague; when this happened, it made no difference to the participant's attitude vis-a-vis my presence or my requests.

Whilst I worked as a producer for local and regional channels, I envisaged Señal Colombia as the pinnacle of my career, not only because of the degree of recognition among colleagues, but also because it was said your earnings would greatly increase if you managed to land a job as commissioning editor there. Furthermore, the channel is often quoted as a parameter of "good television" by independent news reports¹⁴, and is equally mentioned in literature about public service media provision in the country, where authors (Rincón & Barbero, 2001; Arango, 2009; Barbero, et al., 2009; Arroyo, Becerra, Castillejo, & Santamaria, 2013; Rincón, 2013) acknowledge the channel's efforts in producing high-minded contents. These reasons likewise weighed in the selection of the case study.

¹⁴ See, for example: Revista Semana, ¿Calidad o Rating?, 2007; de la Rosa, La Tele Invisible, 2007; Rincón, Señal Colombia / El otro lado, 2012; Revista Semana, *La fórmula de Señal Colombia*, 2015; Rincón, La Doble Moral de la Televisión, 2015

Therefore, I strive to collect data that offers additional information on media production processes in a Global South country based on this particular case study, and thence contribute to the available literature in the fields of media industry and creative labour studies. Furthermore, my intention is to contribute to the existent literature regarding the production of PSB and creative labour, neither of which have, as yet, considered challenging contexts such as producing under stringent government control. As stated earlier, I consider that there has been insufficient scholarly attention paid to the characteristics and conditions under which public service media operate in Colombia and in the wider Latin American region. Even though extensive research has been carried out on the interaction between politics and media in Latin American countries (Fox, 1988; Fuenzalida, 2001; Fox & Waisbord, 2002; McChesney, 2008; Curran, et al., 2014; Garzón Barreto, 2015), the consequences of the relationship between the state and government-owned media, and its implications for production practices and outcomes, have not yet been addressed.

Throughout this study, I strive to develop a self-reflexive process, in which I query my own perceptions and preconceptions of the field when confronted with the data; or as Dewey expresses it: “to reflect is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capital stock of intelligent dealing with further experiences. It is the heart of intellectual organization and of the disciplined mind” (1998, p. 110). Discipline, rigour, and a critical attitude are thus prerequisites for the researcher, to be able to identify one’s own position and thus recognize when the research process is being influenced by it (Pillow, 2010). Due to my former activities in the industry, I now have a deeper knowledge of how things are, but also an urge to offer a critical approach to what it is like to be a producer in an industry under state control. Hence, as a researcher, my own subjectivity regarding my past experience will make a significant contribution to understanding the phenomenon; this distinctive feature, according to Cresswell (2012), is not a weakness but a strength: “researcher’s own background shape their interpretations and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural and historical experiences” (Creswell J., 2012, p. 25). Acknowledging my own subjectivity regarding the scope of my research is the first step to place my

axiological beliefs in the branch of interpretivism. Hence, *validity* in my research proposal is supported by the comprehensive data I collected.

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

Once the selected methods had been applied, there was a vast amount of data to be reduced. The entire process, from reducing the information to presenting the findings, comprised three phases: firstly, the responses from the focus groups recordings were transcribed and the most significant answers were translated from Spanish into English; relevant extracts from the interviews were equally transcribed and translated; field notes from the participant observation were also transcribed. Secondly, since the data collected was determined by the research questions, all the responses were classified into the themes covered by these questions, thus offering an initial thematic coding for the answers. Finally, following multiple readings and interpretations of the data, new themes emerged.

3.5.1. Thematic Analysis and Coding

According to Fereday and Cochrane (2006), thematic analysis is “a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon. The process involves the identification of themes through careful reading and re-reading of the data. It is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories of analysis” (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, pp. 3-4). In the same vein, Braun and Clarke state that it is a research method “that minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (2006, p. 4). The purpose of using thematic analysis in this study is to classify the resulting data through a transparent, consistent and rigorous coding strategy, and to generate classifications that enable capturing the complexity of the phenomenon of producing public service television under state control in Colombia. Here, I followed the procedure for thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87), which is formed by the following stages:

- . Transcription of data

- . Generating initial codes
- . Searching for themes
- . Reviewing themes
- . Defining and naming themes
- . Producing the report

3.5.1.1. Transcription

This mechanical task was the lengthiest and also time consuming, but essential for the purposes of the study. However, it was possible to start a preliminary analysis of the raw data during the transcription process, by adding notes and grouping the responses together, creating a comprehensive picture of the case. Additionally, the fact that I, the researcher, was at the same time the transcriber, not only guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, it also helped to avoid common transcription pitfalls, such as misinterpretation or errors caused by jargon or language barriers (Easton, McComish, & Greenberg, 2000). Then, I proceeded to categorise large sections of information into nodes. During the first stage of this phase, I used suitable software for data management and analysis, in which data was categorised into pre-selected nodes. These nodes were identified by the theoretical framework used to formulate the research questions.

3.5.1.2. Generating Initial Codes: from Cultural Work Studies to Public Value Management

In order to generate codes that would help me to clarify the data, I drew on Banks et al.'s (2013) account of the most relevant and common features of cultural work, and on Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) categorisation of the characteristics of "good work". To classify topics related to all things public, I used Mark Moore's elaboration of the notion of public value creation, in which the practices of both organisation and employees are expected to contribute to a better experience for the citizens that make use of the services provided by that organisation (Moore, 1995). Banks et al. (2013) give an account of the continuous challenges faced by cultural workers nowadays, which they summarized as four problems:

1. Precariousness
2. Inequalities in the workforce

3. A celebratory idea of cultural work

4. Invasion of private life

All of them compiled into the terms “individualization, precarity, immateriality and self-exploitation” (p.4, 2013). These themes were prevalent throughout the participants’ responses, hence this categorization helped construct more specific nodes to reduce the data. Furthermore, seeking a perspective that did not emphasize the challenges but, rather, focused on the ideal scenarios for cultural work, I used Hesmondhalgh and Bakers’ conceptualization of the notion of good work as the combination of “autonomy, interest, sociality, self-esteem, self-realization and security” (2011, p. 31), whose outcomes promote aspects of common good, that is to say, should be beneficial for society in general, which resonates with the goal of public value creation. Therefore, the set of nodes that followed were based on this concept, which is used to denominate the building and strengthening of institutional trust and legitimacy through the organisation’s commitment to working for the common good (Moore, 1995); it is what public service broadcasters have been seeking to use as the most outstanding justification for their continuity; their role in the promotion and conservation of national and cultural features, as well as their existence as a living example of freedom of expression, are what validates their need for public funding (BBC Trust, 2012; Lowe, 2016; RISJ, 2016). With Khagram (2004), Moore developed a test to evaluate the public value of a given project under what they named a ‘strategic triangle’ which includes the public value it sought to produce, support and legitimacy, and operational capabilities (2004, pp. 5-6). In the authors’ words, this model can be applied to organisations “that depend on maintaining a certain kind of social credibility and legitimacy in order to be successful in consumer and investor markets” (2004, pp. 1). Following Moore’s scheme for *public value creation* (Moore & Khagram, 2004), the data was also categorised into the following nodes:

- The public value being sought and produced: its internal definitions; autonomy;
- Support and legitimacy: power and control;

- Operational capabilities: working relationships; assessment practices; professionalism and professionalization.

Some of Moore and Khagram's indicators of public value can also be found in features associated to cultural work and good work in particular, such as autonomy and working relationships. But Moore and Khagram's model provides elements for the analysis of more macro structures involved in the perception and experience of the work, such as issues of power and control; a combination of these two perspectives helped attain a holistic understanding of these aspects in the context under study, and in so doing, offered further insights into cultural work for a public service media provider by emphasizing how, through daily practices, producers create and add public value to what they do. In the initial coding stage, the three elements of Khagram and Moore's model became nodes and were used as an encompassing indicator for the remaining categories, which also gather significant indicators from the cultural work field.

Although a set of categories from cultural work and public value theory were predetermined to guide this study's data collection, those categories were not fixed, and they simply offered a preliminary structure as a starting point for data analysis. The data collected from in-depth interviews, participant observation and focus groups represented a vast amount of information that could only be reduced through coding strategies. Data reduction is subject to deductive analysis, which, according to Patton (Neuman, 2014, p. 214), allows the researcher to "discover themes, patterns, and categories". During the first step of reduction, data underwent a process of *open coding*, in which themes and concepts were identified and grouped under a distinctive label, which became the primary source for the next stage in the analysis process. By this stage, the data was summarized under the research questions. A similar procedure was followed for each source of data. Next, using the NVivo data management programme, relevant extracts from the responses were highlighted and coded into the nodes that had resulted from the theoretical framework.

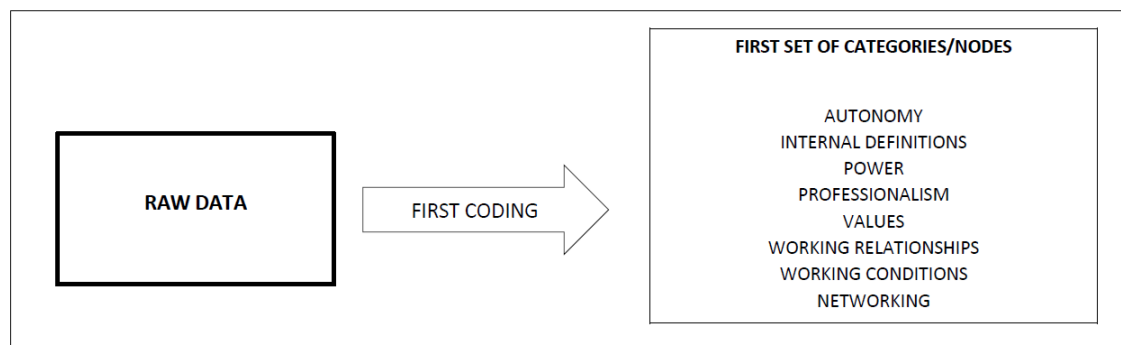


Figure 6 First Stage of Coding

3.5.1.3. Searching for Themes

During this first stage, new themes emerged, some of which were directly related to the initial categories, while others were new, but relevant. In Table 3, below, it can be seen how numerous new themes emerged from the initial coding:

Table 3 Second Stage: Emerging Themes

FIRST SET OF NODES		SECOND STAGE
CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES
Public Value sought to produce	Internal definitions	Audiences do not acknowledge the existence of the channel, commissioning editors assume the role of audiences; state commercial and industrial enterprise; high-minded programming; need for a Public Service TV act; no desire to raise controversy; social profitability; value creation; government apathy; education; creating and strengthening cultural identity.
	Autonomy	Present proposals any time of the year; tell stories they enjoy; creative autonomy; allowed to make suggestions; self-censorship; autonomy under government terms.
Support and Legitimacy	Power	Follow high standards; discipline; creative autonomy; experimentation; commitment; more paperwork than television production; co-production; administrate or delegate productions; independent productions; international awards as recognition; internal and sectorial recognition; production manual; self-censorship.
Operational Capabilities	Working relationships	Team solidarity; not raising controversy; politically correct; white contents; no news programmes; no controversy; lack of planning; selection processes; changing programming grid; no strategic scheduling; poor ability to respond; low political profile, production manual; need for a Public Service TV Act; need for greater autonomy for the ANTV; scheduling regulations; apathy; slowness; bureaucracy; administrative inefficiency; short-term contracts; dead months; outsourcing; freelancers; paperwork overload; scant job protection; exploitation of freelancers; little division of labour; short schedules for production; low budgets; co-production market; family; friendship.
	Professionalism and Professionalization	Discipline; high-minded programmes; high quality standards; self-regulation; awareness of the organisation's aims; lack of unions; lack of planning; experience; auteur television; promote the qualification of the sector; partnerships; family; friendship.
	Assessment Practices	Ratings; rankings; social profitability; impact; international awards; participation in festivals; social media feedback; downloads; regions visited; budget spending; international sales; number of programmes; sectorial recognition; convenience and opportunity reports; monthly reports; transparency; annual performance evaluation; budget spending; selection committees; curators; public tender offers; pitches.

Following the process of open-ended coding, the resulting labelled themes were analysed under a different perspective, looking for relations between data. This process is called *axial coding* and was described by Neumann (2014) as the process in which “you ask about causes and consequences, conditions and interactions, strategies and processes. You look for categories or concepts that cluster together” (p. 483).

3.5.1.4. Reviewing Themes

Since most of the themes overlapped and were repetitive, they were linked according to their similarities and the relationships between them, then they were reduced once again, refined. This process of qualitative data analyses revealed several overarching themes across the three methods (Table 4).

Table 4 Third Stage: Identifying Overarching Themes

FIRST SET OF NODES		SECOND STAGE	THIRD STAGE
CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES	EMERGING THEMES	OVERARCHING THEMES
Public Value sought to produce	Internal definitions	Audiences don't know their existence; CEs assume the role of audiences; State commercial and industrial enterprise; high-minded programming; need a Public Service TV act; no need to raise controversy; social profitability; value creation; government apathy; education; creating and strengthening cultural identity	Purpose Social Profitability Autonomy Self-realisation White Contents
	Autonomy	Present proposals any time of year; tell stories they like; creative autonomy; allowed to make suggestions; self-censorship; autonomy under government terms	
	Participation	Representing others; diversity of topics; no criticism or controversy; white contents; SC is an open door	
Support and Legitimacy	Power	Follow high standards; discipline; creative autonomy; experimentation; commitment; more paperwork than television production; coproduction; administrated or delegate productions; independent productions; international awards as recognition; internal and sectorial recognition; production manual.	Government Apathy Inflexible regulations Political Interference Self-censorship Audience predisposition Recognition
	Working relationships	Team solidarity; not raising controversy; politically correct; white contents; no news programmes; no controversy; lack of planning; selection processes; changing programming grid; no strategic scheduling; poor ability to respond; low political profile, Production Manual; Need for a Public Service TV Act; Need for more Autonomy for the ANTV; scheduling regulations; Apathy; Slowness; bureaucracy; Administrative inefficiency; Short-term contracts; dead months; outsourcing; freelancers; paperwork overload; little job protection; exploitation of freelancers; little division of labour; short schedules for producing; low budgets; co-production market.	Managerial Discontinuity Scarcity of resources Bureaucracy Working relations

Operational Capabilities	Assessment Practices	Ratings; rankings; social profitability; impact; international awards; participation in festivals; social media feedback; downloads; regions visited; budget spending; international sales; number of programmes; sectorial recognition; Convenience and opportunity reports; monthly reports; transparency; annual evaluation of performance; budget spending; Selection committees; curators; public tender offers; pitches	Precarity Assessment practices Inadequate working conditions Self-realisation Professionalism and professionalization Responsibility Individualization
	Professionalism and Professionalization	Discipline; high-minded programmes; high quality standards; self-regulation; Awareness of the organisation aims; Lack of unions; lack of planning; experience; auteur television; promote the qualification of the sector; partnerships	

At this point there were too many categories; it became necessary to combine them into more encompassing groupings. The resulting categories for each group acted as containers of the emerging themes.

3.5.1.5. Defining and Naming Themes

By the end of this process, the resulting overarching themes, or meta-themes, were the labels that would be used as headings to present findings: public value; working conditions, and power. These three themes provide a narrative of the central stages and characteristics of producing public service television under state control in Colombia.

Table 5 Refining Themes

CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES	OVERARCHING THEMES	META - THEMES
Public Value Sought to Produce	Internal definitions Agency Participation	Purpose Social Profitability Autonomy Individualisation White Contents Outcomes	PUBLIC VALUE
Support and Legitimacy	Power	Government Apathy Inflexible Regulations Political Interference Self-censorship Audience predisposition Recognition Networking	POWER

Operational Capabilities	Working Relationships Assessment Practices Professionalism and Professionalization	Managerial Discontinuity Scarcity of resources Precarity Bureaucracy Working relations Assessment practices Individualisation Inadequate working conditions Professionalism and professionalization Recognition Responsibility Networking Motivations Satisfactions	WORKING CONDITIONS GOOD WORK
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In the following chapters, these themes are integrated to the theoretical framework, providing detailed answer to the sub-questions that guided this research. Each meta theme will be developed chapter per chapter.

3.6. Summary

This chapter outlined the research paradigm, methodologies, strategies and design used in the study, including procedures, participants, data collection tools, data collection and analysis methods. The research design for this study was a descriptive and interpretive case study that was analysed largely through qualitative methods, through a process of inductive-deductive analysis. This chapter introduced and discussed the choice of ethnographic methodology as the most suitable for this study.

The ethnographic approach provided an explanation for the case study and producers' experiences and perceptions of the relationship between the government and the channel. The chapter has detailed each phase of data collection and analysis, including sampling. A participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups were conducted, to shed light on producers' perceptions of the relationship between the channel and the government, and how their own practices and organisational dynamics are affected by this relationship.

The following chapters will integrate these findings into the theoretical framework, providing detailed answer to the research questions. My results complement other studies in the growing field of media industry studies, contributing especially to the

existent understanding on the relationship between cultural work and public service media provision, emphasizing how structures of power and control enable or constrain individual creative autonomy.

4. Entering and Remaining in the Colombian Audio-visual Field

I was invited to witness the shooting of a video for a programme on extreme sports. For this episode, we must climb *Morro Azul* Mountain, which is 2,300 meters above sea level. There, we will explore some caves and go kayaking down the *Nechi* River. This will be my first attempt at either sport; I borrowed all the necessary equipment but I am not sure how I am supposed to use it. It is only an hour since we started out towards the mountaintop but I feel dizzy already, and I am having trouble breathing. The paramedic checked my pulse and breathing, and said that I will be fine soon, but I must take long breaks during the ascent. She said that if the light-headedness continues, it could take up to a day for my body to become accustomed to the altitude.

There is a little farm house a few hundred meters away, we go there and ask the owner if we can stay on her porch for an hour or so. She kindly agrees and treats us to coffee and an *arepa* to eat. Gloria, the paramedic, sips her coffee and says that this is her favourite part of the job: experiencing situations and meeting people that she could never do in any other job. Originally she was part of the production crew and performed both roles, as paramedic and field producer, but this all changed when she was involved in an accident when handling the camera while the cameraman was climbing a tree. She stood on a very weak branch and it broke. She suffered some grazes, cuts and bruises, nothing serious, but she had to treat her own injuries. The director realized that they would all be at risk if the paramedic suffered a major injury because she was the only one with first aid training: since then, she can only work as a paramedic.

We left the farm house after an hour and started climbing the mountain very slowly, taking breaks every 20 or 30 minutes. It took us three hours to catch up with the crew. I was worried that they had been without Gloria all this time, but when we reached them they were just finishing shooting the video of two of the travellers sharing their expectations for the expedition. Since Gloria wasn't with them, they decided not to do any risky shots.

Fabio, one of the cameramen, saw me and asked how I was doing with the hypoxia. I said I was fine, that it was just a matter of time for my body to adjust to the altitude. However, I worried that I might become a burden for the production, so it was best for me to say goodbye then and there, not stay with them for the remainder of the shooting (three more days). The cameraman suddenly recalled he had the same problems when he first started working for the programme, "now I'm strong as a bull" he said, laughing. "But it can be very dangerous" he continued "I mean, what if something happens to us? What if we have an accident? We have a paramedic and all, but what if we have a life-changing accident? We have no insurance, we are on our own. That's the peril of this job". I took my phone out and ask: "Can I record this?" "Sure", he replied.

Carlos, one of the camera assistants, was listening to our conversation and added "this is OK while you are still living with your parents and don't have to pay rent and bills. We know that Felipe is trying to pay us good money, but it is not enough to make a living out of this. For example, this weekend I am expecting a phone call about a short film production, but I have no signal up here. You definitely have to look for things to do all the time. At some point, it doesn't look like a career at all. Just ask Natalia.... Natalia!!! Come here!!!" His comment came out of the blue, but it proved that they were taking my presence, and my research, as an opportunity to let others know about their daily struggles.

Natalia is the other camera operator. She was just relaxing on the grass when we called out to her. She came over and said “what do I have to complain about?” Everyone laughed. “Tell her about all the jobs you have done so far”. “All of them?!” Natalia replied. I don’t think I can remember them all!!!” But Carlos insisted: “The point is that we are telling Ale we can’t make a living out of this”. Natalia then replied: “oh, ok, yeah, I see. Ok. You have to do bit and pieces, here and there. I’ve worked as script, make-up artist, production assistant, sound assistant, and director’s assistant, I have even acted!! I’ve never ever had a full time job while doing this, so I’m planning to open a bar with a couple of friends. I have a daughter and I need some stability. I’m also considering studying accountancy, hahaha. Not really, but at some point you realize that all the spice, the thrill of travelling, meeting people, taking selfies with celebrities and so on, is not enough to pay the bills. And it’s our own fault, because most of us have even worked for free, “just for the experience”, and now we are paying the price of that childish decision”.

“I don’t agree, Nat” Fabio replied: “If we don’t participate free of charge in projects we really like, then, are those projects ever going to see the light? I mean, the short films I have “worked” in have all had a very low budget. The producer or the director would never dream of making them if their friends didn’t contribute in kind. Besides, how else will I get people in the industry to know *me* and my work?”

“That’s exactly the problem” Natalia argued, “We keep treating each other as friends, when there should be a professional and legally binding relationship between us. That’s why sometimes your “friends” take advantage of that friendship. You work with them and in the end, they are the only ones who get the credit. Or are you going to deny it? You are just too young to understand what I’m talking about. And you know what? There’s another big problem. There are a lot of people like you, whose parents buy them expensive computers and cameras; since you didn’t pay for anything yourself, you charge nothing for your work, and you are undermining everyone else’s job”.

By this time Natalia was getting overexcited, so I tried to calm things down.

“It’s OK”, Fabio said, “We have had this discussion before”.

I hadn’t noticed but the rest of the crew were all around us, listening to the argument. I looked at Felipe; he seemed concerned. It was obvious that there is tension in the crew. However, the rest of the interviews and shooting proceeded without further problems. No one mentioned the topic for the rest of the day. Thankfully, we got back to town for that first night, from then on they will be camping.

I’m in town now. The next bus to the capital will be in 20 minutes, so I don’t have much time to say good-bye to everyone. As I say farewell to the director, he assures me that not everything is rosy and sweet, that absolutely everybody struggles to make a living out of these short projects. That sometimes he has been forced to take out loans to finish certain episodes, but that the emotional reward is worth it. I ask him to call me when they finish the video, so we can schedule a formal interview. He agrees and goes back to the hostel.

Field notes. November, 2014.

This is the first of four chapters that draw on empirical data from interviews, focus groups, and participant observation at Señal Colombia, the public service television

channel based in Bogota, Colombia. I begin this chapter by exploring the approach of Latin American scholars towards the study of cultural and creative industries, in order to establish the difference between the local perspective on this topic and the Global-North point of view that informs this study. This introductory section leads us to the specificities of my case study context: Señal Colombia, a national public service television channel, which is part of a government entity and, therefore, highly dependent on the government in terms of funding and editorial guidelines. These characteristics make this case study setting completely different to those which are used to understand and explain issues related to cultural/creative work and, hence, it provides a unique opportunity to offer new dimensions to the available knowledge on the topic. A description of the production flows and other specificities at Señal Colombia follows, then I proceed to describe general working conditions in Colombia, and how they are characterized by precarity, with special emphasis on how this is experienced and perceived by cultural/media workers. We will see how precarity, an intrinsic descriptor of cultural work, rightly taken for granted in Anglo studies, takes on a different hue when put into the Colombian context. I also review the backgrounds of people working for Señal Colombia (commissioning editors, independent producers and freelancers), emphasizing how certain socio-economic characteristics influenced the way they entered the audio-visual field in general, and Señal Colombia in particular.

4.1. A Latin American Approach to the Study of Creative Industries

The study of cultural industries in Latin America has grown over the past decade; however, available regional literature does not reveal much about the characteristics of cultural labour, mainly drawing on the cultural sector's contributions to GDP. A recent example of this approach is the newly published global map of the cultural industry, *Cultural times. The First Global Map of Culture and Creative Industries*, by UNESCO, CISAC and E&Y (2015). This report's focus is the statistical impact of the cultural and creative industries on national economies, and the importance of acknowledging the positive outcomes of developing strong strategies for the improvement of the sector. It highlights how recent decades have seen an important increase in the impact of the

orange economy¹⁵ in the region and throughout the world: in 2013, the Culture and Creative Industries (CCI) generated US\$2,250 billion revenues, exceeding “those of telecom services (US\$1,570b globally), and surpassing India’s GDP (US\$1,900b). Within the total, the top three earners are television (US\$477b), visual arts (US\$391b), and newspapers and magazines (US\$354b). With 29.5 million jobs, CCI employ 1% of the world’s active population. The top three employers are visual arts (6.73m), books (3.67m) and music (3.98m)” (UNESCO, CISAC, E&Y, 2015, p. 7).

The report also states that in Colombia, Mexico and Canada, creative industries provide between 5% and 11% of total employment. “Argentina and Colombia rank among the top five exporters of formats and scripts worldwide, along with the UK, the US and Spain. Latin American formats find favour in France, Russia and North America” (EY; UNESCO; CISAC, 2015, p. 63). Statistics are provided that support the need to boost the sector by taking advantage of the cultural and creative tradition, alongside the well-established argument of enhancing trade between countries. On talent, the report draws on Florida’s concept of the “creative class” (2002), asking that it be nurtured: ‘Talent is the lifeblood of cultural and creative industries. According to urban economist Richard Florida, the “creative class,” including designers, artists and high-skilled intellectual workers, acts as an engine of innovation and urban development, structuring creative hubs and networks for the economic, social and cultural development of their native cities and regions’. (EY; UNESCO; CISAC, 2015, p. 9). However, the report does not elaborate on the working conditions of this ‘creative class’.

Villaseñor Anaya (2014), a cultural policies consultant for UNESCO, provides a deeper description of the current state of cultural industries in Latin America. He argues that, as in other parts of the world, the creative economy has been overestimated in terms of its allegedly exponential economic growth, whereas its social impact has not been

¹⁵ Culture Industries in Latin America are represented by what in the region is called the ‘Orange Economy, which “encompasses the immense wealth of talent, intellectual property, interconnectedness, and, of course, cultural heritage of the Latin American and Caribbean region” (Buitrago & Duque, 2013, p. 6). The authors chose to assign this colour to the sector, arguing that “orange has been often associated with culture, creativity and identity. In antiquity, ancient Egyptian artists used an orange pigment (known as *realgar*, a very toxic arsenic sulphur) for the hieroglyphic decoration of the pharaoh’s tombs. Western traditions associate this colour to entertainment and frivolity (often with extroversion and the unconventional). (...) In Hinduism, it is the colour of the Sadhus (holy men wandering around the world) and the orange chakra located in the belly represents the creative power centre of the individual. (...) For the Tupac Kutari of Peru, orange is the colour of society and culture. Orange is also the colour most often associated with fire, and there are countless metaphors about the creative fire and the fires of passion. Because the cultural and creative economy lacks a brand identity, we decided to label it the *Orange Economy*” (2013, pp. 42-45)

sufficiently acknowledged. He states that it is “almost impossible to verify that life conditions have improved for cultural workers as a direct result of the impact of creative economies” (2014, p. 267), to support this, he makes reference to two studies that provide empirical data on the matter. The first was conducted with workers in the cultural sector in Chile, in 2004. The data shows that 42.6% of the respondents lacked a work contract; 30.2% had freelance jobs without any health or social protection from employers. The second study was conducted in Mexico and revealed that cultural workers, identified in the study as *trendsetters* (García-Canclini, 2014), required more than one job to offset the lack of offers: often having a ‘regular’ job that provided 80% of their monthly incomes, whereas their job in the production of culture would only cover the remaining 20%, or was not paid at all. Similar findings were discussed by Ross (2000) more than a decade ago in a study on the economic conditions of Jazz Artists in the USA; Ross found that the dominant employment model for creative workers is “casual employment on project-by-project basis” (p. 10). In a similar tone, drawing on data from the Chilean and Mexican studies, Villaseñor Anaya concludes that:

“Though the Latin American cultural sector has never been distinctive for providing fair working conditions to workers, that trend has been strengthened and rooted by companies in the creative sector that regulate their operations according to market trends. It is that it doesn’t matter that their raw material is cultural because that doesn’t guarantee that the cultural values will predominate over their administrative needs. At some point, becoming a creative worker allows bosses to evade employment protection” (Villaseñor Anaya, 2014, p. 269).

In Colombia, current information on working conditions in the cultural and creative industries relies on general statistics and figures, but there is not enough theoretical development or reflexivity on creative labour. For example, a survey conducted by the *Centro Nacional de Consultoría* for the Ministry of Culture, in 2008, established the need for training personnel in the audio visual sector. The study reports on 196 production companies in the country and provides data about the number of employees, types of contracts, levels of education and years of experience. Though there are intriguing numbers, such as the percentage of temporary employees per company (up to 50% for jobs below-the-line) and the amount of work per year (under seven months for a temporary employee), the analysis focuses on the need to create educational programmes that address the current and future demand for qualified employees in the

sector (Centro Nacional de Consultoría, 2008). This strives to foster more qualified local individuals for an increasingly competitive global field, notwithstanding the low number of job offers compared to the actual number of qualified workers. Similarly, a more recent study examines the impact of training on entrepreneurship for audio-visual businesses development in Bogota; after interviewing 100 participants from small production companies, the study determined that the sector requires further professionalization, to achieve a greater impact on the overall production process, thus having a positive effect on its outcomes (PRANA, 2014). Paradoxically, these studies require better skills to be performed in an increasingly deteriorating working environment.

Throughout the available literature on creative industries in Latin America, and particularly in Colombia, there is little or no reference to working conditions in this sector. It would seem that the notion of relating working conditions to the cultural field is perceived as a contradiction, as if cultural workers were expected to be a different category of people, not to be protected by the same regulations and standards that cover other types of workers. Hence the concept of artistic and creative labour as something mythological and romantic, guided only by the artist's desire for self-expression and public recognition, avoiding any relationship with capital, so that their work is not prostituted (Ross, 2000). The combination of these perceptions has fostered an increase in the expectation that creative workers sacrifice themselves for the "favour" of being allowed to perform their art, or as Conor, Gill and Taylor (2015) put it: "into the vacuum formed by a lack of serious discussion of the culture and creative industries, a powerful stereotype has taken root and flourished. This sees the typical 'creative' as driven by passion to Do What You Love (DWYL), prepared to work for long hours for little or even no pay, and requiring minimal support" (Conor, Gill, & Taylor, 2015, p. 2). This particularity, which could also be the root of the audacious precarity of cultural work, is also known as "the mental labour problem" (Ross, 2000), and will be expanded upon in the following chapter.

This trend was also described by McRobbie, in her study on the features of work and employment in the UK culture industries, as "the rise of the creative subcontractors and the downgrading of creativity" (2002, pp. 518-519). She argues that the cultural sector

is generally characterized by the possibility of expanding one's creative skills outside the 'dullness of a 9-5' job; hence youngsters are keener to explore this field, accepting short-term projects, which are often freelance and casualized. Once in, they realize they need more than one job in order to make a living; however, since they are still in the 'field', these new projects are another opportunity for them to develop their creative self, which Mc Robbie considers a "utopian thread embedded in this wholehearted attempt to make-over the world of work into something closer to a life of enthusiasm and enjoyment" (2002, p. 521).

Both Ross' and McRobbie's work, among others referenced throughout this thesis, represent a Global North¹⁶ approach to, and interest in, creative work, marking a clear contrast with the viewpoint for creative industries studies in Latin America, where debates focus on the macroeconomic angle and the use of cultural texts in social representations. However, such regional debates are aligned with the on-going expansion of policies and discourses regarding creative economies, promoted particularly by the British government since the late 90s, which sought to improve Britain's competitive worldwide position in the sector, through strategic alliances with developing countries to "maximise economic impact ... at home and abroad'... by making the exploitation of intellectual property crucial" (Schlesinger, 2017, p. 77). The global map of cultural industry by UNESCO, CISAC and E&Y (2015) discussed earlier in this chapter, as well as reports from organisations such as the Inter-American Development Bank-IBD (2007) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean – ECLAC (2012), are exemplary of the common regional standpoint to address the topic of cultural and creative industries, emphasizing the region's strengths and weakness for the development of the sector in terms of its impact on GDP, as well as its potential to alleviate unemployment.

Their focus on macroeconomic topics is in stark contrast with Latin American scholars' interests; they do not emphasize numbers and figures but, rather, pursue other

¹⁶ Most of these works have been produced in the United Kingdom, where there is a now settled scholarly tradition of study of the cultural and creative industries that responded to the economic and political impact these industries have had on British societal dynamics since the 1990s. British advances in the cultural and creative sector as a vital part of the economy have been influential in Latin America's introduction of economic and political regulation of culture industries, while knowledge of the academic theory that has accompanied these developments in the UK is also having an impact on the way issues related to creative work are being addressed in developing regions.

interpretations of the sector's effects on various aspects, not only the economic angle. For example, García-Canclini and Piedras express concerns regarding the process of industrialisation in the creation of contents, and how this process undermines the cultural and symbolic value of the creative products (2005). Similar trepidations are conveyed by Rey (2009), who adds the growing interest in screen quotas and copyright laws to the discussion. With an emphasis on television in Colombia, Barreiro (2013) found that scholarly interest has focused on the purposes and usages of television; the challenges for production techniques and viewers' experiences; regulations and policies; and the economic impact of the medium (at the industrial level).

These works followed the tradition initiated in the 80s by Barbero and García-Canclini, who stressed the need for Latin American cultural studies to focus on "the set of practices in concrete settings of production and consumption. Rather than starting with media production or focusing on the underlying meanings of media texts, cultural analysts needed to consider the integration of media content in the creation and re-creation of cultural identities" (Waisbord & Szurmuk, 2011, p. 17) For instance, Barbero considers that there is a need for research that emphasizes TV representations of *colombianness*; representations of social actors; agenda-setting of commercial channels; narratives, and quality. He argues that this represents a map to explore Colombian television, especially if it is acknowledged that "citizens need to know what kind of images can represent the country, because even public channels have been affected by homogenized representations of the country common to private channels; representations that stereotype and diminish the sociocultural and political complexity of the country" (2007, p. 149). Likewise, García-Canclini centred his academic interest on an ethnographic analysis of popular and indigenous cultures in Mexico under the influence of capitalism (1982), focusing not only on the cultural impact of political-economic processes, but also on popular mechanisms of resistance to retain control over local manifestations of culture.

This longstanding Latin American scholarly tradition explains the lack of empirical data on cultural work in the region. In this panorama, further works by García-Canclini and Piedras (2013), and Piñón (2016), stand out due to their insights into this topic. García-Canclini and Piedras conducted a study on Spanish and Mexican youth and their

involvement in cultural practices, focusing on the interface between creativity, urban transformation, precariousness and social networking (2013). Though the study did not focus on working conditions in the cultural industries per se, it found that the increasing industrialization of economy and culture has negatively affected people's experiences, promoting a growing feeling of general discontent. Drawing on Mengers' and McRobbie's' understandings of creative industries dynamics, García-Canclini finds trends of precariousness in the cultural sector:

"Young people have unstable jobs, combine public and private resources, official and unofficial grouping strategies and innovative networks to achieve a certain creative development (...) these creative people must compete among themselves for limited opportunities... (Their) versatility... is facilitated by digital networks, but it is also a 'normalised' requirement due to the flexibility of labour markets and uncertainty about the future jobs" (García-Canclini, 2016, p. 6)

For the author, the specificities of industrialized cultural dynamics mark a "social reorganisation", as we are "entering another stage of social and political development, more unstable and with less durable structures" (2016, p. 11-12). This shift from stable and favourable job conditions towards a more casualized work environment is not only applicable to the cultural industries, but also to work in general. This social reorganisation is what has also been called the New International Division of Labour-NIDL (Fröbel, Heinrichs, & Kreye, 1980; Miller, 2016), and explains how, through practices of outsourcing production to developing countries, production costs are lowered while at the same time "capital accumulation and profit revenues stay close to the conglomerate's homes" (Piñón, 2016).

Following the implications of this NIDL for Latin America, which for decades has been a main producer of outsourced products for global media economies, Juan Piñón (2016) offers an overview of the regional market-oriented television industry based on interviews with senior managers and above-the-line staff from four independent production houses, focusing on the relationship between independent producers and larger communication networks. In his study, Piñón found that there is an asymmetrical relationship between indie houses and television networks, as the former "lack the economic, technological, and labour capacity to produce their own content without the financial backing of a television network or a major sponsor" (2016, p.137-138), which usually forces them to negotiate their creative autonomy in the pursuit of

agreements with the network. Furthermore, Piñón found that independents are non-unionized and lack steady work and benefits, and therefore must “subordinate to the power of national networks and multinational conglomerates” (2016, p.140). Though published in English, Piñón’s work, along with that of García-Canclini and Piedras, establishes a new path for the study of cultural work in Latin America that includes both a political economy focus, along with a much-needed detailed study of the agency of workers from the cultural studies approach. However, neither of these two works addresses the regional public media systems, or their relationship with governments, nor the political effects on the production of public television, which is understandable since public TV in Latin America has no perceptible impact on the region’s economy in terms of raising GDPs, which commercial TV does, although it still plays a major role in the field of cultural production.

To contribute to filling the existing gap with a more analytical description and interpretation of current working conditions for television producers as cultural/creative workers, this chapter examines how creative labour and production is played out in a Latin American, and specifically Colombian, context; by tackling the working conditions under which commissioning editors, independent producers and freelancers perform their tasks for the public TV channel Señal Colombia. In particular, the aim is to investigate their perceptions of their job and analyse the specificities of their field. The following section focuses on the channel’s organisational structure and the way it is linked to government agencies, and how this relationship affects internal processes within the channel. Before proceeding to discovering the producers’ perception of their work, a subsequent section reviews and categorises general working conditions for Colombians as predominantly precarious, a situation which is aggravated when work is independent or informal. This is evidenced through producers’ responses on their working experience while producing public service television, placing the notion of precarity in a particular Colombian context where low wages, instability and lack of job security are daily concerns. Furthermore, class divisions play an important role in how work is experienced, particularly with regard to the opportunities individuals encounter to join the media field, making it harder for members of the middle-class to access better job positions. This last point will be further expanded in the following chapter, on power.

4.1.1. Background: Producing at Señal Colombia

Here I will provide a brief description of Señal Colombia's functions and production model, to establish a more comprehensive frame for the participants' responses. In this study, the term *producers* is used to describe a group of people engaged in connection with a programme. For the purposes of this study, this group comprises commissioning editors, independent producers, executive producers, production assistants, production coordinators, field producers, researchers, and general producers. They are the *creative workers* mentioned by Hesmondhalgh (2007) as the group of individuals involved in audio-visual production. Here, it is necessary to make another distinction between producers above and below-the-line. Since these terms can be found throughout different reports resulting from data collection, I wish to clarify what is meant by them in this particular study, which follows the definition provided by Mayer (2011):

“Whereas the word *professional* in this discourse came to separate those who managed themselves from those who were managed by others, *creativity* more often demarcated intellectual from manual activities. Professionals located “above the line” managed themselves and used their intellectual capacities, as opposed to tradespeople, artisans and others “below the line” who used their manual skills under the control of managers” (2011, p. 4).

This distinction it not meant to grant certain roles greater value over others, but to differentiate each participant's role in the production flow, and how their position in the flow might, or not, influence their responses to my inquiries.

It is important to note that Señal Colombia has two concrete roles set out in their Production Manual (Señal Colombia, 2015): executive producer, and “delegating” producer. Since the latter denomination refers to the functions of a commissioning editor, I intend to avoid any confusion and call them *commissioning editors*. Additionally, as the channel is part of the Colombian Public Media System, under the administration of *Radio Televisión de Colombia* (RTVC), which is a government agency, the roles of both executive producer and commissioning editors were created to audit the process of budget execution. A broader view of the general structure of the channel and RTVC is shown in the following figure:

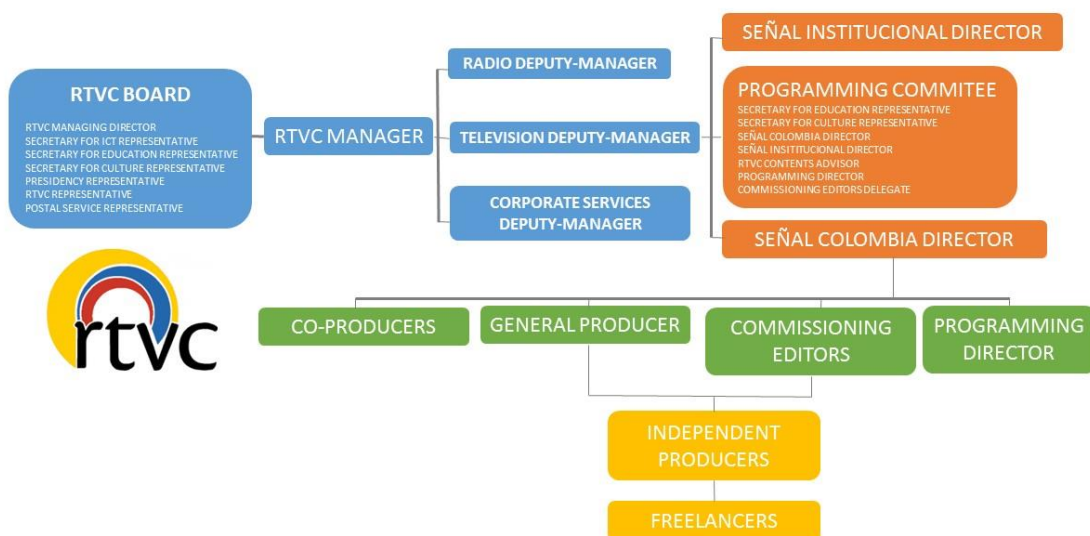


Figure 7 RTVC Organigram

According to the channel's production manual (Señal Colombia, 2015), certain commissioning editors have the functions of executive producers, with their roles divided as follows:

"Commissioning editors apply all the channel's conceptual directions, and supervise the editorial and audio visual development of each project.

Executive producers supervise production models in order to optimize resources, schedules, and the channel's interests, in general.

A commissioning editor and an executive producer are assigned as auditors to each project, in order to monitor and supervise the compliance of agreements.

Commissioning editors are specialized in supporting contents, editorial guidelines and audio-visual language of the projects in their care, whilst the executive producer supervise all the aspects related to the production itself; nonetheless, both work as a team¹⁷ (Señal Colombia, 2015, p. 17.)

Furthermore, since Señal Colombia does not possess its own equipment or a technical crew to produce television, they are obliged to commission all their projects. In addition, they co-produce contents with national and international companies, which submit their ideas every year, following the channel's call for proposals. In this case, the original idea belongs to the proposer, but revenues are shared as per the budget contributed by each

¹⁷ My own translation

co-producer. In summary, the following types of production are available at Señal Colombia:

“Production by request: the purpose is to hire production services to develop a specific project, where RTVC entirely covers the required budget (...) Señal Colombia establishes the budget and cash flow to optimize the use of resources. (...) RTVC alone has the right to exploit this work.

Delegated administration: (...) the delegated administrator assumes the management of a budget established by RTVC. (...) RTVC entirely covers the required budget (...) This is the appropriate method when the budget is to be spent on different types of productions that cannot be sufficiently anticipated, such as special programming, sport competitions, and promotional content. (...) RTVC alone has the right to exploit this work.

Co-production: is a partnership mode in which resources (cash and/or corporate contributions) are provided by RTVC and its partner (co-producer) in previously agreed percentages, to cover the direct and indirect expenses of preproduction, production, and postproduction of a given project. (...) RTVC and its partner determine the percentages of exploitation, according to the resources invested”. (Señal Colombia, 2015, pp. 9-12)

Once a year, Señal Colombia calls for tenders to produce contents for the channel (See figure 8 for details of the tender procedure). These contents are usually predetermined by the government and the channel, with potential bidders then creating proposals that address the channel’s requirements. Occasionally the channel calls for tenders to produce ‘free’ contents, with the intention to provide independent producers with the resources they need to develop their creative ideas, whilst ‘refreshing’ the channel’s scheduling. In this case, the independent producers hold the moral rights, as creators or authors of the content produced by the channel. Notwithstanding the creative proposal belonging to an independent producer, a commissioning editor is assigned to the project from the outset up until it is aired, with the commissioner empowered to suggest, or even request, changes to the creative proposal.

SEÑAL COLOMBIA TENDER PROCESS

There are two types of tenders:

1. **For projects and production:** looks for ideas and proposals from individuals willing to create contents according to preset topics.
2. **For talent and production:** looks for production teams (independent companies) willing to develop/produce contents previously set up by the channel and RTVC.

ESTABLISHING THE NEED

The channel's **Committee of Programming** determines the topics to be addressed by the channel at the end of every year.

FUNDS ARE REQUESTED

To **ANTV** before the call for tenders

AN INVITATION TO TENDER IS PUBLISHED online, uploaded to RTVC and Señal Colombia websites

<http://www.rtv.gov.co/contratacion/etapa-pre-contractual>

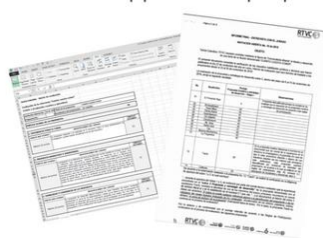


INFO AND PAPERWORK

Every **link** leads the applicants to instructions manuals and official documents related to the tender.

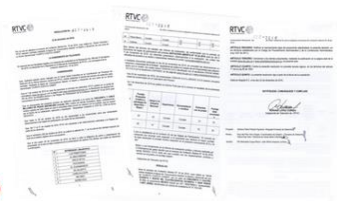
LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Applicants must submit an number of **attachments** to support their proposals



EVALUATION PROCESS

After every stage of the evaluation process there is an **update** on the website.



AWARD OF CONTRACT

After the evaluation process, the decision to award the contract is made, and successful tenderers are notified.



Figure 8 Señal Colombia Tender Procedure

Summarizing, on the one hand there are commissioning editors (CE) hired directly by the channel, and on the other hand, there are independent producers (IP) who were allocated a budget to develop a specific content. Other roles in the production of a creative text are engaged through independent producers or through production companies that do business with the channel. This system of producing apparently opens Señal's doors to anyone interested in producing public service television contents and possessing the requisite paperwork to support their ideas; however, as becomes evident in the following section, working for Señal Colombia as Commissioning Editor, freelancer or independent producer requires much more than good intentions and ideas for new projects.

4.2. Entering the Field

The audio-visual sector is the largest employer among the cultural industries, its contribution to the Colombian economy accounts for approximately 1.57% of GDP. (World Intellectual Property Organization - WIPO, 2008). When graduates and young professionals in the media sector look for a job in television, the Colombian landscape offers a wide range of possibilities. According to the ANTV (2015), in Colombia there are:

FREE TO AIR TV CHANNELS	2 national commercial TV channels 3 national public TV channels 8 regional TV channels 43 local TV channels
PAY TV	61 cable TV operators 735 community TV channels

Table 6. TV Channels in Colombia

As several respondents stated, their first chance at a job in TV came from a commercial channel. The two free-to-air commercial channels in Colombia (Caracol and RCN) have the highest ratings, followed by international channels¹⁸; therefore it is understandable that graduates foresee their careers as professionals working for these channels. Certain

¹⁸ According to the last EGM (General Study of Media), Señal Colombia did not make it to the top 20 channels viewed in Colombia. The first two are Caracol and RCN, followed by international channels on cable TV.

producers and commissioning editors started their careers in the private sector, gradually moving to public TV as they begin to recognise the work opportunities offered by the public sector, and as they realise there are few opportunities for actually developing their own audio-visual ideas and projects when they work for the private sector.

However, this is a very recent development, and many workers who entered the field 20 or 30 years ago faced a very different panorama when they started out in the sector. Before 1990, there were only three national public channels and three regional channels, five additional regional channels were created between 1990 and 1997. There was also cable television, but no private channels. In the early 80s very few universities offered courses in media and communication, while only one offered a degree in film and television production¹⁹. Graduates from these universities were the very first to work as producers, directors, programming directors or other roles for the available channels, thus forming a first generation of university-trained audio-visual practitioners. This first generation also comprised filmmakers and others who studied film production abroad and worked for independent companies. Their access to economic resources which enabled them to either study in private universities, gain access to video recording cameras and video tapes, and/or travel abroad, identifies them as part of a privileged upper class in the Colombian context.

In comparison, someone from a lower or middle-class background might attain the same educational “opportunities”, but only through additional financial help, such as student loans, since only three out of the eight higher-ranked universities offering degrees in Media and Communication are public²⁰. This situation is described in Hudson’s study of Colombia (2010), where he states that middle class families are “just as concerned as

¹⁹ Only two of those universities (Pontifical Xaverian University and University of Antioquia) are currently ranked in the Times Higher Education University Rankings, in positions 500-600 and 601-800 respectively. Other internationally ranked university offering degrees in Media and Communication are: National University of Colombia; Externado University of Colombia; De la Sabana University; Uninorte; Rosario University, and Univalle. Only University of Antioquia, National University, and Univalle are public institutions. The National University is based in the capital, Bogota, and in the early 80s was the only one offering a degree in Film and Television Production. For the remainder, this subject was part of the curriculum but not a degree per se.

²⁰ Higher education in Colombia, whether public or private, is regulated by Law 30 of 1992, but tuition fees in private universities are discretionary, and they are autonomous in how they manage their incomes. For example, Xaverian Pontifical University charges students an annual tuition fees of up to 30 average monthly wages, whereas a public university charges according to Colombian official social strata divisions, that go from levels one (lower-low) to six (high), which take into account housing characteristics and family income. Therefore, yearly tuition fees in a public university might start from less than 2 minimum wages. Additionally, public universities are entitled to funds from the National Budget and from regional taxes, as long as they comply with a number of annual management indicators (UNESCO, 2002).

those at higher social levels with giving their children an education (...) regardless of the financial burden” (2010, p. 103). A member of the working-class at the time would not even consider enrolling in a private university, but would strive to pass a public university’s rigorous entrance exam. This division contributed to the early formation of a Colombian audio-visual elite formed by members of the upper class, who were the very first to be summoned when white collar jobs were created during the conformation of the first regional channels. Throughout the 1990s, new schools of communication and media production were created, offering different alternatives for those wishing to specialize in various roles for the media sector (Barbero & Rey, 1999); in addition, channels were offering positions for technicians, which created an opportunity for technical colleges to include subjects related to media production, a situation that provided members of the lower and middle-class the chance to acquire qualifications and pursue careers in the media sector, but with limited opportunities to perform white-collar or above-the-line jobs (Gómez Campo, 1995). This disparity in educational background among the participants in this research is apparent in the following figures (9 and 10), where those who studied in top private universities hold higher administrative positions, whereas those with level five education mostly perform as freelancers:

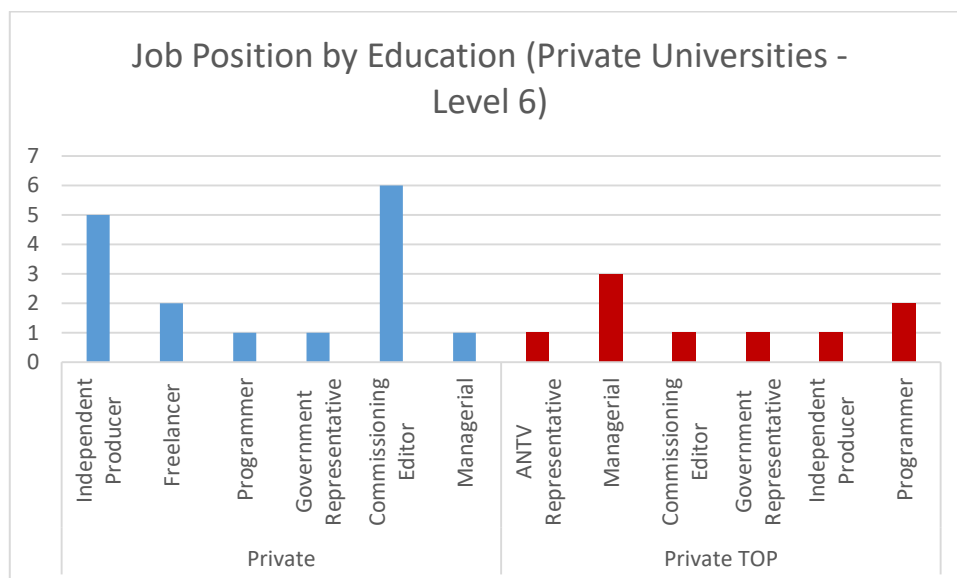


Figure 9 Job Position by Education (Private Universities – Level 6)

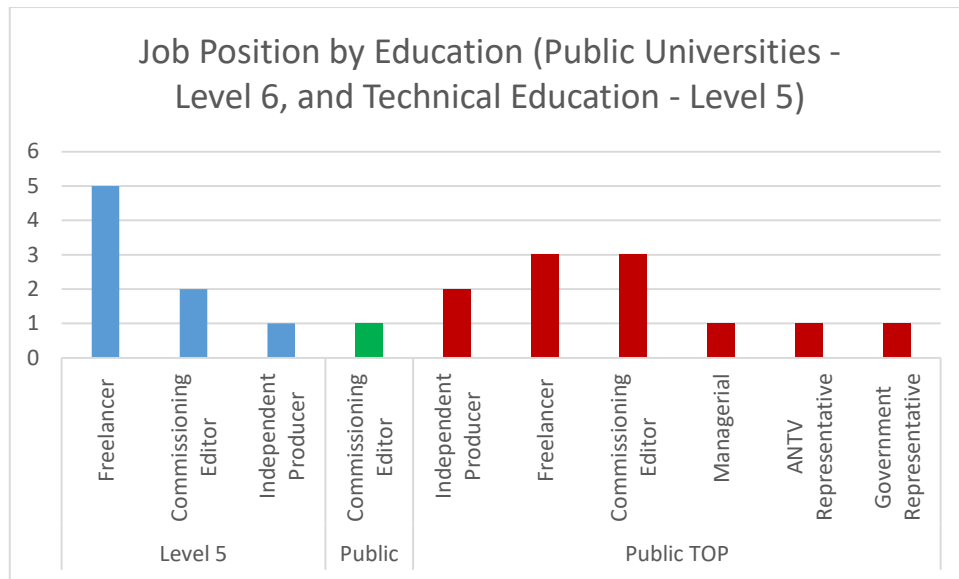


Figure 10 Job Position by Education (Public Universities - Level 6, and Technical Education - Level 5)

Most of the commissioning editors in this study belong to that first group of media graduates incorporated into the nascent TV industry of the time. Hence, a typical commissioning editor can be described as someone in her/his forties; from a middle to upper class background; who graduated from one of the few universities that offered degrees in media and communication, or film and TV production, in the 80s and 90s; with an extensive background in cultural television production (most of them began their careers as interns or volunteering at the media centres in their universities). This profile is shared by most Ministry of Culture representatives, while partially shared by independent producers, who have more diverse educational backgrounds and are in their late 30s; some of whom graduated from media schools created in the 90s. In contrast, freelancers working as production assistants or researchers come from either lower or middle class backgrounds and are younger (late twenties – early thirties); they all attended public universities (a few of them in high-ranked universities, mostly not) and perform roles below-the-line. These socio-economical divisions are clearly manifest in the formation and integration of media networks. The following chart (figure 11) illustrates the participants' different roles, along with their social backgrounds:

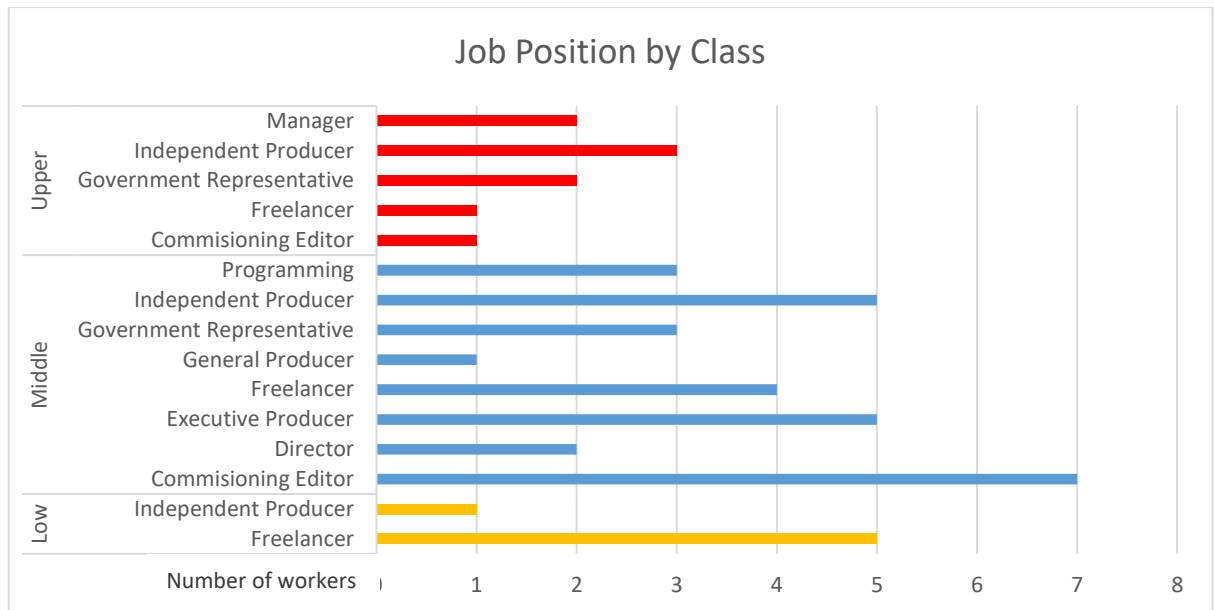


Figure 11 Job Position by Social Class²¹

It is apparent from figure 11 that the elite dominates higher positions and roles, whereas members of other classes perform below-the-line duties. Each role has its associated characteristics in terms of job security, stability, uncertainty, and salary; when performed for the government there are additional specificities that magnify the general perception of precarity. The following section will develop a greater context on working conditions in Colombia and how they are characterized by widespread precarity.

4.3. Precarious Life and Work in Colombia

While Anglo literature quite rightly takes precariousness for granted, we must explore what the term might mean in a different industry and specific national context. According to Cohen (2012), precarity is experienced when employers absorb companies' "financial risk, which is offloaded onto individuals. Because the creative stage of production cannot be completely rationalized, companies trade relative autonomy for the ability to extract higher value through contract and freelance status, protecting

²¹ Law 142 of 1994 created a numeric division of social strata that "allows a municipality or district to classify its population in distinctive groups or strata with similar social and economic characteristics. The law was framed this way to establish cross-class subsidies that would help those in the lower strata pay for utilities. (...) Depending on the diversity and quality of housing, there could be six strata: level one is lower-low, two is low, three is upper-low, four is medium, five is medium-high and six is high. (...) The lower-middle class, constituting the bulk of the middle class, comes primarily from upwardly mobile members of the lower class. The great majority of the population (89 percent) lives in strata one, two, and three, and on that basis, even if not by other criteria, is considered poor. Strata four, five, and six house only 6.5 percent, 1.9 percent, and 0.5 percent of the population, respectively. In other words, only about 10 percent of the population lives in dwellings that are well built and located in well-developed neighbourhoods with access to good utility services" (Hudson, 2010, pp. 101-103).

capital from risk, lowering labour costs, and intensifying competition for work” (Cohen, 2012, p. 148). Furthermore, when describing what precarity entails for UK cultural workers, Conor, Gill and Taylor argue that:

“Increasingly, cultural and media workers are freelancers or work on extremely short-term contracts that are counted in days or weeks rather than months or years. Zero hours contracts are not unusual. For large numbers of people in the CCI pervasive insecurity and precariousness are therefore the norm, with individuals very often unsure how they will survive beyond the end of the next project, and living in a mode that requires constant attentiveness and vigilance to the possibility of future work” (Conor, et al., 2015, p. 9).

These characteristics are also manifest in the Colombian cultural and creative sector, concurring with the idea that precarity is a *sine qua non* characteristic of cultural work. This is evident in a response from a freelance production assistant, whose experience as an independent worker in the Colombian media sector summarizes what others like him must endure:

“You are never hired directly by the main organisation but by third or fourth or fifth parties, so you end up earning less than you would have if you had worked for the main organisation. These outsourcing companies charge administrative fees, and they take money from wherever they can in the original budget, so it is most detrimental to us. You end up having to work for a bargain rate, but there’s no other way to do it. Most of the time projects last two or three months, so you have to look for another project while you’re still working, because the money you earn is not enough to live on between jobs. Right now, December and January, are months of inactivity, so we all are wondering what will become of us”. (Freelancer production assistant. FG Participant 1).

Interestingly, work precariousness was not a feature most workers expected when they first joined the media field; on the contrary, most respondents envisaged that after starting a career in media, they would achieve a degree of financial security in addition to the glamour. This was the reason most participants chose commercial channels as their first option to work, however, before long they found themselves working long hours, for very short-term projects that lasted no more than two or three months, and earning very little. There is not much difference when working for a public TV station: besides a more relaxed environment and a sense of pride in the contents, Señal Colombia does not offer better working conditions than commercial TV channels. Most employees are subcontracted via third parties; their contracts are fixed-term, as per the duration of the project; they have to pay their own social security and the channel provides no job protection.

However, it is important to emphasize that in the Colombian context, as a general rule, precarity is the common ground. Short-term contracts, uncertainty and precarity are the constant for cultural workers, but there are further national specificities that increase the scarcity for Colombian workers. Following the labour reform of 1990 (Law 50), which aimed to open the country up to global trade, working conditions drastically changed for workers overall. Certain economists, such as Echeverry and Santa María, consider that working conditions prior to 1990 were too paternalistic and failed to encourage entrepreneurs to create new jobs, and therefore contributed to the country's rising unemployment rates. In their words, before 1990:

“(…) labour regulations sought to (i) make it very hard for employers to fire workers; (ii) protect and increase workers' labour income (especially for those perceived as being poor or more vulnerable to economic shocks); (iii) improve working conditions; and (iv) discourage “excessive” job turnover. These objectives tried to be accomplished by putting in place a set of “traditional” instruments, namely: strong hiring and firing regulations, provisions that obliged to pay extra charges to all workers for a variety of reasons (overtime and work on holidays, for example) and some regulations aimed directly at improving the quality of working conditions (vacations and codes of conduct, for example)” (Echeverry & Santa María, 2005, p. 5).

In contrast, the 1990 labour reforms promoted flexibility both for employers and employees, mainly by introducing the possibility of fixed and short-term contracts; it also introduced the concept of “total salary”²² and reduced severance pay. With these reforms, employers were expected to create new jobs; however, they failed to foresee the precarity associated with the new working conditions. Later on, additional reforms reduced the hours for nightly surcharge and forced independent workers to pay a percentage of their income towards social security (health, pension, unemployment benefits) (Muñoz Cardona, 2014). From the total amount of income agreed in the contract, they must deduct:

- 11% taxes
- 6.4% Pension

²² Or “Package” salary. This form of payment was introduced by Law 50 of 1990. “These salaries are determined through a combination of the regular salary and other forms of remuneration received, (which may or may not be classified as benefits), to arrive at a total salary figure” (Cavelier Abogados, 2011).

“Employees whose monthly income equals or exceeds ten minimum monthly salaries may choose to be remunerated through this system (Article 132, Labour Code). The integral salary system includes the base salary and the fringe benefits, which shall not be less than thirty percent (30%) of the base salary. The resulting amount is equivalent to thirteen (13) minimum monthly salaries. All legal benefits, except vacation, are included within the monthly salary payment (Article 132, Labour Code). This type of integral salary must be agreed by both parties and by means of a written document”. (Deloitte, 2015)

- 5% Social security

This percentage is higher for independent workers and freelancers, precisely the types of contract most frequently used in the media/cultural sector nowadays. A promotional booklet advertising Colombia as a favourable location for films and television recordings recently summarized such contracts as follows:

“Civil/Commercial Contract: These are independent contracts not seeking to establish any labour relationship between the employer (producer) and the contractor. For this reason the contract must not refer to any of the common elements found in labour contracts, such as subordination and dependence, although the necessary mechanisms of coordination between the parties must be stated. (...) It is also important for productions that the contract state that any personnel hired are to assume their own responsibilities vis-à-vis the Colombian health care, pension and professional risk systems, regardless of whether the production company contracts additional accident or life insurance coverage.

“Temporary Employment Agency (ETT): The use of temporary employment agencies is a common practice for hiring cast, crew, and artistic personnel for the audio-visual sector. Temporary Employment Agencies (ETT, as per the acronym in Spanish) are companies whose activity consists of temporarily placing workers hired by the ETT with a user company.

“Labour Contract: These contracts cover all forms of labour governed by Colombia’s Substantive Labour Code. This model is usually not used for film productions, since film requires work for shorter periods than other fields. (Comisión Filmica Colombiana, 2015, p. 43)

According to a 2008 study that aimed to identify training needs in the audio-visual sector, approximately 50% of the total number of employees in TV production companies were temporary/freelance workers (Centro Nacional de Consultoría, 2008). Under the conditions established by the state for this type of labour, freelancers and/or independent employees should earn at least 59% more than a regular employee under contract and with full job security, to actually receive the same amount of money (Finanzas Personales, 2010). Furthermore, it is mandatory that independent employees pay for their own health and pension scheme, plus taxes.

In addition, when signing a contract with the state, the worker must provide an insurance policy in its favour, protecting the employer (government) from any risk of failing to fulfil the contractual obligations. In contrast, a regular employee would receive a yearly extra month of salary (mandatory bonus); a small stipend to subsidize transportation costs; they would only contribute 4% of the entire wage to the pension fund and another 4% towards social security; and if they earned less than three monthly

minimum wages, they would not pay taxes (Finanzas Personales, 2010). The minimum wage in Colombia in 2017 is GBP 2,704 per year, which only covers 49% of the total cost of living (Finanzas Personales, 2015). According to a study conducted by PRANA (a Creative Business Incubator) on the impact cultural entrepreneurship training had on the development of competitiveness among small and medium size enterprises in the audio-visual sector in Bogota, 44.4% of independent producers earned between two and four minimum wages per month; while 15.7% said they earned from five to seven minimum wages per month (PRANA, 2014) (See Table 7). The precarity of general working conditions in Colombia can be summed up with the following Solidarity Centre Report:

“the majority of informal workers work on their own, with such low and unstable income levels that they can rarely meet the social security payments, and must choose between putting food on the table and being a part of social security...the only priority of the worker is to continue working and earn as much money as they can, simply to put food on the table. Moreover (...) poverty is not linked exclusively to a lack of predictable income.” (Solidarity Center, 2006)

However, television producers and others who do freelance work are no longer considered informal. It matters not what duration is stipulated in the contract they signed, they are considered ‘employees’ for the purpose of national statistics. This is how the unemployment rate can be estimated at 8.9%, with 60% of the total number of employees working as “independents” (DANE, 2016). Due to this precarity, the quality of living standard has diminished considerably, forcing many active Colombians to work more for significantly less income and stability. This situation was summarised by one of the commissioning editors, a mother of two struggling to find out whether she would be hired the following year. She was already used to such uncertainty at the end of every year, but for her, this is the best type of work she can get:

“The good thing is that I can control my schedules, however, I have a fixed-term contract; no days off; no health care; no pension scheme. I have two children, and when they are on school holidays, I have to bring them to the office sometimes; this is not an ideal way of working, but I must feel grateful and lucky, although conditions shouldn't be like this. You feel that the government doesn't trust you” (Commissioning Editor. IV25).

This excerpt provides a new nuance to contextualize and understand the term *precarity*, which has been used extensively in Anglo literature on creative labour as “both the multiplication of precarious, unstable, insecure forms of living and, simultaneously, new

forms of political struggle and solidarity that reach beyond the traditional models of the political party or trade union". (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 27). In a similar tone, Ross offers a broader definition of the concept as "shorthand for the condition of social and economic insecurity associated with post-Fordist employment and neoliberal governance, which not only gives employers leeway to hire and fire workers at will, but also glorifies part-time contingent work as "free agency," liberated from the stifling constraints of contractual regulations" (2009, p. 34). Colombian specificities determine that precarity is the rule for independent work in general, which is manifestly aggravated by other conditions, such as uncertainty and instability that exacerbate the situation for cultural workers. Features of independent work in Colombia fit Gill and Pratt's account of the enduring characteristics of this type of work:

"a preponderance of temporary, intermittent and precarious jobs; long hours and bulimic patterns of working; the collapse or erasure of the boundaries between work and play; poor pay; high levels of mobility; passionate attachment to the work and to the identity of creative labourer (...); an attitudinal mind-set that is blend of bohemianism and entrepreneurialism; informal work environments and distinctive forms of sociality; and profound experiences of insecurity and anxiety about finding work , earning enough money and 'keeping up' in rapidly changing fields" (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 33).

In general, the structural conditions for the participants in this study are undignified and instable; for example, one commissioning editor recounts that he never knows if his contract is going to be renewed, but at the same time, it has been renewed so many times that he has not been able to take holidays since he started working for Señal Colombia three years ago.

Nonetheless, precarity has a distinctive dimension when relating it to independent producers. They must cope with the same uncertainty and instability as CEs do, with scarcity and multitasking added to their equation. CEs can count on their monthly income for the duration of their contracts with the channel, but independent producers work with the budget allocated for the production of the programme; usually they have to stretch it in order to maintain a certain amount of technical and narrative quality, which could sometimes involve performing more than one role during the production process.

Table 7. Typical Roles, Average Contract Duration and Income at Señal Colombia

JOB POSITION	AVERAGE CONTRACT DURATION	AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME
Commissioning Editor	9-12 months	COP 4,750,000 (GBP 1,295)
General Producer		
Executive Producer		
Programmer		
Independent Producer	9 months	COP 5,000,000 (GBP 1,363)
Freelancer (Production, Research)	3 months	COP 3,000,000 (GBP 818)

In the hierarchy of job well-being, the commissioners are at the top, followed by independent producers that administrate a given budget and, finally, at the bottom, freelancers working either for independent producers or Señal Colombia itself, as shown in Table 7. Similarly, this hierarchy represents the working conditions for those above and below-the-line. However, the difficulty of getting a job, and the subsequent lack of job protection, are not the only downsides for freelancers and independent producers in Colombia. As contractors for the state, they must go through a very convoluted process before they can even start producing.

In this structure, freelancers below-the-line (production assistants, researchers, field producers) are the most affected, earning from £700 to £900 a month. Señal Colombia receives the annual budget from the ANTV to start producing two or three months after a contract is awarded. However, as the production never begins when it was expected (usually because of delays in the initial payment), the amount of money allocated for the programme is reduced in accordance with the time left for execution, even though the number of episodes remains unchanged. For example, if an independent producer's accepted proposal planned to start producing in January, but the ANTV waits until the beginning of the year to launch the payment process (as commonly occurs), the IP would not receive their first payment until March; if they had planned to finish the production by November, they would now have three months less in which to do so. IPs receive their first payment at this point, but freelancers will do so only a month after production has actually started. Since every production has to be completed before the end of the year, this system curtails the number of working months per year for both IPs and

freelancers. An independent producer narrates the drawbacks of working under these circumstances thus:

“We bid for the tender that was published in February; we were told we had won it in June and it took another two more to finalise all the paperwork. In the end, we had less than six months to produce a documentary series that was conceived to produce 7 episodes over a period of 11 months”. (Independent Producer, IV 14).

According to Centro Nacional de Consultoría, a temporary worker for a television company in Colombia works an average of 6.4 months per year (2008, p. 80). Stability in contracts for IPs, freelancers and commissioning editors is further aggravated by the government’s administrative practices, such as the political appointment of senior administrative positions in RTVC and SC. Such appointments usually occurred every four years, following national elections and the renewal of the cabinet, but the past decade has seen a habit of changing the manager of RTVC almost every year; which also affects the stability of Señal Colombia’s director and commissioning editors, since each new appointee forms their own working team, letting certain workers go as soon as their contracts expire.

These settings provide the stage for a wide range of both verbal and behavioural responses from individuals directly involved in the production of public service television, responses that ranged from uncritical acceptance to total opposition (albeit the rarest), making it clear that none of the participants have remained unaffected by this experience and, most of all, that the way they responded to it had a major impact on the quality and relevance of the audio-visual contents they produce.

In addition to the working conditions reviewed in this chapter, Señal Colombia has a relationship of dependence on the government in terms of funding and programming guidelines; this creates a particular situation of networking, based on power and political relationships that significantly affect both the channel’s organisational dynamics and its creative workers’ exercise of their autonomy. This is expounded on in the following chapter. The notion of creative autonomy as a decisive feature of cultural work, especially in relation to understanding what ‘good work’ is (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008), proves helpful in keeping the focus of this research on producers’ negotiations of their motivations and satisfaction with the organisational environment, in order to

unfold their narrativization of both their professional identities and the job. Finally, following Hesmondhalgh and Baker's inclusion of the value of the outcomes as a main feature of good work, and taking into account recent European trends to assess the delivery of value by public service media, in chapter 7 I emphasize how the notion of public value applies to the Colombian context, and how it permeates discourses on public television production, as well as practices. In these four chapters I offer a detailed analysis of public service television production under state control, a topic that Latin American academia has overlooked for decades, and has only recently started to perceive as crucial to the study of cultural and creative industries.

4.4. Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to set the scene for the Colombian national context, the working conditions in television and its labour market structures, which the next three chapters will analyse in greater depth. Here I have sketched the Latin American academic approach towards the study of cultural and creative industries, in order to establish the difference between the local standpoint on this topic and the Global-North point of view that informs this study. I have identified a gap in the local literature, which has only recently started to provide data on the current working conditions for creative workers in the media sector, a fact which is explained by the novelty of cultural and creative industry dynamics in terms of governance and economy, and traditional scholarly interest in the users and audiences of cultural and media outcomes.

I also examined how creative labour and production is played out in a Latin American, and specifically Colombian, context, by addressing the working conditions under which commissioning editors, independent producers, and freelancers perform their jobs for the public TV channel Señal Colombia. In doing so, I described the channel's organisational structure, how it is linked to government agencies, and how this relationship affects internal processes. This panorama was also related to general working conditions throughout the country, which are described and categorised as predominantly precarious, and aggravated for independent or informal work.

On precarity, this chapter strengthens the belief that independent work in the Colombian creative industries is characterised by poor working conditions that keep the cultural worker under constant financial duress, which is contrasted with their high levels of job satisfaction. Precarity, an intrinsic descriptor of cultural work rightly taken as a given in Anglo studies, acquires a different hue when seen in the Colombian context. This was evident in producers' responses regarding their working experience while producing public service television, placing the notion of precarity in a particular Colombian context where low pay, instability and lack of job security are daily challenges. Furthermore, it was evident from participants' social backgrounds that class divisions play a significant role in their work experience, particularly concerning the opportunities individuals encounter to join the media field, making it harder for middle-class members to access better jobs. These relationships are studied under notions of power in the upcoming chapter.

5. Power, Control and Creative Work

The intrinsic specificities of Señal Colombia Public TV channel, in addition to the country's contextual characteristics in terms of working conditions, establish a unique scenario for networking and power relationships to be played out either through top-down mandates imposed by clientelistic practices, or in more horizontal relationships at the core of the networks. In this chapter, I explore the operation of power relationships between Señal Colombia workers and discuss how the exercise of their autonomy configures discourses and practices of power. I focus mainly on the relationship between disciplinary power, governmentality, symbolic power and social capital, concepts that represent different manifestations and understandings of power, which contribute to the description of how networking relationships are experienced in the field of cultural production. Combined with the concept of bureaucracy, these characteristics lead to an understanding of the dynamics of public service television production in my case study.

The chapter commences with a description of the concept of power, focusing on two specific variants widely used in the study of culture and media: governmentality and symbolic power. I also discuss bureaucracy as a form of power and how it has controlled traditional management strategies. The majority of the chapter illustrates how the power operated within a public service organisation such as Señal Colombia denotes a very traditional political economy approach to power, where social relations constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources (Mosco, 2009). In this case, we have a public media organisation with the state controlling how it operates, however, as I approach producers' daily practices inside the channel, I need a more sophisticated understanding of power. Here, Foucault's notion of governmentality and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power prove useful in analysing the different forms of power evident in my case study. From the empirical data, I identify three types of power: a traditional one, expressed in the institutional factors that influence the production of public service TV; a Foucauldian notion of governmentality and subjectification; and a Bourdieusian one, with people deploying their capital as part of an inherited social structure, shown in their habitus and the ways they perform, above all in the way they

form networks. I firstly discuss the main effects of governmental power on the production of public service television in Colombia. Secondly, I focus on the way in which these manifestations of power affect public media contents, hence the public service broadcasting aims. I strive to move beyond the operation of power and consider how it affects producers' professional experiences and perceptions, as well as the organisation's practices and representations of networking in the Colombian media field. The final section provides a summary of my findings and links them to the ensuing chapter.

5.1. Power and Media Studies

In the context of media production, the analysis of power has traditionally applied a political economy approach, emphasizing ownership and control of the media and cultural industries, studying the social relations that “mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources” (Mosco, 1996, p. 25). For Mosco, this approach concerns how societies are organised in terms of economic order and control; that is to say, relations of power and class systems. This approach has informed an important number of studies that focused on the business of media and communication; international communication and globalisation; media/state relations; resistance and opposition, as well as media developments related to democracy, the public sphere and citizenship (Wasko J. , 2016).

Moreover, the study of power relations in media organisations has mainly focused on mid- and micro- levels of negotiation and industrial practices, centred on “cultural producers as a status or class group, on the labour process, and on the relationship between producers and consumers” (Havens, Lotz, & Tinic, 2009, p. 238). This approach addressed what was deemed a missing subject in the study of cultural industries, which was “the issue of individual *subjectivity* in the cultural workplace” (Banks M. , 2007, p. 27). The acknowledgement of workers' subjectivity and increasing degree of autonomy in the field of cultural production is, therefore, what the analysis of cultural processes should focus on, without invalidating the important role played by the economy in the field of cultural production. However, my concern is to further explore these interwoven issues of power in a context of public service television production under

state control, which I do by situating power relationships among creative workers and their superiors in an organisational context. Acknowledging the complexity of this context for creative workers to perform their roles is fundamental in identifying the specificities of my case study. Hence the relevance of including notions of clientelism, bureaucracy, public management, and public value, in connection with concepts of autonomy and good work, to describe the practices of producing public service television in Colombia.

5.2. Power and Creative Work in Señal Colombia: Editorial Control, Clientelism, Bureaucracy and Network Sociality

To understand how power is played out at Señal Colombia, it is important to bear two different contexts in mind: first of all the state, since Señal Colombia is a division of a government agency, and second the organisation, acknowledging the channel as an institution with its own dynamics and processes to accomplish its tasks. Accordingly, I start by addressing the first context, in terms of how power is exerted by the government on the channel, focusing on specific practices such as editorial control, clientelism and bureaucracy that occur in the tight links between the channel and the government; the channel's lack of programming that diverges from official versions of Colombian reality; the President appointing the Director of the Public Media System and other senior positions for the duration of the presidential term; the appointment of political allies to pay back favours; and the extensive set of bureaucratic processes and procedures that impair the speed that characterises TV production. A subsequent section draws on the networks established within the public media system, focusing on how producers entered the industry, how they embarked on negotiating a space in the field of production and began to establish themselves as professionals in the public media field.

5.2.1. Editorial Control: Swallow That Frog!

Señal Colombia, as a creation of the Colombian government and an educational and cultural channel, is expected to follow government mandates and to do so efficiently, in such a way that its actions are continually assessed as legitimate. However, as a public

service television channel, it is also expected to be independent from government constraints that obstruct the production of contents which could contribute to the enlightenment of society for democratic purposes; but, as demonstrated below, the government has a direct influence on the channel's contents, although it claims to do so to safeguard it from other external pressures that might divert its public purposes. In this section I will focus on how the government exerts power on the channel, how employees experience and perceive this influence, and how they develop their own set of working relationships accordingly.



In a group meeting with all the channel's staff, they presented the programming strategy for 2015. The Director of Programming stated that the strategy would follow the main topics from the National Development Plan (NDP): Peace, Education and Equity. Prior to the meeting, the number of new programmes and episodes that would address these topics had already been agreed with the commissioning editors.

Figure 12 Slide from the Presentation of Señal Colombia Programming Strategy for 2015 (Señal Colombia, 2015a)

At Señal Colombia, before the start of each year, the person in charge of programming, in conjunction with the programming committee, revise the topics that the government wishes to promote. During 2015, they followed the country's National Development Plan, emphasizing peace, education and equality. This is not a hidden agenda: the Director of Programming presents the upcoming year's scheduling strategy to the entire staff, acknowledging that these are the topics the channel will focus on, having previously discussed with the Director of the Channel and a few commissioning editors how these topics will be produced into particular formats. As Bourdieu, Wacquant and Samar argue "one of the major powers of the state is to produce and impose... categories of thought that we spontaneously apply to all things of the social world – including the state itself" (Bourdieu, et al., 1994, p. 1). For these authors, one of the

state's most important assets is informational capital and its cultural capital dimension. By managing "culture", the state unifies "all codes, linguistic and juridical... effecting a homogenization of all forms of communication" (1994, p. 7), moulding a sense of national identity through the imposition of "common principles of vision and division" (1994, p. 7-8). Once accumulated, and legitimized by the society, this symbolic capital is distributed through edicts and regulations, objectifying it, delegating it, bureaucratising it. In this specific scenario, it takes this form of symbolic power, exerted through top-down control in the shape of editorial guidelines.

By controlling representations of national reality, reducing it to a limited number of topics, producers are constrained in their creative opportunities. Strikingly, the evidence revealed that instead of opposing or challenging these limitations, they accept them as part of the job, even if they disagree with them, and end up ensuring that their peers and colleagues also abide by the government's mandates, as became apparent in the following situation:

I was having lunch at the RTVC canteen, chatting with a group of commissioning editors. We had just attended a general meeting in which the programming director had announced the topics that would be produced for the year 2015. Most commissioning editors were excited about the idea of producing a programme called Heroes that would focus on the biographies of relevant characters in Colombian history. One of them said how proud he was that the channel was showing how wonderful Colombia is, to which another replied that he would prefer that the channel also show the negative things that needed to be tackled in the country; that its duty was to "rub some salt into certain wounds" too. This provoked a very heated debate between them: "you don't just go out there and start airing your family issues", to which another replied "but we still have to tell each other what is affecting us as a family, without the need to start a fight. Let's speak frankly because we cannot just bury our heads in the sand". A third one, addressing me directly, said that it is very difficult for them to deal with the channel's political correctness, and recalled a situation in which he and other commissioning editors had the idea of producing a programme that would be hosted by a famous journalist and comedian, Jaime Garzón, who was later assassinated by paramilitaries, he questioned this idea by asking the others whether they really thought such a character would be allowed to speak freely at Señal Colombia. According to him, as soon as something in this hypothetical programme ruffled someone's feathers, producers would have to provide explanations to the management.... "We have to be realistic. We (the channel) are the good guys, we are not troublemakers. It doesn't mean that we have to cause problems, but we should be allowed to point out relevant issues and topics for the country". "Where is the impediment coming from?" I enquired. "Nowhere", he replied, then added "we just know".

Field notes, December 2014

Although one of the commissioning editors involved in this conversation demonstrated having a critical and reflexive stand towards the 'way things are done at Señal Colombia', in the end he complies and accepts this tacit agreement not to challenge the establishment. A governmental approach of cultural work states that individuals actively cooperate in the maintenance and reproduction of social structures and relations of power after routinized processes of embodied domination.

Foucault's governmental approach to the notion of power describes an embodied mechanism of self-conduct, not held in 'anybody's hands'. In his explanation of the modern state, Foucault (1979) argues that, to understand power and its technologies, first it is necessary to comprehend the rationality that supports it. For him, sovereign states can no longer govern without the integration and voluntary participation of the autonomous individual. He believes "governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself" (1993, pp. 203-204). That is, power is not something imposed by one individual (or a group of individuals) on another, but rather, a networked relation between individuals who have normalised and internalised a set of behaviours, disciplinary norms and understandings that shape their conduct and their perception and judgment of the others.

It is no wonder, then, that producers at Señal Colombia reproduce and legitimize an unspoken censorship by the state; they do so based on the premise that otherwise they would lose their jobs, and they advise newcomers to act accordingly if there are ever sparks of ideas that could potentially be damaging, or conflict with the preferred idea of the country or the government. This editorial control is embodied and reproduced by word of mouth, while the mechanisms for checking it and guarding against infractions are none other than informal and unrequested peer supervision, a constant reminder to commissioning editors and independent producers of how things are done at Señal Colombia. It is a manner of implicit consent among Señal Colombia producers; there is no point even proposing sensitive topics to be addressed by the channel's programming because they infer, after inculcated experiences (Jenkins R. , 2002) from colleagues' attitudes, that no one intends to bite the hand that feeds them. This practice of

refraining from even suggesting challenging ideas has been nominated as “the *quintessence* of being Colombian”, to explain the extended practice of respecting hierarchies and accepting one’s own position:

PSTV is for (taking risks). But PSTV has double standards: you must look honest, and you prove that by writing two or three reports, and there’s also this thing of being politically correct, and that has to be our position (...) We are always talking about the same topics: heritage, traditions, but without criticism, we are afraid of criticism. That is the quintessence of being Colombian. (Commissioning Editor, IV 31.)

Some participants, especially those with greater experience in the (public) media field, exhibited a more critical standpoint towards the channel and their own work, however, they do not attempt to challenge their externally and self-imposed limitations:

There's self-censorship and fear of expressing your own opinions. And I think that debating and giving your opinion are characteristics of the media in the public interest, and PSTV should provide spaces for that. (Freelancer, IV 35).

This participant is referring to the unique media environment they operate in: they have no market pressures, nor from audiences. They are given a ‘green light’ to let their narrational and experimental creativity flow, so they should manage to capitalize on that without upsetting the government in the process. They are aware that what they produce is controlled, they are specifically instructed what range of topics they must address; equally, they are instructed in the ‘dos and don’ts’ of the job:

“Contents should be:

- . Veridical for non-fiction contents, with all information being verifiable.
- . A place for freedom of opinion and contrasting testimonies.
- . Diverse.
- . Non-discriminatory and non-stigmatizing.
- . Non-apologist.
- . Non-propagandist.
- . Responsible in the treatment of topics related to public order, violence and conflict.
- . Non-violent and with no depiction of violence.
- . Non-religious.
- . Non-offensive.
- . Non-pornographic.
- . Responsible, avoiding putting participants or producers at risk;
- . Respectful of children’s rights.
- . Respectful of private life and personal integrity.
- . Respectful of animals.
- . Respectful of copy rights”. (Señal Colombia, 2015)

However, producers have never been explicitly told not to deal with controversial topics, but they infer they should not do so from the channel's history and from their own fear of doing something that would negatively affect their prospects of employability.

Another form of control that was evident during one of the participant observations, and was likewise pointed out by certain participants, is the direct interference by the President on the channel's scheduling, as demonstrated in the following situation:

I am invited to a programming meeting. The programming coordinator is reviewing the scheduling strategy for November 2014. The focus will be on the Central-American and Caribbean Games; they will broadcast almost 10 hours of live games a day, plus a live show with commentators; this will cover scheduling from approximately 10 am until 8 pm every day, which poses certain problems: they have a daily live show that has been scheduled at 7:00 p.m. for the past 6 months; and another programme produced by the Ministry of Culture that goes live weekly. The programming assistant says: "We can talk with the representatives from Mincultura, they will understand". To which the Director of Programming replies: "Not this time, the President will be in that programme, and we must tell the team of *En Orbita* that their programme will have a different schedule, at least three times this week". Someone else added: "They are already very upset about that". "Well, they have to swallow that frog", this is how the Director of Programming ends the dilemma.

Just as they decide that the Ministry of Culture programme will be broadcast in its regular slot, and the sport competitions taking place at the same time will be pre-recorded and broadcasted the following morning, the TV Deputy-Manager walks in, saying she just got a phone call from the presidency because the President is going to send over a copy of a documentary that he wants aired in prime time that same week. The Director of Programming inquiries the length of the documentary, "40 minutes", says the Deputy-Manager, hearing "OK" as leaves.

The Director of Programming turns to the woman next to her and says: "Well, tell the people from *En Orbita* that they must pre-record their programmes for this week and we will let them know when they will be aired".

No one even queries the topic of the documentary that the President wants broadcasted.

Field notes, November 2014

As can be seen from the situation described above, workers in all lines of duty, which in this case included two individuals in high positions: the Deputy-Manager and Director of Programming, exemplify the dominance that comes from even higher positions, in this case the presidency. Whenever they are given the opportunity, they legitimize top-down, sometimes even irrational power, simply because of its legitimacy in the channel's hierarchical structure. Albeit momentarily, they savour the supremacy that comes from giving an order that others must follow, even if they are the first to bow and scrape in

front of a higher authority. It matters not how much this intromission affects their routines, they embrace top-down power and reproduce it when given the opportunity, notwithstanding the fact that they also praise options for more horizontal power relationships, at least in their discourse.

This is where the notion of disciplinary power resides: the multiplicity of social relations creates an environment of accepted norms that are internalised by everyone who, simultaneously, ensure the observation of these norms by others through “surveillance, regulation and examination” (Cronin, 1996, p. 58). Governmentality is the tool that Foucault offers to understand the set of relationships forged under this mind-set. This approach does not necessarily nullify the subject’s individuality and freedom. On the contrary, it exemplifies the use of their power in a social context, where individuals deploy their freedom to maintain the social status quo, and consent to assuming responsibility for it. As Foucault explains: “A power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that ‘the other’ (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up” (Foucault, 1982, pp. 788-9).

The notion of governmentality as a regime of self-discipline has been of remarkable importance to studies of cultural work, as the concept has been used to describe cultural workers’ common choice of passion for the job over profit. For Lee (2013), for example, the fact that cultural workers are offered “rewards of autonomy as part of a package of benefits” (2013, p. 8) is an evident form of governmentality, as individuals are regulated from within, therefore assuring and reproducing the social power around them. In the same tone, an important number of scholars sympathizes with this view; for example, du Gay argues that: “the aim (of culture) is to produce the sort of meanings that will enable people to make the right and necessary contribution to the success of the organisation for which they work” (1996, p. 41). For Mc Robbie (2002), this is possible thanks to promises of creative autonomy, liberty and self-expression, which according to her, end up as a motivation for self-exploitation and denial. In the same perspective, the works of Ursell (2000), Ross (2003) and Gill and Pratt (2008), have demonstrated

how cultural and creative workers are encouraged to invest their emotions (passion, excitement, sense of liberty and autonomy, fulfilment, and the feeling of doing good work) in the labour process, a situation that enables them to not just tolerate the precariousness of their working conditions, but also to embrace them. The relevance of Foucault's understanding of power relies on its contribution to the generation of a relational analysis of power between individuals and the social institutions surrounding them, which in this case is evident, for instance, in the embodiment of practices of self-exploitation understood as a moral commitment, as will be seen afterwards.

5.2.1.1. "White" Contents

Señal Colombia programming is recognized for its focus on educational and cultural contents. From its foundation in the early 70s, it has been a governmental instrument for addressing topics relevant to the state's interests of spreading knowledge, and offering an alternative to commercial broadcasters. These aims are summarized in the channels' code of self-regulation:

"Señal Colombia programming wants to help Colombians to have access to quality contents, for free, and with the aim of:

- . Looking at the past with new eyes, and building the present of the country;
- . Revealing the contradictions, and praising the agreements of our society;
- . Exploring our patrimony and showing different ways of living real life in Colombia;
- . Building Colombians' visual memory through the creation and acquisition of quality and long lasting contents.

Furthermore, the channel focuses on 10 axial themes related to Colombian educational and cultural policies:

- . Sports
- . Cultural and artistic production
- . Ecology and environment
- . Identity
- . History
- . Patrimony
- . Territory
- . Contemporary issues" (Señal Colombia, 2012, p.2).

And these objectives take the form of documentaries, contents for children, live sports live cultural events, and interviews, which are listed in the scheduling following a counterprogramming strategy, in an attempt to offer alternative topics and narratives

to commercial channels. The channel's main tactic to look different from others is having special month or week themes, focusing on relevant themes suggested by either one of the secretaries (Culture, Education, or ICT) or the Director of Programming. Theming is mixed with dayparting, targeting audiences that can be engaged in at particular times of the day, paying particular attention to children and viewers over 50. Over the last ten years the channel has made a name for the quality of its children programming, most of which is coproduced with other channels, and independent production companies from Latin America (Rincón & Zuluaga, 2010, p. 132). On an average day, the channel's scheduling would list about 12 hours of children programming, and bosses are very proud of this decision:

"You can leave your children with our programming, because you can trust that our contents are going to be white, that they are not going to see any disturbing images here". (Former TV Sub-manager, IV 4).

"White" is an adjective commonly used by bosses and commissioners to describe the channel's contents in terms of purity, correctness and decorum; however, by looking at the channel's daily schedules, and after realising its lack of contents that promotes the enhancement of "civic engagement, forming political identities and culture, and tackling the 'democratic deficit' in the era of commodification of the communications media" (Iosifidis, 211, p. 232), this adjective can also relate to the insipidness of a programming based on discourses about national identity, kept from addressing topics relevant for society so as to avoid controversy.

The following table describes some programmes currently in the channel's schedule provide examples of how some typical 'white' topics are framed and presented (Table 8). In table 9 it can be seen a regular week day schedule and the dominant aesthetics in the channel's programming.

Table 8 Synopsis of Certain Programmes (Señal Colombia, 2016)

Así Somos (We are Like This) is a series of micro-programmes featuring 150 Colombians who explain how we Colombians are when we are happy, when we dream, when we work. The list of questions is endless (Señal Colombia, 2016).

Los Puros Criollos (Pure Creole) is a column-type series about what anthropologists, historians, musicologists, and average citizens perceive about the symbols that represent national identity, and which define the sense of being Colombian.

















Guillermina y Candelario (Guillermina and Candelario) is an animated series for children that recreates the everyday life of these siblings, whose curiosity and need to explore make every day a new adventure, full of knowledge and fun. The series takes place in a natural setting, by the beach, thus offering several possible topics to be addressed as well as fun stories to tell, inspired by nature and the creatures that inhabit it.

























Pizarro (Pizarro) Carlos Pizarro was the last leader of the political movement and guerrilla group M-19. This documentary follows the personal quest of his daughter, María José Pizarro, who strives both to rebuild her own life and her father's, and in doing so, be reconciled with him. This is a story about the weight of history over family that starts with a letter María José found during her exile in Barcelona, written by her father 30 years ago, and which reminds her that, no matter how far she goes, she will never be able to run away from the image she inherited from him. She decides to confront herself and his past, through images and objects he left behind, to rediscover the absent father and political leader.

























Expedición Cóndor de los Andes (Expedition Andean Condor) nine travellers begin a journey throughout Colombian territory to live an extreme adventure in nature and become acquainted with the culture in different regions of the country. In this docu-reality, participants come from different regions and are representative of Colombian cultural diversity. They were selected among 400 applicants who wanted to fulfil their dream of travelling all over the country.

























Todo lo que vimos (Everything we Saw) Señal Colombia presents a tour of 60 years of Colombian television history, paying tribute to those who made television and the viewers as well. Six episodes, each one with a top 6 milestones for Colombian TV, plus 60 mini-programmes dedicated to the best contents ever produced for the medium. This is a tribute that brings into the present those TV programmes that made history.

























Table 9 Señal Colombia Programming for 31/05/2017






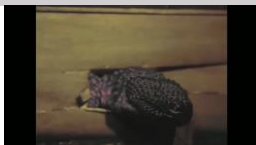


















SEÑAL COLOMBIA SCHEDULING FOR 31ST MAY 2017					
12:00 a.m.	La Guajira del Palabrero				
12:30 a.m.	Ancestro Tribal				
1:00 a.m.	Y Llegamos a París				
2:00 a.m.	Vogulys				
3:00 a.m.	Ciencia entretenida con los Pepa				
3:30 a.m.	Señal Colombia				





















6:00 a.m.	Pocoyó				
6:30 a.m.	Peppa Pig				
7:00 a.m.	El Principito				
7:30 a.m.	Aventuras con los Kratt				
8:30 a.m.	Siesta Z				
9:00 a.m.	Puerto Papel				

9:30 a.m.	El Principito				
10:00 a.m.	Guillermina y Candelario				
10:30 a.m.	Lola Lá Vamos a Cantar				
10:35 a.m.	Asquerosamente Rico				
10:42 a.m.	Ooommm - Mmmooo Yoga para Niños				
10:48 a.m.	Ana Pirata				

10:51 a.m.	Maguaré				
10:55 a.m.	La gran Pregunta				
11:00 a.m.	Súper Strikas				
12:00 m	Perdido en el Paraíso				
1:30 p.m.	Aventuras con los Kratt				
2:30 p.m.	Lola Lá Vamos a Cantar				

2:35 p.m.	Asquerosamente Rico				
2:42 p.m.	Ooommm - Mmmooo Yoga para Niños				
2:48 p.m.	Ana Pirata				
2:51 p.m.	Maguaré				
2:55 p.m.	La gran Pregunta				
3:00 p.m.	Siesta Z				

3:30 p.m.	Asquerosamente Rico				
4:00 p.m.	El Mundo Animal de Max Rodríguez				
4:30 p.m.	Guillermina y Candelario				
5:00 p.m.	El Profesor Súper O				
5:30 p.m.	Puerto Papel				
6:00 p.m.	Súper Strikas				

7:00 p.m.	Hombres				
8:00 p.m.	La Escritura Embrujada				
9:00 p.m.	El Noticiero del Senado				
9:30 p.m.	La Mujer del Presidente				
10:30 p.m.	La Jaula de Oro				

To justify the institutional appeal for “white” contents, the same participant states:

“We tell the stories, the contexts, rather than the facts, so people can make their own judgment about the topic we are talking about. I prefer to build, instead of criticising. Other television channels are raising controversy, so if they are doing it, we don't need to. It's already done”. (Former TV Deputy-Manager, IV 4).

It could be said that with the government ‘proposing’ editorial guidelines, producers have no option but to comply with deference. However, as certain participants disclosed, they do so for more complex reasons than that. Regarding this issue, I specifically asked why they did not produce programmes addressing current national affairs, or news; these were some of their answers:

“Our client is the state, therefore, we address topics we like such as freedom, equality... but we work for the government, and that's our disadvantage. We depend on the government. Not having news programmes or current affairs programmes gives us some room for independence, but most of the time we have to work for them”. (Producer, IV 22).

“Thankfully we don't produce news, because it would make the channel become politicized”. (Former Señal Colombia Director, IV 21).

Nonetheless, others find different reasons:

The state should guarantee the inclusion of the diversity of our country, but you find that it's not an easy job for them. SC makes high quality programmes that you can't find in commercial TV. PSTV accomplishes very little of PSTV aims, because for managers and for the government it's easier not to raise controversy; then, you can only find white, neutral contents; cartoons... and it's nice, because commercial TV doesn't even produce children's programming. PSTV should address important issues such as the peace process, but they just don't do it. They are afraid of taking stances, so they prefer to offer a different way of looking at the country. The channel is like an ostrich, hiding from the surrounding reality, pretending it's not happening. (Independent Producer, IV 16).

But, in the end, it might well be a way to survive in the public TV sector:

“...it's better not to bite the hand that feeds you. Since you must undergo a selection process, you don't want to be labelled as a troublemaker, an agitator, when they are considering your proposal”. (Independent producer, IV 11).

What can be inferred from these responses is that doing what is expected of them represents a survival strategy so they can remain active in the media field and secure a somewhat steady income; it also prevents them and the contents from being used for political purposes. Focusing on children programming and producing *white contents* can be understood as a survival technique in the form of negotiated resistance, a strategy of invisibility/visibility that helps producers keep their jobs. This strategy works two ways,

and it also has a double edge. On one hand, by producing politically innocuous contents, commissioning editors keep politicians away from the scheduling; consequently, they can safeguard their creative autonomy. On the other hand, in doing so, the channel fails to give itself the opportunity to produce contents that audiences might find more relevant, without leaving aside the fact that they are neglecting two very important characteristics of PSB: diversity and independence. This can also be viewed as a practice of self-censorship. There is no document which states that the channel is not allowed to produce news programmes, or current affairs programmes, or even that independent producers must not offer their political views in the contents they produce for the channel. However, and notwithstanding their views on this situation, producers adopt the institutional narrative about the benefits of producing that type of contents, convincing themselves “of the necessity and benefits of upholding enterprise values in order to expedite successful cultural production” (Banks, 2007, p. 42), allowing the government to dominate them through discourses that they will also use to their own benefit, when needed.

In a clear demonstration of how governmentality works in this case, producers choose not to produce controversial programmes or news programmes to keep their jobs; independent producers act accordingly to gain new agreements with the channel. Although it seems a form of domination, we are actually witnessing a system of negotiation, where producers are using their autonomy and power as individuals to take what works best for them, complying to an extent with the norms of the organisation, at the same time as they try to gain some work stability. However, their creative autonomy is constrained and it depends on not questioning their own lack of political freedom. They have embraced and replicated discourses of the value of public service television for their own sake. They make use of the symbolic capital they have gathered throughout their careers to justify and eulogise their work, to achieve recognition among peers and from superiors, and to underestimate the demands by the larger audience. They have been given the unique opportunity of not surrendering to ratings and numbers, which puts them above the audience. Their customer is the government, and it is easily pleased.

5.2.2. Clientelism

Further to editorial guidelines and promoting a rather unexciting programming, another way for the government to exercise its power over the channel is through the appointment of managers of the Public Media System following every national election. Usually, the appointee is chosen by the President due to political affiliation rather than experience, which could well explain the lack of professionalism (and criticism) from managers, deputies, and directors when following orders that modify the channel's dynamics in terms of scheduling. Senior administrative posts in the country's public service are "granted" to the main political parties, to appoint their members to numerous governmental offices and agencies. This practice works two ways: the political party increases its representation in the government, whilst ensuring that the appointee's gratitude and loyalty will favour the party whenever its interests are compromised. This exchange of favours and services, known as clientelism, makes those thus favoured dependent on the government to gain access to resources, while reinforcing their own prestige and legitimacy as they perform their newly-appointed role. This is a system of reciprocity and calculation, "but demands for recognition within the inner circle are more significant" (Auyero, 2001, p. 180).

Clientelism (political patronage) as a "pattern of social organization in which access to social resources is controlled by patrons and delivered to clients in exchange for deference and various kinds of support" (Hallin & Papathanassopoulos, 2002, pp. 184-185), with the purpose of increasing political capital by controlling government agencies which can provide exclusive access to privileged information and sometimes to substantial budgets, is a widely extended and normalized practice in Colombia. Under clientelism, information becomes a 'privately-held-resource' in the spiral of political influences on the public field, and is used to confirm both the loyalty of the dependents, and to make it possible "to cement the patron's position vis-à-vis other powerful persons" (Eisennstadt and Roninger 1984, p.74, in Hallin & Papathanassopoulos, 2002, p.185). Clientelism, as a form of symbolic power, is manifested here in the interactions between agents distributed in a social space (in this case, a state organisation), where capitals are being weighed, recognised and legitimated, reinforcing the power relations that constitute the structure of that space, where agents comply with the objective

structures of that space to make sense of the world of social structures they are in (Bourdieu, 1989, pp. 16-21).

As a form of symbolic power, clientelism helps situate and maintain power relationships in the media field. According to Cronin, “symbolic power is the form material power relations assume when they are perceived through social categories that represent them as legitimate. The shared schemes of perception and evaluation incorporated in the habitus mask the arbitrariness of social divisions by inculcating belief in their legitimacy or naturalness” (1996, p.65). Symbolic power is gained through the accumulation of cultural capital, which refers to a set of qualifications that enables individuals to hold cultural authority; it is their vision of the world, legitimated by their socio-cultural background, and recognised by their peers and subordinates, that rules and guides others (Bourdieu, 1996). Bourdieu, drawing on notions of agency and structure, developed the theory of symbolic power addressing the processes through which power is obtained and used, defining it as “the power of constructing (social) reality” (1992, p. 164) Accordingly, individuals sharing a cultural belief system create the foundation for symbolic power, and in this sharing they (consciously or unconsciously) adhere to the principles ruling the reality they live, therefore legitimizing relations between agents.

Notions of field, habitus and capital are also pivotal in the understanding of how symbolic power operates. A field is a situation composed of individuals who develop a set of actions according to the power they exert in that situation. In Wacquant’s words, a field is a network:

‘or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation ... in the structure of the distribution of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions...’ (Wacquant, 1989, p. 39)

The field empowers its members by setting the structure of their social positions and by allowing them to interact with other individuals at a different level of the same field (Bourdieu, 2013). Within the field, ‘agents’ strategies are concerned with the preservation or improvement of their positions with respect to the defining capital of

the field' (Jenkins R. , 2002, p. 85), therefore, the field is the framing context for wielding symbolic power. By capital, Bourdieu refers to the different forms of social assets acquired by individuals during their life experience, according to their education and class. Their cultural capital is a set of qualifications that enables them to hold cultural authority; it is their taste, which is legitimated by their background, and recognised by their peers and subordinates (Bourdieu, 1996). Finally, habitus is a structure of dispositions developed by the individuals in response to their interactions within a particular field; this habitus is not conscious but still constitutes the frame, the logic for the relationships of power established by the individuals (Bourdieu, 1989). All these notions are deployed in the clientelistic practices which have thrived in the daily dynamics of managing public organisations in Colombia: everybody involved recognises them when they see them, and know that clientelism is the logic behind any absurd situation, such as a simple change in the channel's scheduling or the appointment of someone incompetent to a senior position.

Señal Colombia and the entire media system are subject to clientelistic practices because of the government structure that places Señal Colombia not only under the control of the Presidency, but also of the ministries of ICTs, Culture and Education.

How clientelism works at RTVC

Lucy Osorno was appointed by liberal President Santos to run the Colombian Public Media System, in March 2015. This decision raised a heated debate in news reports that emphasized the relationships between Osorno and several politicians and businessmen from the opposition party, Democratic Centre, and how these links could reconfigure the political parties' unspoken quotas in government agencies.

Diana Celis, the outgoing manager of RTVC, was appointed by liberal Diego Molano, the Minister of Information and Communication Technologies: both Molano and Celis were ratified in their positions following Santos' re-election in 2014. However, despite nearly two years managing RTVC with considerable success, President Santos asked Celis to resign. It is said he was not happy when Celis refused to cancel a televised debate among candidates for the vice-presidency which the official candidate, Germán Vargas-Lleras, was unable to attend. The debate went ahead without Vargas-Lleras, which was taken as a gesture of defiance to the president on the part of Celis (Revista Semana, 2014; 2015). This was the moment Lucy Osorno entered the scene. To begin with, Osorno had joined the Democratic Centre party, founded by former President Alvaro Uribe, who now leads the opposition against the government of President Santos. Furthermore, Osorno has a close relationship with Gonzalo Angel, the cable television businessman who in 2008 supported her campaign to be elected a member of the now extinct National Television Board (Comisión Nacional de Televisión, CNTV). In 2010, it was claimed that Angel was the only beneficiary of a CNTV regulation that reduced the fees paid by cable licensees (El Tiempo, 2010), it was also demonstrated that Angel supported the campaign of two elected board members who managed to reach the CNTV by presenting support from front associations of viewers (Revista Semana, 2008; El Espectador,

2009); however, it was never clarified who was behind the creation of these associations. This situation, among others, contributed to the liquidation of the CNTV in 2013.

As General Manager of RTVC, Osorno was charged with running one of the Ministry for Information and Communication Technologies' most ambitious projects: TDS, or Social Digital TV. This new development promises to bring the terrestrial TV signal to every last nook and cranny in Colombian territory, with great definition and a larger number of regional TV channels (RTVC, 2015). According to news reports, the Minister wanted Osorno to appoint a member of his legal team, Gustavo Cala, to be in charge of the TDS project (El Tiempo, 2015; Revista Semana, 2015a; Lewin, 2015), which had an approved budget of 70 billion pesos (about £16 million). Gustavo Cala was part of Celis' team at RTVC, and following her resignation, he and the rest of her team were required by protocol to resign as well. News outlets reported that Osorno had declined the Minister's suggestion she let Cala steer the TDS project, arguing that he did not fulfil the job requirements and he was asking for more money than the project could afford (Revista Semana, 2015a). The Minister was not happy with Osorno's response, she was confident the president would support her decision; however, Molano requested her resignation and she had to comply. Had she not, she would have been officially removed from public service. One month later Diego Molano also resigned, ostensibly for personal reasons.

As this account exemplifies, managerial appointments are political rather than PSB-oriented, which means that clientelism and bureaucracy rule, and that there is no required connection between knowledge and experience when it comes to appointing senior administrative positions. Furthermore, this "anecdote" reveals the volatility of government decisions, which in the end only destabilize the continuity of processes and keep state organisations under a constant state of instability.

Field notes, June 2015

This clientelistic turmoil raises two questions: why is it so important to control a weak, rarely-watched channel? What benefits does the Colombian state reap from such control? For some participants, especially those in administrative positions, it is clear that the government's political interest in Señal Colombia, particularly in the management of the media system, concerns access to financial resources. With the chance to manage a substantial budget comes the power to allocate resources in such a way that benefits political and business allies, which would in turn be beneficial for the political and financial undertakings of the person in charge of that budget. This exchange with the intention to distribute resources has nothing to do with public policies' criteria, but solely with politicians' need to be rewarded with "greater popularity, higher esteem, and thus become more easily reelected... (also) generating a peculiar particularistic accountability by which voters demand specific and individual favours or services from the politician, sidestepping general public policies' criteria" (Maiz & Requejo, 2001, pp. 6-7). This can be seen in the words of one participant who has held numerous different

roles and positions within the public media system, even achieving a managerial role a few years earlier:

“The importance of (RTVC) is that they manage a very large budget, at least 60 billion pesos (about 17 million pounds) per year, although they can only use a small percentage of that money to produce contents, the rest being earmarked to support the national TV system and the other public channels. As long as managing that budget is the main objective of RTVC, it will be very difficult to give the channel the tools to actually stand out as a competitive channel, because the interest will always be in the money, not the contents. Politicians are always interested in organisations that manage big budgets, not in organisations that have important outcomes”. (Former independent producer, IV7).

This explains the interest on the part of the state and politicians in controlling the Colombian public media system; an added benefit from such control is their enhanced visibility in the political arena, which they gain both from holding a senior administrative position, such as managing RTVC, but also garnered from the headlines Señal Colombia generates whenever it receives a national or international prize. It is a perfect clientelistic scenario, not only is a position of power held in the eyes of other politicians, but it is also legitimised by public opinion when there are results to vaunt.

“The Ministry of Communication has never been interested in our contents, but when we were awarded the first India Catalina, they claimed they had produced the awarded contents! Just because they are board members....” (Former Señal Colombia director, IV 29).

Furthermore, this symbiotic political relationship between the state and its agencies explains the endurance of clientelism at high echelons in the hierarchy of the Colombian public media system, directly controlling the appointment of managers and deputy-managers, but rarely becoming involved in the appointment of the director of Señal Colombia channel itself, or its commissioning editors: senior positions are generally preferred to individuals with more political experience and less practical knowledge, whereas to keep Señal Colombia producing good results requires staff who actually know what they are doing, empirical experts in the field of media production. Clientelistic practices deeply affect producers’ experiences and perceptions of the field, especially when they fail to recognise political appointees as legitimate players in the media sector, which is predominantly the case, since these appointees have very little experience in the audio-visual field but vast political baggage. When this occurs, there

is a generalized perception of disinterest on the part of the government vis-à-vis the channel's main objectives and aims:

"The appointment of managers and deputy-managers responds to unofficial, implicit political quotas, and the people appointed are not qualified to perform their role; most of them don't have an educational background related to media, or don't have a sensitivity for the value of public service television. They only care about using their role as a political launch pad for achieving other political appointments, such as working in an embassy. So, it's never about television. These people wouldn't watch the channel, and they have other kinds of TV models; then, they come and want to copy what they know. They have no appreciation or respect for diversity, or interest in the construction of identity, which is one of the aims of PSTV. What they want is to include entertaining programmes, sell contents, therefore putting the spirit of the channel at risk". (Former SC director, IV 29).

Due to clientelism, there is a pervasive perception that the channel is not relevant to the government's plans, hence the fulfilment of public broadcasting objectives relies solely on the commitment of commissioning editors and independent producers.

"Neither the channel, nor the media system is a priority for the government, you can see that simply by considering the number of managers appointed to RCTV over the last 10 years: seven! Besides, there were many months in which the system had no head, no leader, while they were waiting for a new appointee. Sadly, I think that our own purpose is just to exist, because there's no concrete policy regarding the use of public service media to develop culture". (Freelance director, IV 18.)

Clientelism, and the managerial discontinuity it implies, keeps producers subject to constant feelings of instability and helplessness, as they are unsure whether they will work for the channel after every change in management, thus adding to the already precarious working conditions that cultural work entails. However, producers' access to the channel and to the audio-visual sector in general has little to do with clientelistic practices and more to do with their own networking, as will be explained later.

5.2.3. Bureaucracy

Adding to the uncertainty and instability that trail every managerial change, commissioning editors and independent producers must face lengthy bureaucratic processes before their proposals are approved, and therefore have very little room in which to exercise any autonomy they may have earned during former administrations:

Every time they appoint a new manager, a lot of information about our processes is lost. All the effort we put in to develop a project must start over, then, information flows slow down, planning efforts are lost too. And that really speaks badly of us as an organisation. It also

makes us focus more on administrative issues than on the core business of the channel, which is creating and producing. (Commissioning editor, IV 37)

Furthermore, bureaucracy has long been associated with “complicated formalities of official procedures” (Williams R. , 2011, p. 41). Or, as Sarangi and Slembrouck put it, the term is related to slow-working institutions, inquisitive cross-examinations and repetitive procedures. In these cases, the term is used negatively to refer to powerful and repressive state institutions which are insensitive to individuals’ wishes and heavily constrains their freedom of action” (2014, p. 49). Under this form, bureaucracy has an important impact on power relationships inside institutions, as well as on individual autonomy, and it is the latter that determines the types of institutional management. However, at the same time, governments’ processes and procedures only gain symbolic power once they have been legitimized by society and this symbolic capital has been distributed “in the form of offices and honours” (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 11) as a method of statutory objectification (acts, edicts, regulations). This shift towards an “*objectified symbolic capital*” represents the bureaucratisation of the state. Bureaucracy is then one of the forms the state takes as an agent in the circulation of power, and it is evident in the state’s power to nominate, to appoint, to set up procedures and assessments, and so on.

Although a few producers try to justify bureaucracy as something inherent to public management, saying there is no other way for the channel to function, most participants cannot cope with it, finding it overwhelming and at times discouraging. This feature gains importance when certain commissioning editors consider that their creative capacities are being underestimated when they must go through a convoluted amount of paperwork for each project. For them, too much time is invested in filling forms when it should be spent on the creation of new projects for the channel. Here too, there is a much more interesting perception from some participants, who argue that the purpose of the channel is to justify budget spending through all this paperwork, that they are judged on the amount of paperwork they produce, not on the quality of the programmes. This perception is key to understanding and explaining the claim regarding the government’s apathy towards the channel. Regulators do not check the programmes, only the paperwork that is attached to every project.

“Half our work, and I can’t not be honest about this... If you are hired as a professional, it is because you have a reliable judgment, you can make proposals, and you are critical. But we, as commissioning editors, are being wasted by using our time checking photos, paperwork. We could be more creative, strategic, we could see what’s going on in the world, and how we can take steps with the new opportunities we have. But time goes by and you spend it signing things, and that’s where you see the double standards: if you do the paperwork, if you read that the producers you are working with say that they are doing something, but you know that in fact they’re not doing it, what is written is the only thing that matters. That’s SC’s reality, and the country’s as well. We ask for super projects, with super assessment matrixes, but talent doesn’t have anything to do with that”. (Commissioning editor, IV 31)

Bureaucracy, as a technology of power and a form of social organisation, relies on administrative habitus and hierarchies that ensure compliance with norms, processes and procedures, to guarantee the achievement or completion of a given task in the most efficient way possible. Its dynamics are legitimised by the symbolic power accumulated by the state, even if procedures have sometimes proven inefficient. Bureaucracy is the norm, and individuals accommodate to it. In addition, it emphasizes its own power through the certification of individuals’ actions and processes for their official recognition, this is, bluntly said, just through technical administrations and paperwork. In the process of certification, individuals weave a lengthy and slow path that disheartens and delays. This process itself is seen by Bourdieu as a type of domination: “Making people wait (...) delaying without destroying hope (...) adjourning without totally disappointing” (2000, p. 227), since keeping individuals in a continuous state of insecurity forces them to comply with mandates. However, as du Gay argues, behind this negative representation there is a bureaucratic ethos that “include the possession of enough skill, status and independence to offer frank and fearless advice about the formulation and implementation of distinctive public purposes and to try to achieve purposes impartially, responsibly and with energy if not enthusiasm” (2000, p. 146); namely, bureaucracy ensures compliance with norms and institutional values that cannot be left to discretionary observance.

Conversely, the bureaucracy that accompanies the form of clientelism described in this research ends up working against the values expressed by du Gay, promoting organisational activities that rather than being efficient, prove to be the opposite, delaying outcomes and adding lengthy and sometimes unnecessary processes to the work flow of television production. To such an extent that one participant contended that, rather than a TV channel, the organisation appeared to be a registry office.

Furthermore, in this case, bureaucratic procedures seem to be a technology armour that shields the inefficiency of managerial and administrative support to TV production, reducing it to bureaucratic paperwork. Bureaucrats may know nothing about TV but they know how the government works, and that is what keeps them thriving in the structure.

“We are a pachyderm office, very slow. There are lots of procedures for every single process... Every time you need to take a decision, you have to go through a lot of people, each one with a different perspective on it... We know in advance how slow the company can be, so we are always prepared. The company’s slowness doesn't have to make us slow as well. We always have the content ready to be broadcasted”. (Commissioning Editor, IV 17).

5.2.3.1. Managing Autonomy

Editorial control, clientelism and bureaucracy are understood and accepted as the norm by producers; to conserve both the channel’s aims and their professional roles within it, they find themselves striving to do what they consider best with the means at hand, so as to enhance their own portfolio and also further their possibilities of being hired again, or starting a new independent project when unemployed. This situation is both a manifestation of individualization, with producers being “complicit in the execution of power through their own situated practices” (Banks, 2007, p.46), and a manifestation of the government’s symbolic power to define the terms of negotiation in the organisation, namely the procedures and processes for the organisation to accomplish its goals, and the conditions under which workers must perform their related tasks. However, as mentioned, this does not prevent producers from using the little room they have for autonomy to produce contents that work well for the government’s mandates and also foster the construction of their own professional portfolio. They cope with the bureaucratic environment either to remain active in the media field, or due to their moral and ethical motivations to produce something they consider valuable and relevant for society.

The organisational room given to them to exert any degree of autonomy is a reconfiguration of the forms of bureaucracy in modern institutions denominated *post-bureaucracy*. Grey (2012) establishes a difference between bureaucracy and post-bureaucracy in terms of the extent to which individuals can exert forms of autonomy:

“Bureaucracy is a model of organization based upon rules, hierarchy, impersonality and a division of labour and has been the dominant form of organization for over a century. However, it suffers from problems such as poor employee motivation, producer-focus and inertia. In view of this, post-bureaucracy has been proposed as a new organizational model more suited to today’s business environment. Post-bureaucracy is based on trust, empowerment, and personal treatment and shared responsibility. But this brings its own problems in terms of loss of control, risk and unfairness... From a critical perspective bureaucracy is seen as dehumanizing and post-bureaucracy is interpreted as an extension of control” (Grey, 2012, p. 480).

Nowadays, the type of management applied to an institution in the cultural production field is becoming more relevant since creative industries are associated with a more relaxed and autonomous working environment, so they can effectively encourage individual and collective creative expression. This is the opposite of traditional management, which does not put “enough stress on human relations and developmental and logical aspects of organizational culture. Besides, organizations did not develop employee autonomy and team work and did not give much importance to change and risk taking, (and its impact on) productivity and effectiveness” (Ozmen, 2013, p. 75). Then, in traditional management, bureaucracy is a restraint of freedom, whereas in post-bureaucratic organisations, autonomy, self-management and flexibility are the features. These characteristics tie in with certain descriptions of creative work, where notions of freedom and autonomy are used as flagships of this field. However, creative labour scholars have analysed how these features can sometimes be deceptive, instead causing a work life committed to self-exploitation; organisational theory has reached similar conclusions, calling the exertion of freedom as autonomy in post-bureaucratic organizations as a “subtle colonization of the life world of workers” (Maravelias & Hansson, 2005, p. 2).

Contemporary cultural organisations have subscribed to post-bureaucratic notions of work, stressing individualisation, putting the risk of business back into employees without performing coercive practices, but actually selling them the idea of autonomy, therefore increasing their commitment to the work. In McGuigan’s words: “the person becomes responsible for what they do and, therefore, personally culpable for their own failures. Individualisation is not just rewarding; it is also penalising” (2010, p. 328). Although the topic of bureaucracy was not raised in these terms during the interviews or focus groups, participants did not appear to acknowledge the bureaucratic ways of

the organisation, however, some responses reveal an individual commitment despite their poor working conditions:

“I will always work for Señal Colombia, even if we keep having these working conditions... It's a matter of belonging... They pay you to do beautiful things” (Freelancer Researcher, FG2).

For McGuigan, individualisation is a necessity, an obligation, an institutionalised doctrine of self-discipline that works better than coercion. As such, it is also a characteristic of New Public Management (NPM), where public organisations adhere to post-bureaucratic practices of administration, in this case emphasizing individualism to increase the accountability of both public servants and citizens/users of the public services.

According to Hesmondhalgh, Nisbet, Oakley and Lee (2015) New Labour's policies in the UK have implemented a NPM approach, which is particularly evident in the “top-down performance management tools” (2015, p. 104) adopted by the government in reference to cultural policies and techniques for measuring the impact of cultural activities, such as setting targets and measuring impact, “driving cultural policy in the direction of economic and social goals” (Hesmondhalgh, Oakley, & Lee, 2015, p. 108). This managerial style complies with neo-liberal precepts of enforcing individual responsibility. In post-bureaucratic organisations, freedom and responsibility at work, through the extensions of management's power over workers, seeks their commitment and identification with work (Maravelias & Hansson, 2005, p. 5). But, as seen in this research, this approach transcends the limits of the organisation and reaches independent producers, who embrace a sense of commitment and responsibility that even exceed their material capabilities:

“I used to have my own production company but I went out of business because I was a perfectionist, and didn't care if I needed extra time to produce or post produce the episodes, I would cover the extra cost out of my own pocket. Now I have a huge debt. Anyway, I love working for Señal Colombia, because there you can address topics you like to talk about”. (Independent Producer, IV 32).

By placing responsibility for the quality of the contents on commissioning editors, independent producers and freelancers, these individuals actively cooperate in maintaining and reproducing social structures and relations of power after routinized processes of embodied domination. The way this system works is through offering

opportunities for autonomy, freedom and work, therefore having more responsibility, and developing a higher sense of commitment from the worker as a gesture of gratitude for the trust placed in them (Ozmen, 2013). With autonomy and responsibility, values of entrepreneurship become constitutive of cultural work, therefore increasing the chances of ‘unintended negative outcomes’ such as social-atomization, a need for self-coping, self-exploitation, and self-blaming (Banks M. , 2007, p. 43).

Under this approach, power is not embodied in a specific entity but is diffused, non-imposed by ‘higher’ authorities but prevalent throughout the system, socialized through institutions (school, work, family, prison, and religion), in such a way that individuals adapt and integrate it into their daily routines, disciplining themselves accordingly, so that there is no need for coercion. This enhances individuals’ belief that they alone shape their present and future, which is equated to neoliberal approaches under which individuals must forge their destiny, making themselves into an enterprise so they are their own source of income throughout their lifetime. However, workers are well-aware of the price they must pay to assume that portion of autonomy as a form of self-control at work: anxiety, stress, and uncertainty, neglect of the self in their desire to produce cultural and creative outcomes.

“Here, you are always working with your contract’s end-date in mind. But our policy has always been to give our utmost until the last minute. That’s what we are paid for, to produce a quality programme with the budget they give us”. (Freelancer Director of Photography, IV6).

As Hearn argues, cultural workers are expected to invest their soul and work, so they can become the managers of their “own self-gratifying activity, as long as the activity turns into profit” (Hearn, 2008, citing Holmes 2006:6). Hearn also reminds us of du Gay’s thoughts on what he denominates an “enterprise culture”, where management strategies require the regulation of work-based subjectivities (du Gay, 1996), “keeping workers invested in corporate functioning by addressing their subjective sense of self-identity, soliciting them to express their uniqueness and tying that to corporate objectives” (Hearn, 2008, p. 203). This is evident in the following response, where a commissioning editor demonstrates how entrenched the ideas of responsibility and commitment are in her mind that she firmly believes that the commitment of the channel’s personnel is what enables it to receive the recognition it achieves:

“You decide to work here; we, the people, are Señal Colombia’s most valuable resource. We are here because we are stubborn, PSTV interests us, we like the topics we can show here. My personal vision is that from here, I am also contributing to a nation for my children. I feel proud to say that I work for Senal Colombia”. (Commissioning Editor, IV 25).

Although it seems that selflessness and commitment on the part of workers is due to a genuine sense of altruism, for Hearn this behaviour is preceded by a “highly self-conscious process of self-exploitation, performed in the interests of material gain or cultural status” (Hearn, 2008, p. 204). Under this approach, individuals have to create their own branded selves as professionals, developing a portfolio that shows their major achievements and qualities, to make themselves more likely to be hired. They circulate this image of themselves in the media networks which, apart from clientelism, are the most important ways to gain access to information and resources to develop their audiovisual projects, or to be invited to take part in others’ projects.

Network and networking sociality are the ‘places’ where producers can build working relationships which are not only based on imposed circumstances, as in clientelistic contexts, but also on their own subjective set of expectations, according to their professional and personal needs. The different forms of establishing network relationships in the Colombian audiovisual context, and the ways these forms deploy power relationships, are explored in the following section.

5.3. Networking

To display their own cultural capital, producers join media networks, to exchange capacities and knowledge so they can demonstrate their potential to peers and colleagues; hence the importance of networking as an informal means of recruitment stands out, to alleviate the constant uncertainty cultural workers face in the highly flexible, mobile, and instable media sector. For Lee, “networking is understood as central to economic, social and cultural relations, in contrast to the declining traditional sociality of community. This sociality is informational and intermittent in character” (2011, p. 553). Research has shown the centrality of networking as a mode of interaction, functioning as a means of sharing and exchanging capacities and knowledge, in order to create a competitive advantage (Grebher, 2004). The purpose of networking is to gain access to resources, either through job offerings, co-productions or funds that

grant the development of a project; furthermore, networks also have a social function, promoting collegiality and a sense of belonging among members. For Grebher, “social relations are less based on mutual experience or a common history but primarily on an exchange of knowledge and ‘catching up’” (2004, p.51), as well as being highly dependent on factors such as geography, class, education and socio-economic status (2004, p.52). Furthermore, Ursell found that belonging to a network acts as a clear advantage for the cultural worker, especially when meritocracy is not the basis for employment in the sector, but the “reputation and familiarity, conveyed in a mix of personal acquaintance, kinship, past working connections, and past achievements” (2000, p. 811). This understanding is shared by Wittel (2001), who draws on the instrumental characteristic of the network, which is mainly used as a source for making professional contacts and securing jobs. For him, this form of ‘sociality’ contrasts the notion of community, as the network here “does not represent belonging but integration and disintegration” (2001, p. 51).

In this study, most of the participants joined their first networks when they first entered the sector as interns for private channels or independent production companies. There, they met colleagues who were performing jobs for Señal Colombia. Those contacts opened the doors of public television for them, the quote below reveals how belonging to the network is crucial to be considered as a professional for further audio-visual projects:

“(When hiring) I only call friends whom I know are responsible, and whose work I already know. That makes it very difficult for other people to have access to the channel. I don’t even look at CVs of people I don’t know, because I don’t know if they have a good work attitude; or whether they are punctual or honest” (Executive Producer, IV 10).

Before she hires anyone to work for her projects, this executive producer must be sure how responsible and accountable they are, because their failure would be seen as her own failure, as the leader of the team. This example resonates with McRobbie’s findings, who argues that the network and its “club culture sociality” is per se a practice of social segregation, “so that getting an interview for contract creative work depends on informal knowledge and contacts, often friendships” (2002, p. 523). For producers, networking is the means to let others acknowledge their skills and achievements, and also to create close relationships that might favour them even when their professional

experience is not as impressive as someone else's. But under this practice, guided both for professionalism and acquaintance relationships, impartiality cannot be taken for granted, making the same network go against the member's interest. For example, for one independent producer, having resigned from a programme produced by an independent company for SC became a huge liability. He was not happy with the conditions he was working under; then, after giving notice, a friend offered him another job, editing a different programme for SC. He accepted, but the commissioning editor in charge of this new project requested the director submit other names for the editing role because they did not want a "troublemaker" in the organisation. His friend complied and he lost the opportunity to work in the new position. A few weeks later he got another call from SC, offering yet another role for a different project: "(...) then I realised that what had happened to me was not a corporate decision, that it was something orchestrated by certain people in the channel with the power to make decisions at that point". (Independent producer, IV 19).

This participant was both sunk and rescued by his connections in the network, but his experience also corroborates the subjectivity in the relationships between network members, and the factions that are formed therein. These factions can also act as mini-networks within the network and, to a degree, there can also be hierarchies among them which are expressed in social gatherings after working hours:

"We like to go out for a beer every Friday, but it is just us, I mean: the assistants, the researchers... those of us who really get our hands dirty during every production. We don't go out with people like the commissioning editors, for example. They have their own gang to hang out with, we have ours. But it would be nice, though, if they invited us..." (Freelance production assistant. FG Participant 7).

In addition to the subjective dimension of the network, the need to create social situations is what offers the most opportunities not only for members to expand their number of contacts, but also to reinforce pre-existent relationships. This combination of work and play as a condition for creating connections and stronger professional bonds demonstrates Wittel's notion of *network sociality*, where "the social bond at work is not bureaucratic but informational: it is created on a project-to-project basis, by the movement of ideas, the establishment of only temporary standards and protocols, and the creation and protection of proprietary information" (Wittel, 2001, p. 51). However, in this case Wittel's understanding applies only to the manifestation of the surface of

the network, which can be understood as the point of entry into the network: exchanging business cards; attending social and academic events to meet others and become known, attending annual company parties, and having informal social gatherings after work. At SC, everyone is accepted in the network at this point, from the CEO and the Minister to the third production assistant and his girlfriend; they are equals and allowed to be there due to whatever relationship they have with the media field. But this is only the outer circle, the circumference that surrounds the core of the network.

Nonetheless, despite belonging to the same network, members hardly create further social situations with others that are not in the same line of work; although this is not universal, it does demonstrate that the network itself is also divided between above and below-the-line members, a hierarchy that creates new layers to protect the network's inner circles, making it even more difficult for newcomers to break in. As Wittel argues, the practice of networking extends from the elites to the base, but this does not necessarily mean that they all belong to just one network, that workers create networks within the network and these appendixes, more than relying on the exchange of valuable information, count on members' shared bibliography, shared experience; a stronger bond that is supported by the members' socio-economic and educational background, that reinforces hierarchy and class division against other members of the larger network. In contrast to Sennett's view of an "erosion of enduring friendships, responsibility and trust" (1998, in Wittel 2001 p.67), these networks within the larger network are created to actually strengthen and reinforce relationships, pursuing a transcendence of the professional level, relating members through ties of affection more than knowledge, with the intention to extend the notion of *family* towards them. This is exemplified in the following observation:

Everything is very quiet, the year is just starting so there are no programmes being produced at the moment. However, commissioning editors are working on all the paperwork for the upcoming call for tenders, and selecting the winners from the previous ones. At lunch time, a group of them go out together, as they have been doing for the past two years. Every Thursday they go to one of the commissioning editor's home to have *frijoles antioqueños* (beans). Some of the guests' partners will join them later; there is even a couple formed by two commissioning editors. When they leave, I ask the commissioning editors who remained in the office why they were not invited to lunch. "We never are", one replied. "They have their own little group; they went to the same university (private, top), they go on holidays together... wherever you see

one of them, you will see the rest shortly afterwards, and I am also talking about jobs...” The other commissioning editor made a disapproving gesture and went back to her task at hand. A couple of days later I realized that all the members of this ‘little group’ had worked for the same local channel a few years back, just as they were quitting that job, the first one to enter Señal Colombia opened the door for the rest of them.

Field notes, January 2015.

The tight relationship between members of the network can be understood as an instrumental kinship, which provides both emotional and working support. However, the emphasis on affection and empathy expands beyond the media sector and reaches into personal and intimate spaces such as the family circle, moreover, as the previous quote and the following observation illustrate, it promotes and reinforces class segregation:

“Our daughters attend the same school. That’s great because we’re not only linked by our professional interest, we are also building something more important beyond the channel’s walls. We’re friends, we have been friend for years, and our children are friends now. It’s like continuing some sort of tradition” (comments by a commissioning editor, field notes, November 2014).

Contrasting Wittel’s argument, Banks (2006) also found in his study on cultural entrepreneurs in Manchester, that they cultivate their relationships based on collective memories and socially shared experiences, thus demonstrating that practices of networking and entrepreneurship are not necessarily instrumentally or economically oriented. Equally, Piñón (2016) found that media networks in Latin America, due to their small size, offer a ground for tighter relationships, not only based on common artistic purposes but also on emotional ties. He adds that “just as emotional and pecuniary relations are intertwined, so too is the artistic sensibility that permeates some of the indie shops. This is often described as a common outlook on how television should be made, a shared understanding in the realm of either aesthetics or ideology” (2016, p. 141). This is crucial, particularly when a media worker is known for his/her work, especially if he/she has a penchant for a given topic or point of view. In such a case, this kind of person uses the network to find potential teammates and funding; furthermore, because of their inclination towards a specific topic/genre/point of view, their options to join other teams interested in different lines of work are limited by the other members of the network, who constantly maintain in circulation the characteristics of other members. This is akin to what happened to the independent producer mentioned

earlier (IV 19), who struggled to get back to work because other producers have spread the idea of him being 'a troublemaker'. The circulation of perceptions about members' characters is pivotal in the creation of a professional identity within the network, and therefore in the chances of having access to job opportunities. Furthermore, the network serves to legitimize habitus, ideas, and practices regarding what is, or not, accepted by other members of the field, thus maintaining the status quo.

Under this form of networking, if someone dares to be experimental, if they break the mould and fail, they can rely on the backing of the network instead of sacrificing them for their mistakes. This applies both to members performing above and below-the-line jobs. Here I only refer to experimentation in audio-visual technique and narrative, not to being bold by producing controversial (non-'white') programmes. In such a case, the network will recognise that person as a transgressor, or someone who can be part of the network but not the best one to work with, as already seen. Since friendship in this case is stronger than professionalism, the network provides a (probably temporary) risk-free environment for those who "fail" in their attempts to produce something out of the box in terms of innovative camera angles or non-linear narratives, for example, which could also explain the general dullness of classic formats such as interviews and TV magazines. They will remain friends, therefore part of the network, regardless of their professional failures. In this sense, the expression "you're only as good as your last job" (Blair, 2001), a common catchphrase in Anglo literature on the obligatory nature of always being successful in order to "resecure work and maintain positions within groups" (2001, p. 149) is disputed in this working environment, as it appears to only apply to networks in market-driven contexts. Wittel's assumptions on network sociality are similarly based on free-market contexts, but in this case study, the state, a non-free-market context, is an important mediator and player in network sociality.

5.3.1. Networking, Friendship, and Revolving Doors

Networking in the Colombian media field means more than just being sociable or 'clubbable' (Oakley K. , 2009, p. 51), it is more than just meeting every Friday evening for drinks at the local pub; it is about power and influence spreading towards every aspect of the individual. What participants create is a bond that exceeds ideas of

‘solidarity, sociality, cooperativeness, desire’ (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 15), to become a more solid bond, based on their commitment to each other’s well-being. It is the inner circle of trust where there is more emotional, subjective involvement of the members in matters that are not related to job competence, but that can still have a powerful impact on working dynamics, to the point that professional bonds become blurred and they would just ‘help each other out’ as a proof of loyalty, as a means to reinforce kinship ties, or as a way to gain and display political advantage.

This form of networking is explained in the revolving door between government agencies and Señal Colombia, where employees arrive from other places if they have the right connections, therefore allowing members of the network’s inner circle to attain security, since they know they will be supported by the other members. At this point, clientelistic practices seen beforehand as a means to pay off political favours, work to the benefit of producers, providing them with political protection inside the organisation or in the general governmental structure that is within their reach. This has become more evident in the latest directors appointed to Señal Colombia (four since 2010), who have come directly either from the Ministry of Culture or from other government agencies, as shown in the table below (table 10):

Table 10 Señal Colombia's Revolving Door

Name	Señal Colombia Director	Previous Positions
DIANA DIAZ	2016 (to present)	Ministry of Culture, Adviser for Communications (2012-2016) Independent Company. General Producer (2011-2012) National Commission for Television (CNTV now ANTV) Chief of Contents and Ombudswoman (2011-2012) Señal Colombia – Commissioning Editor (2011)
JAIME TENORIO	2014-2016	Current: General Manager of independent audio-visual company Previous: TeleSur, Adviser (2013) Independent Company, Director. (2010-2013) Ministry of Culture, Adviser for Cinematography (2007-2009)
MARCELA BENAVIDES	2011-2013	Current: Executive producer at independent audio-visual company. Previous: Ministry of Culture, Adviser for the Arts (2011, 2014-2015) Ministry of Culture, Adviser for Cinematography (2010) Señal Colombia, Commissioning Editor (2008-2009)
ADRIAN COMAS	2010-2011	Current: General Manager at independent company National Audit Office, Adviser for Communications (2011-2013) RCN TV, General Producer (2008-2010) President at Independent Company (2004-2007) INRAVISION (former RTVC), Director and Producer (1996-2004)

In this context, the network functions as a guarantee for stability despite the high mobility: thanks to their contacts, members can go from one channel to another, from there to academia, a government agency, and back to the channel again, if they so desire. These findings support Wittel's, who identified that "networks provide support. Thus networking reduces risk; it generates security" (2001, p. 57); however, as explored earlier, in the case of SC, we must envision this beyond the job security level, adding emotional, affective and political security when kinship is mixed with clientelistic practices. Insofar as members nurture and strengthen their relationships at a more intimate level with their fellows, they can feel secure and protected.

The form of networking found among Señal Colombia commissioning editors, which has a similar version for workers below-the-line who create their own networks with same-line peers, expands on Wittel's understanding of the assimilation of play and work as members' disguised interest in opening the world of professional connections and their interest to perform better. Though they may use their connections to create or gain professional support for new projects, this is not the ultimate purpose of networking in this context, but rather, the creation and nourishment of long-lasting kinship ties that transcend the professional level. This is certainly a community full of more social and political than professional meaning. Here community life is deeply integrated into work life, so relations become stronger; however, their closeness is protectionist, and discriminatory against those who are not in the inner circle, involving more depth to the social relations than mere 'networking' suggests.

In this sense, the Colombian context offers a different angle to the understanding of network societies and socialities, by evidencing that relationship-building works, as Wittel and McRobbie argued, but only at the surface level. Features such as clientelism and community enrich the comprehension of how professional networks are played out in the country, making them more complex and highly contextualized.

5.4. Summary

This chapter aimed to explore how power relationships are played out in the Colombian Public Media System and in Señal Colombia TV channel. As seen, generally these

relationships can be explained under a more traditional political economy approach, as producers are aware of the control the state exerts over the channel, by establishing the rules to be followed. However, this power does not wish to seem heavy-handed or need evidently be deterministic, therefore the government allows the channel some degree of freedom and autonomy, through their choice of formats and allowing them to move across a given spectrum of topics. Producers' options are to embody this normative position and act accordingly, negotiating their own perceptions of their professional selves with the actual conditions offered by the job.

Editorial control, clientelism, bureaucracy and tight networking groups were identified as the main manifestations of how power is weighed, not only in the vertical, top-down structure of the state, but also in the more horizontal relationships that can be established within the organisation. On editorial control, the research has shown that the government has a permanent influence on the channel's contents by 'suggesting' topics it could address. Although they launch calls for tenders requesting that independent producers propose other topics, the latter restrict their proposals to what they think the government and the channel would approve, therefore undermining all possibilities of producing contents other than cultural and folkloric features of Colombia, but also reinforcing their own self-censorship in their need for financial survival.

Another significant finding of this study shows that there is a set of organisational practices, such as clientelism and bureaucracy, that are at the core of the management of the state and its agencies, and that act as forms of symbolic power that maintain the political *status quo*, with a hint of controlled autonomy that keeps producers complying with the norms whilst thinking they are on the right path to self-realisation.

Finally, on networking, I have argued that the concept has been traditionally used in literature on creative labour as a shallow form of relationship of mere instrumental purposes, whilst the evidence from this research suggests that in the Colombian context, there are stronger bonds tying members with shared experiences; bonds that transcend the professional network towards more lasting community and familial relationships, which simultaneously work as support for members facing the challenges of instability and uncertainty tied to creative professions. Furthermore, when clientelistic practices

are also involved in the formation of the network, members can count on some political security. In addition, I have argued that this closeness creates elites within the network, that it generates revolving doors within different media and culture organisations (TV channels, government agencies, universities) where jobs are offered on the basis of friendship. However, it is in the formation of networks that producers can really deploy their symbolic capital in order to either make professional contacts, or have access to elite networks on the basis of their socio-economical background.

So far it has been evidenced that the context for media work under state control in Colombia is characterised by precarity and portioned autonomy for producers, due to local contextual specificities related to poor social welfare and strong state intervention in the mediated representation of public affairs. The fact that the media network is guided by affection and political partisanship, most notably in the public sector, raises doubts about the impact of these forms of networking on the outcomes that are supposed to be in the public interest. These concerns will be addressed in the following chapters.

6. Good Work and Autonomy in Public Television Production

In previous chapters I described some of the working conditions in the cultural sector, which can be summarized as precarious since it does not provide much security or advantages: in most cases, income is not usually sufficient to live on; and furthermore, high levels of mobility and uncertainty keep workers constantly searching for ‘the next job’; all of this aggravated by a relentless sense of instability and uncertainty fostered by the government’s clientelistic practices. Workers are aware of these circumstances, yet they keep praising their roles and practices, which raises questions about the ways they negotiate their autonomy in the workplace, and how they build their perceptions of work, in terms of their motivations and satisfactions. The idea of doing good work is both a major motivation and satisfaction for cultural workers, as it helps them develop a professional identity and a sense of worth through their outcomes. Hence, in this chapter I outline the notion of good work, in order to understand how producers negotiate their motivations with the actual context they must work in of a public channel that is under state control; this will lead us to a reformulated understanding of how ‘good work’ is defined in a new and specific context such as Colombian PSB.

6.1. What is ‘Good Work’?

The satisfaction cultural workers obtain from doing a job that is professionally meaningful, is one of the conditions that Hesmondhalgh and Baker acknowledge as constituent for what they denominate “good work” (2011). In their seminal work on creative labour, the notion of good work is defined as work that entails “autonomy, interest and involvement, sociality, self-esteem, self-realisation, work–life balance and security” (2011, p. 36). In addition, there is also a correlation between the work and the quality of the outcome; this is how “bad work” relates to the production of goods that are either of poor quality or harmful to people or society. In contrast, products from good work involve “goods and services that are excellent and that promote aspects of

the common good” (2011, p.36). To reach this definition, Hesmondhalgh and Baker build on Blauner’s model of alienated and unalienated labour (1964) which comprises four types of work alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation and self-estrangement. Departing from these categories, Hesmondhalgh and Baker provided more detailed concepts to develop their own model of good and bad work, which includes autonomy, sociality, self-esteem, self-actualisation and self-realisation, then enriched it by incorporating essential aspects of bad work, such as *insecurity* and *work-life balance*. Moreover, Hesmondhalgh and Baker acknowledged that these concepts only make reference to the *process* of cultural work, but that it does not actually say anything about the cultural product. Therefore, they also integrated product assessment in terms of quality and social value as part of their model, which is summarized in the following table (Table 11):

	<i>Good work</i>	<i>Bad work</i>
<i>Process</i>	Good wages, working hours, high levels of safety Autonomy Interest, involvement Sociality Self-esteem Self-realisation Work-life balance Security	Poor wages, working hours and levels of safety Powerlessness Boredom Isolation Low self-esteem and shame Frustrated development Overwork Risk
<i>Products</i>	Excellent Products Products that contribute to the common good	Low-quality products Products that fail to contribute to the well-being of others

Table 11 Conceptualising Good and Bad Work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 39)

The product is particularly relevant to my research as the participants work for a public broadcaster that claims to produce contents in the public interest and, therefore, such contents should be understood *ex ante* as useful to audiences in the sense that they should have been created to contribute to the common good. The relationship between producers and their outcomes is significant as producing *good* contents is the most relevant aspect of professional and personal satisfaction obtained from the job. Therefore, Hesmondhalgh and Baker’s work is essential for examining the affects (emotional responses in terms of their experiences and perceptions) involved in the relationship between cultural workers and their practices: for example, a work can be perceived as bad when the outcomes are of inferior quality, which also means workers failed in their intention to contribute to society. Additionally, if working conditions are

pressing, unstable and/or poor, cultural worker's general well-being is compromised (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, pp. 69-70). Here, I take up their call on the need for research that considers "how the reflexivity, intentionality and agency of cultural producers conditions the creativity and innovation possible within a given medium" (2011: 74), so as to interpret the relation between producers' narratives of doing good work, the working context, and the actual outcomes. Likewise, to understand why, amidst the general adversity and precarity of working conditions in the cultural sector, cultural workers prefer this way of life over the stability provided by more traditional jobs.

Answers to the latter question indicate an important feature of cultural workers' perception of themselves as individuals and professionals, and emphasize the satisfaction obtained from their jobs as a key factor of what constitutes the notion of *good work*. For example, Banks (2006), Wynne and O'Connor (1998), and Florida (2002), provide some suggestions on the matter, saying that "cultural entrepreneurs are in part motivated by a desire to contribute to the aesthetic 'vibrancy' of the city (Wynne and O'Connor, 1998) or by the idea of inspiring a 'creative' urban renaissance" (2006, p. 437). More recently, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2009) tackled the same inquiry, and offered an answer based on Menger's (1999) three explanations for choosing the highs and lows of cultural work:

1. "Labour of love (artists, or symbol creators, have a strong sense of a 'calling', of potential fulfilment, and they are prepared to take the risk of failure);
2. Artists are risk-lovers;
3. Artistic work brings nonmonetary, psychological rewards, associated with autonomy, community, the possibility of self-actualisation, and potentially high degrees of recognition, even celebrity" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2009, p. 9).

Hesmondhalgh and Baker summarize these three factors by stating that "some people are highly oriented to self-realisation through work, and some people find work the best way to achieve the esteem and recognition that most of us need" (2011, p. 228). Oakley, in her lengthy study on the phenomenon of the cultural worker (2014), describes the entrepreneurial experience in relation to the aspects associated with the notion of *good work*, paying particular attention to the pleasure obtained from work, and the artistic status, however, arguing that "It is important not to sentimentalise cultural work" (2014,

p. 157) because when cultural work is performed by an independent, motivations vary from producing excellent cultural products to overcoming financial difficulties, therefore “imagination is required to rethink our notions of good work in culture and elsewhere, and persistence will be necessary to bring this about” (2014, p.57). This means that it is possible to maintain a romanticised idea of cultural work, but allowances must be made for the complex environments in which it is performed, and the multiple variations that motivate workers to remain in the field, which may or not be related to factors that characterise good work.

In order to develop a common understanding of the motivations behind creative work, the idea of doing “good work” stands out both in the available literature and from data emerging from my empirical study. Still, it is impossible to wholly determine whether motivations for doing cultural work are something intrinsic to the individual, or whether they are acquired through experience; however, as will be seen in the following section, doing good work is the main reason my participants gave for putting themselves under uncertain working conditions. In what follows, I also focus on autonomy as the main feature of good work, and how it is evidenced in work aspects that draw on self-realisation through creative autonomy and recognition, and workplace freedom. The unique circumstances of producing public service television under state control provide a particular context for the development of both creative autonomy and workplace freedom.

6.2. Good Work in the Colombian Public Media System

As shown in previous chapters, the complex relationship between the state and the channel affects producers’ perceptions of autonomy, and develops dynamics of unspoken negotiation between work and self-realisation so producers can fulfil both state/public service aims and pursue their personal and professional goals. These local features add to the academic understanding of the idea of good work in the creative industries, but these notions have not been tested outside Global-North contexts. In what ensues, the data draws on the dichotomy between creative autonomy and

workplace autonomy, embedding them in a context where narratives of doing good work provide a renewed point of view for traditional understandings of these concepts. It will expand on how the creative autonomy of television producers for Señal Colombia is exerted through programme making, therefore obtaining visibility and recognition through peer comments and winning awards, and how they negotiate their autonomy with government demands.

Table 12 Producer's Perceptions on Aspects of Good Work

	Irrelevant	Lower than Average	Average	Higher than Average
Quality of Outcomes	5%	0%	39%	56%
Outcomes Contribution to Society	6%	5%	28%	61%
Levels of Boredom	11%	61%	28%	0%
Levels of Isolation	22%	56%	11%	11%
Opportunities for Self-Realisation	6%	11%	33%	50%
General Motivation	5%	17%	28%	50%
Levels of Satisfaction	11%	0%	50%	39%
Levels of Self-esteem	6%	6%	53%	35%
Level of Income	0%	50%	39%	11%
Work-Life Balance	0%	44%	28%	28%
Opportunities for Creative Autonomy	6%	22%	33%	39%
Job Security	0%	78%	17%	5%
Number of Working Hours	0%	0%	6%	94%
Levels of Uncertainty	6%	11%	5%	78%

To begin unfurling how Hesmondhalgh and Baker's notion of good work applies to the Colombian case, every participant working either as a commissioning editor or producer was asked about their personal perception of the aspects of good and bad work, where they could place their perception of the aspect under fixed categories: average; lower than average, higher than average or irrelevant. The results are displayed in the table above, and demonstrate that producers generally have very high expectations of their work: they are highly motivated and they consider the quality of the contents they produce not only to be very high, but also relevant for society. Furthermore, they perceive that they have sufficient opportunities to develop their own creative

autonomy, therefore enhancing their chances to attain self-realisation. Likewise, it is not surprising that they do not feel bored or isolated while performing their roles. However, notwithstanding this discursivity about their perceptions of the job, they rate their levels of self-esteem and satisfaction as average, which is interesting and contrasts the fact that they also claim to have more opportunities for self-realisation through their work. It would seem, then, that they are getting just enough to feel comfortable both with their career choices and what they are obtaining from the job. However, when looking at the other set of work aspects, it is understandable why levels of satisfaction and self-esteem are average. To begin with, producers consider the income they earn as average, what is expected for the job they perform in the field, however, they remark that job security is lower than in other fields, and that they must work a lot more, therefore spending most of their time at work rather than actually enjoying their earnings. Furthermore, they recognise that the uncertainty that comes with the job is very high, making it very difficult for them to truly find the stability they require.

In general, it could be said from the above table that public TV producers and media workers give greater meaning to their imagined idea of the value of what they produce, and the opportunities to express themselves as creative, autonomous beings, to the extent that they decide to endure the adversities of the job, therefore evidencing that their moral stance and personal nature are higher motivators than their physical and material wellbeing. In the following sections, Hesmondhalgh and Baker's categories for good work are contrasted against producers' experiences and perceptions of work at Señal Colombia.

6.2.1. Discourses on Motivation

When asked about the motivations that drove them to pursue a career in the media field, producers offer a variety of reasons that range from a desire to tell their own stories to a calling to produce something beneficial for society.

"This is my vocation: producing audio-visual contents that promote social transformation and the reconciliation of humankind" (Commissioning Editor, IV 27).

"Participating in the creation of tales and the construction of the nation" (Commissioning Editor, IV 37).

"Telling stories" (Former SC Director, IV 21).

“Passion” (Commissioning Editor, IV 30).

“My main motivation was to understand the impact of communication on the strengthening of national identities, therefore as a professional having the opportunity to propose new representations of our reality through audio-visual contents” (Former Director of Programming, IV 3).

“Watching films” (Freelancer, IV 38; Independent Producer, IV 19; Independent Producer, IV11).

The following chart illustrates and summarizes the main reasons given by participants for entering the media field:

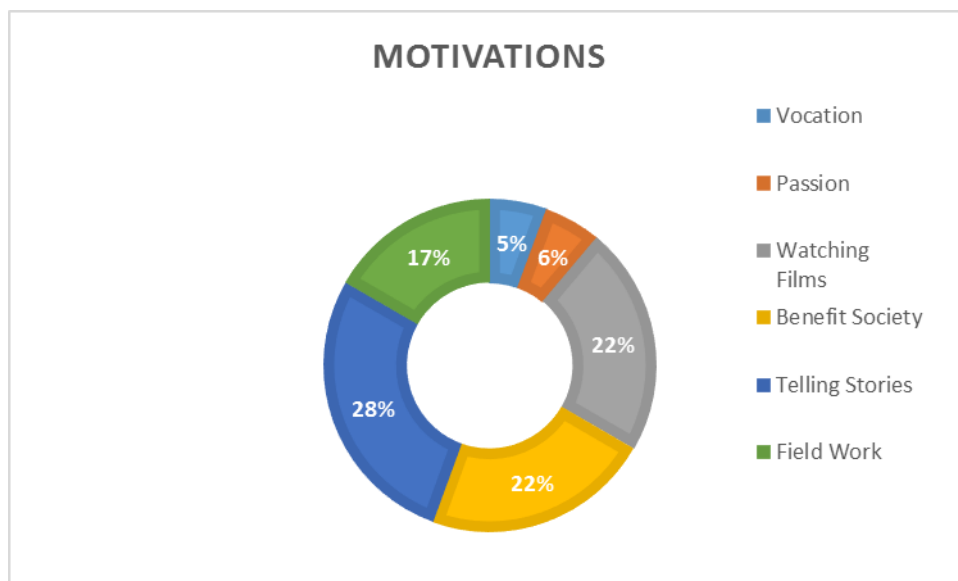


Figure 13 Motivations for Entering the Audio-visual Field

According to their responses, the main reason is to tell their own stories. They see themselves either as directors or video makers, so they can in reality see their creative ideas come true in audio-visual forms. This response is relevant when their answers are contrasted with the notion of the value of their products, or the idea of producing something audiences find relevant, as shown later on. The second most important reason to join the media field is divided between the individuals' cinematographic interest and their idea of being able to benefit society through the production of audio-visual contents. These reasons make sense when juxtaposed with the first one; they want to tell stories, and those stories have a purpose: either they are of cinematographic relevance or they can have a significant impact on the viewer's experience.

To emphasize their motivations, producers argue that through their daily work they are making an important contribution to society and filling a gap in the media landscape. There is a common narrative that justifies their actions: apart from Señal Colombia, no other channel in the national television landscape produces non-commercial, niche, arts and cultural programming. That is to say, children's programming, documentaries, live music shows, and in general formats that are not associated with the soap operas, celebrities or gossip programmes which abound in commercial Colombian TV scheduling. For instance, this opinion is evident in the response of a freelance production assistant:

"If the channel didn't exist, what could we tell about Colombia? Reality shows? We have a lot of stories; thanks to Señal Colombia I've had the opportunity to know both a joyful and sad Colombia" (Freelancer Production Assistant, FG Participant 1).

This answer is interesting not only because it reflects the common narrative of working for Señal Colombia (a sense of uniqueness, a sense of worth and value, and job satisfaction), but also because it comes from a freelancer who does not have a direct working relationship with the channel. Like many others, he is hired through a third party that outsources for independent producers with commissions for Señal Colombia. He is in the most distant link in the production chain; however, he is as committed to, and passionate about, the job as most commissioning editors or independent producers. This response reveals the discursive creation of Señal Colombia as part of an imaginary space of idealised community –somewhat akin to Benedict Anderson's idea of 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006). The channel, and producers as part of it, are a construction of discourses which are spread with the confidence that they are actually true. Through this discursivity, producers add value to their context and justify their own involvement in it. Therefore, SC occupies a space in the broadcasting imaginary, but it is far from being real. This is also evident in the tone a commissioning editor's used to describe his motivations for working at Señal Colombia:

"We want to make an impact on every person's life, we want to impact their understanding of the world, the way they see it. This is an educational and cultural channel, we have a social responsibility, and we want our audience to grow, as persons and as a society. We are a treasure yet to be discovered". (Commissioning editor, IV 24).

Beyond an imagined community, this quote clearly evidences Bourdieu's field of restricted production (Bourdieu, 1983), where artists produce for one another and do not want to be mass market or popular, since this would invalidate their 'special' aesthetic credentials and sense of superiority. Public service television offers cultural products that, because of the industrial practices behind them and their scope, could be considered as 'mass appeal'; however, the characteristics of these cultural products – the television programmes- can be situated in the sub-field of restricted production as it excludes the pursuit of profit and it is not expected to achieve massive acceptance or ratings. Albeit unnoticed, producing worthy contents (cultural, educational) is what keeps them working and insisting on working for the channel. PBS aims are part of the narrative of their professional identity, and they want to make a contribution to society from their own standing points:

"I feel that I'm contributing to my country; that I'm working for something worth watching. We are proud to work for SC, even if they (audiences) don't care about our existence. (Freelance researcher, FG Participant 2)".

And these characteristics make them stand out from the national TV offer. In particular, Señal Colombia scheduling is characterized by its factual programming, where interviews and documentaries fill the daily scheduling. Regarding these genres, there is also an overall feeling of identification and satisfaction:

"Producing documentaries has become a way of life for me, it's not just a job. You are always away from home, willingly sleeping wherever you have to; you must get used to the cold and hot weather; keeping cool in dangerous neighborhoods..." (Independent producer, IV 11).

These findings corroborate Zoellner's (2016), who, after studying a group of independent television producers in the United Kingdom and Germany, found that "practitioners are, on one hand, integrated into the television production culture and perceive themselves as television professionals operating in a particular commodified industrial setting. On the other hand, they are committed to a particular program genre. In this case, the practitioners perceived themselves also as documentary makers dedicated to genre-related values of production and representation" (2016, p.153). Additionally, she found producers have developed a narrative on the intrinsic value of documentary production: for her interviewees, when the purpose of a documentary is

to offer an understanding of social reality, it makes the genre stronger than others, therefore more 'worthwhile' (p.156).

Moreover, attachment to a particular format that is believed to be more morally valuable than others was also identified by Born (2002) in her long study of the organisational tensions inside the BBC. In her case study, she discovered that "a continually evolving Reithianism animated the BBC's production cultures, as for decades it had informed the shared craft of British broadcasting. For each kind of programming the Reithian ethic had a different inflection; it formed part of the collective expertise and implicit knowledge of programme-makers" (2002, p. 96). This "neo-Reithian" ethos was also corroborated by Lee (2012) and Bennett (2015). In his study on independent television production, Lee found that TV producers care about the productions they are working on, as they want their outcomes to be educational, informative and entertaining, but also negotiating those purposes with two competing desires: "the desire for fulfilment in work as understood in purely commercial terms, and the desire for fulfilment through an internal sense of having done good work, and receiving public recognition for that" (2012, p. 490). Similarly, Bennett, in his study on the motivations of public service television producers (2015), found that "public service emerges as a culture that seeks to balance creativity, remit, and the forbearance of economic reward as highest priority in the production, economic, and textual practices of the sector" (2015, p. 127). These findings are also corroborated in my study, as respondents demonstrated having developed a narrative on the value of the contents they produce, stating that they are valuable insofar as they make people consider versions of reality that are not portrayed by commercial channels, thus offering a broader representation of the country, its inhabitants, their traditions and customs. SC producers feel they are making a difference whenever they show something that would never be shown by other channels in the country. This narrativization of their outcomes also strengthens their self-perceptions and identities as professionals, working as 'motivating factors' to keep themselves performing their roles, providing them with the satisfaction that softens the harsh working conditions. The idea of doing something of value for society helps them endure the everyday precariousness.

Though participants are not part of a homogenous group, and their experience of producing public TV in Colombia is different in each case, there is a general and solid consensus on this point: what they are producing for the channel is good in terms of the topics they are addressing and the contribution these programmes can make to society. The idea of producing something of value for those who consume it, which is intrinsic to in the notion of good work as seen earlier in this chapter, has been evidenced as one of the main motivations for cultural workers to endure the precarity associated with their field. However, it is noteworthy that most participants made their way to public TV through professional contacts they met whilst working for commercial TV, which could mean that producing “good” contents was not necessarily what most of them were aiming to achieve at the onset of their careers (see Figure 14); in fact, producing contents for public TV sometimes comes as an option for producers to develop their own creative ideas, or just as a means to secure an income. This is definitely a contradiction in their professional identity, nonetheless it cannot be implied that they are not motivated by the idea of doing “good work”, or that it is just a pose, nor that they cannot change their minds.

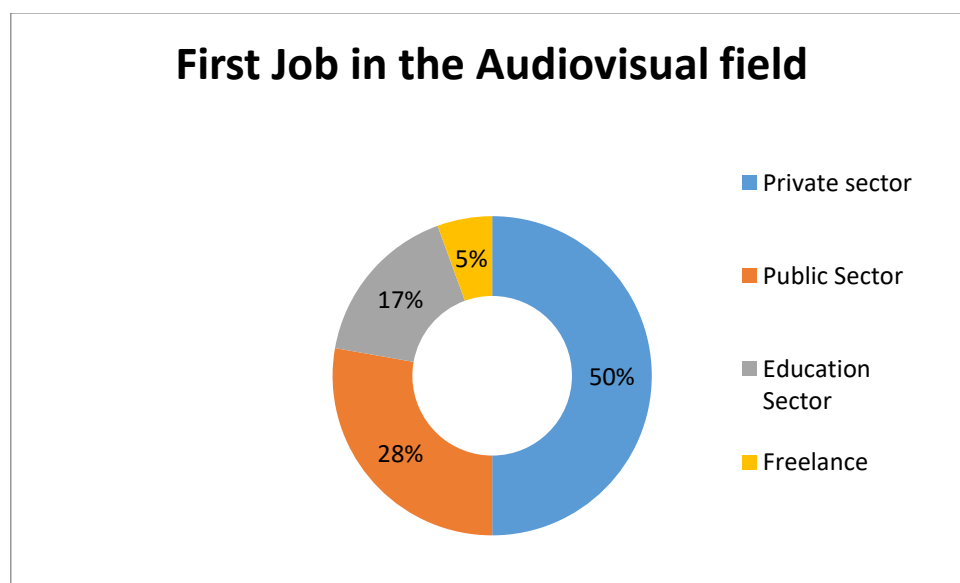


Figure 14 Participants' First Job in the Audio-visual Field

The question of the extent to which these values are internal, subjective and, therefore, somehow authentic and significant, as opposed to a structured response to the objective conditions of employment, is the heart of the matter and the key factor that affects our understanding of ‘good work’. The contents are unquestionably good,

because they are not *bad* in terms of quality, and they are not promoting contents that audiences can find immoral or offensive in any way. What they produce does not raise controversy of any sort, or try to raise debates on national issues such as internal conflicts, political corruption or international affairs. In this sense, the idea of doing ‘good work’ thoroughly differs from Hesmondhalgh and Bakers’ in terms of the value of the outcomes and their contribution to society. In the Colombian public service media context, in the case studied, ‘good work’ means producing contents that positively represent the nation, that reinforce national identity and a sense of belonging. It is good work in a narrowly restricted sense, in that it is autonomous, free and ‘creatively’ open in a certain way, but it is equally bad work in the way Hesmondhalgh and Baker would judge it, because it is bound by interference, and must shy away from topics that are ‘controversial’. It could be argued that this ‘good’ work is having ‘bad’ effects if ‘white’ programming is not contributing to (or is ignoring the value of) social critique or a democratic representation of the diverse multicultural perspectives of Colombian society, for example.

As depicted in this section, workers for Señal Colombia combine the best of that which can be expected from creative workers: they are passionate, ethical, creative, self-reflexive and committed. The ethical commitment and morals that participants voiced about their work suggest a more fundamental understanding of the idea of good work. Thus, the characteristics of “good work” expressed herein, that in fact apply more to “good workers”, are challenged when commissioners’ or independents’ outcomes are weighed against their personal and professional expectations in the Colombian public media system, considering that the efficacy/impact of these outcomes contradict producers’ discourses on the value of what they do; it would appear that these outcomes have greater value for the producers than for audiences.

6.2.2. From the Value of Outcomes to Self-exploitation

As discussed in the previous chapter, cultural workers – in this case audio-visual producers - tend to push themselves into precarious situations when they wish to achieve either professional and personal goals, or to produce outcomes that do not

necessarily pursue financial income, but other sorts of 'psychic' rewards (Throsby, 2010). The freedom to do this, as Hesmondhalgh and Baker argue, is complicated "because it involves a very strong sense of ambivalence for many workers. Pleasure and obligation become blurred in a highly challenging way" (2009, p. 17). In this sense, the authors question whether "autonomy and pleasure might be conceived ultimately as tools of control, encouraging self-exploitation" (2009, p.17) in their quest to find meaningful work. For Hesmondhalgh and Baker, self-exploitation is a danger that each and every cultural worker and government should be aware of, and that ethical goals must be "balanced against other ethical principles" (2011, p. 228).

However, producers are not necessarily completely free to develop their autonomy, if they are simultaneously trying to make a living out of their work. This is because they are either influenced by market pressures or other external forces that might influence their decisions; in this case, cultural workers negotiate their creative investment with the goals of the sponsor or funder, so that both can achieve their objectives. In so doing, cultural workers ensure obtaining a continuous source of paid work. Though mostly evident in independents and freelancers, this behaviour is also apparent in my empirical study of commissioning editors and other producers, who have full-time jobs under fixed-term contracts and accommodate their individual goals to those of the institution, thus guaranteeing some work stability for themselves under limited conditions of autonomy. As Banks (2007) and Stahl (2012) see it, the selflessness of creative workers can be an inconvenient characteristic for work in general, as "individuals are perpetually required to demonstrate their co-operation with enterprise ideals, in work and beyond, and are ever reminded of their responsibilities by programmes of government that promote working as the primary social obligation" (Banks, 2007, p. 56), therefore "the exportation of norms of artistic or creative work into other fields appears mainly to promise peril and disaffiliation" (Stahl, 2012, p. 54). Nonetheless, most participants care deeply about the programmes they produce, to the point that certain independents have overstretched their own financial resources to see them through. This was the case of an independent producer, utterly passionate about his work, who ended up in debt for covering production costs that were not envisaged in the original budget, just for the pleasure of producing a programme to his entire satisfaction:

“(...) I had to shut down my company, but I would pay from my own pocket again if I’m not completely satisfied with the outcome. Anyway, I love working for Señal Colombia, because it is the only place where you can talk about the topics you like to talk about”. (Independent producer, IV 32).

This response demonstrates that satisfaction and commitment can also function “to mask exploitation, insecurity, and raises questions marks over the long term sustainability of a creative career within the current context” (Lee D. , 2012, p. 483). According to Throsby, an aspect of cultural workers is that they “in general do not regard work as a chore where the only purpose is to earn income. Rather, their commitment to making art means that they have a positive preference for working at their chosen profession, and empirical evidence indicates that they often forgo lucrative alternative employment in order to spend more time pursuing their creative work” (2010, p. 81) , in other words, they are the “voluntary poor” (Ross, 2000). Throsby’s concept added to Ross’ account of the mythology of artistic labour provide the foundations for the working conditions faced by creative workers today: they prefer to be underpaid if they have the chance to work in something they really care about, as opposed to probably higher paid jobs that would consume the majority of their time doing something that gives them no personal satisfaction.

Most of the time, what is expected from cultural workers is what Ross called a “sacrificial ethos” (2000), this is a “commitment to values of a ‘higher’ nature (...) as a ‘calling’ that feeds into mentality in which workers are prepared to accept appalling pay and conditions that would, in other sectors, be regarded as nakedly exploitative” (Gill, 2011, p. 255). Self-exploitation, then, seems to be the morally justifiable way for cultural producers to make themselves visible and become recognised in the field. However, this expectation also works against them, as they are contributing to maintaining “a degraded labour market that disciplines and sets the wage floors of those precariously positioned in the core segments immediately above” (Ross, 2000, p. 27). This has extended the perception that cultural workers should accept low pay, or no pay at all, out of the “love for the subject” (Ross, 2000, p. 22). This problem is magnified by the uncertainty and instability of the field, which force workers to conform to precarity in exchange for work opportunities. Menger offers a more detailed explanation on the way selfless and emotional satisfaction are capitalized:

“Artistic work can be considered as highly attractive along a set of measurable dimensions of job satisfaction that include the variety of the work, a high level of personal autonomy in using one’s own initiative, the opportunities to use a wide range of abilities and to feel self-actualized at work, an idiosyncratic way of life, a strong sense of community, a low level of routine and a high degree of social recognition for successful artists. All these benefits have a shadow price, which may be compensated by a lower income than would be expected from less amenable jobs” (Menger, 2006, p. 777).

These notions are expanded by Brook (2015), who similarly describes cultural workers’ persistence, arguing that due to “professional ideologies of authorship and creativity (...) cultural workers are willing to trade in financial reward and security for creative autonomy” (2015, p. 296), or as Bennet and Strange put it, such forms of self-exploitation and precarity are accepted “because of the desire to work with a creative freedom that fulfils the utopian promise of media independence: to create a better, more just and open society” (2015, p. 139).

Regardless of the precarity, uncertainty, and lack of job protection or stability, the overall sense among most participants was that Señal Colombia is the best place they could possibly work in. They find themselves working under relatively less pressure than in commercial television, and producing programmes they find inherently valuable. In addition, at some point they begin to develop a narrative of value and worth that heightens their overall satisfaction: they defend the channel and its contents, they display a narrative of passion and love for what they are doing. After a few months of work, they develop a feeling of belonging, of being part of something that has great potential but cannot be fully developed; furthermore, as they engage with the contents they are producing, they distil a narrative on their value as producers of public TV which begins adding to the construction of their own professional identity. This narrative expresses their “refusal of tedious, repetitive, exploitative and mundane work” (McRobbie A., 2007), and their idea that they are producing something “good”, worthy and socially valuable (Banks, 2006; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Bennett & Strange, 2015).

The recognition of creative workers’ autonomy to make decisions that seem to negatively affect their finances but improve their general well-being has provoked a shift in the understanding of creative labour, from being precarious (McRobbie, 2002a; Ross, 2003) to being moral, ethical, and “good” work (Banks, 2006; Hesmondhalgh & Baker,

2011; Lee, 2012; Deuze and Lewis, 2013). In that sense, Deuze and Lewis argue that “(t)he fact that people who do cultural work often deeply care about what they do not only opens up more opportunities for exploitation, but can also be seen as raising the stakes for a personalized sense of professional identity as a coping mechanism that can be self-delusional as well as empowering” (2013, p. 167). In contrast, Banks does not acknowledge these decisions as something that has not been thought through, but as a rational, self-reflexive and sensitive response from cultural producers who articulate moral-political values to their daily instrumental goals (2006, p. 465). In the same fashion, Lee found that cultural workers displayed a ‘neo-Reithian’ ethic: ‘a deep-rooted ethical concern (...) They care about the product they are working on and they carry out creative work (...) because they want to inform, educate, and have a positive impact on society’ (2012, p. 487). Similarly, by studying a group of producers for the BBC, Bennett demonstrated that they acknowledged their job and the company as a flagship for public service ethos, working under a strong cultural commitment, to the point that “(public service media) only exists to the degree to which those who produce it believe in it, understand it, and share some sense of value” (Bennett, 2015, p. 135).

Brook (2015) challenges the idea of the artist’s sacrifice when it comes to their financial abdication in exchange for participation in the cultural work. He argues that, though the idea of “selfless” morality behind cultural work dignifies their role, it cannot be generalised to every cultural worker’s experience. Instead, Brook seeks an explanation that considers the practical circumstances where such “selflessness” can be translated into an economic reward. For him, the focus must be placed on “a founding conception of culture as a repertoire of activities for cultivating ‘the person’ as a particular type of social investment” (2015. p. 299). To wit, that cultural workers may not have a substantial financial reward but receive a boost in the construction of their professional identities, an impetus that features the cultural worker as an autonomous, creative professional. Brooks’ understanding is aligned with Feher’s notion of human capital (2009):

“The things that I inherit, the things that happen to me, and the things I do all contribute to the maintenance or the deterioration of my human capital. More radically put, my human capital is me, as a set of skills and capabilities that is modified by all that affects me and all that I affect. Accordingly, the return on human capital no longer manifests itself

solely in calculations about whether to work or to receive more training. It now refers to all that is produced by the skill set that defines me. Such that everything I earn — be it salary, returns on investments, booty, or favours I may have incurred — can be understood as the return on the human capital that constitutes me” (2009, p. 26)

In this study, producers are fully aware of the consequences of their kamikaze-like decisions. They may have had different expectations in their very early days in the field, but once they were there and became fully conscious of what working in the television sector entails, they decided to stay. What would appear as an incoherent decision on the part of cultural producers (sacrificing job protection for personal and professional fulfilment) has been interpreted by Menger as ‘psychic income’ (1999); a term he used to refer to the rewards creative workers receive when performing creative jobs: “high level of personal autonomy”, “opportunities to use a wide range of abilities and to feel self-actualized at work” and a “high degree of social recognition for the successful artist” (1999, p. 555). However, as Menger argues, this psychic income is put to the test when the worker ages, and the buzz and coolness of having a creative job fade compared to the need for stability, especially when workers have a family to take care of, and debts or mortgage to pay off.

The shift in mind-set, from eulogising the channel and the value of its outcomes, as well as their own role in their production, to feeling disappointed and with a sensation of frustrated development, is manifest in certain responses, where participants admitted having considered a change of career, or were in fact actively seeking a transition at the time of the interview:

“This job is unbelievably demanding, both on the personal and emotional levels. Managing to start and keeping a healthy family life is a very complicated task, and it is even more difficult if you want to have children. We have no schedules at work, we must be available on weekends, holidays, and there is no paid leave... Yes, you have a few months with a stable and “good” income, but it is still exhausting. On top of that, the amount of taxes you have to pay is outrageously high, therefore no matter how high your income, it is just an illusion... I haven’t quite left it because I love it, and that’s a problem: this job is a passion, a passion that devours the rest of your life” (Commissioning Editor, IV 37).

“The uncertainty of not having a stable job for long periods of time makes you consider whether to stay, or not, and most of the time you find yourself looking for alternative ways to earn income” (Commissioning Editor, IV 24).

A significant percentage of the participants (33%) admitted not only to having considered the possibility, but being actively on the lookout for other job opportunities,

whilst 11% are approaching that point. In general, the main reasons given were uncertainty and instability, along with excess work, which after a decade in the field, fails to compensate for the moral rewards. Interestingly, those who have considered changing career have been in the media field for at least ten years and are over 30 years old, which means that the hype of working in this field is more related to a stage of life in which people are still exploring their career options, giving themselves to what they feel passionate about, with no concern for material rewards. But once they have dedicated a substantial amount of their life to media work, feeling underpaid or over-exploited, sensing they have wasted their efforts doing something very few people actually care about, they turn away and seek something else:

“I quit producing TV because I began to lose my battles, and I felt that everything was going backwards. Also they (the government) started limiting my autonomy...I felt the cycle was completed and what came next for me was to start over...I’d spent 20 years in this struggle and there was no step forward”. (Former SC director, IV 29).

Intriguingly, this participant was the only one to actually mention government influence as one of the motivators for considering retiring from the media field; in general, the relationship between the state and the public television system is not deemed an aggravating factor for the precarity of their working conditions in terms of the real extent to which they can exert their creative autonomy. On the contrary, complying with the government’s demands in terms of contents to be produced by Señal Colombia is actually seen by most producers as a manifestation of good work, because only through producing educational and cultural contents can they find themselves making an important contribution to society, even leaving aside the fact that these contents are not part of the audience’s choice and therefore have no real impact.

Considering changing career might also be encouraged by a shift in the familial setting, but is not necessarily a condition. Indeed, among those who stated they were considering a change of career, half of them were single and without children; the gender balance was also equal, half of them being women and the other half men. This reinforces the idea that at the beginning of their careers in the audio-visual sector, producers are driven by their own preconceptions of the work and they firmly believe in the impact of their outputs, otherwise they would not invest so much time, effort and emotions; but once they are confronted with the precarity of the audio-visual field, and

the real extent to which they can exert their autonomy, their experience and perception of the work change, and their moral commitment is more likely to fade away, especially when uncertainty and instability are their daily bread.

6.3. Autonomy

The notion of autonomy is central to Hesmondhalgh and Baker's model of good work. They understand it as being the opposite to the idea of powerlessness as discussed by Blauner, drawing on Hodson's arguments on the importance of autonomy (2011, p. 31). For Hodson, workers in control of tools, techniques, and work priorities are in relatively higher positions of power than other workers, and "report greater levels of job satisfaction and meaning, and greater levels of creativity at work, than other types of occupation" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 31).

According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker, there are two variants of creative autonomy: aesthetic and professional. Citing Andrew Bowie, they define the former as "the idea that works of art entail freely produced rules which do not apply to any other natural object or human product" (2011, p. 62). Or, as Toynbee puts it, the idea of aesthetic autonomy is set "against utility. Here culture making is conceived as autonomous in resistance to the ratio-centric, means-ends system which has come to order the modern world" (Toynbee, 2012). Banks believes this understanding became possible following the emergence of industrial societies, where cultural work was seen in opposition to for-profit work, and was not subject to commercial demands, with artists being free-spirited subjects "possessed of rare and precious gifts (...) recognised as the antithesis to the rational and calculative subject of the modern age" (2010, p. 3). However, Hesmondhalgh and Baker find that this romanticised vision is valuable, as it keeps cultural work from falling into reductionism and mere commodification.

The second variant of creative autonomy is related to professional or workplace autonomy, which refers to the self-determination of professionals to "find some resistance to the encroachment of commercial goals" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 67). Here, professional values and identity mark an important difference in the exercise of autonomy in constraining working environments, therefore pitching "human creativity against alienation" (Toynbee, 2013, p. 87). Under this variant, subjects are

provided with working conditions that permit them to develop their individual potential, find meaning, capitalize their strong points, attain a sense of belonging in their working environment, therefore developing a fulfilling experience of the work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 29). This type of autonomy can be expected in freelancing modes of work which, according to Cohen (2015), “has offered a way to gain control over the working conditions and the works (freelancers) create. Here autonomy means refusing to be subservient to a single company and maintaining freedom to self-organise one’s labour” (2015, p. 522). Good work, in this case, consists of self-determination: being able to make your own choices.

Producers must negotiate their personal and professional motivations with the features of the context they are working in, they must achieve an equilibrium between their individual goals and their superiors’ requirements. This is the self-same negotiation of autonomy Banks identifies in cultural workers’ struggle to reconcile the opportunities for self-realisation whilst also trying to survive (Banks, 2010). Similarly, Oakley and Leadbeater (1999) describe these negotiations in the independent sector, though they acknowledge that independents are highly motivated, and with a strong work ethic, “the entrepreneurialism they display is often of the forced, or at least adaptive, kind” (2014, p. 145). Meaning that most of them did not decide to become independents of their own free will, but rather, that the characteristics of the field forced them to be flexible in their work choices, usually having an additional job to their entrepreneurial attempts that guarantees some stable income.

As seen in previous chapters, the room producers have to exert their autonomy at Señal Colombia is limited by editorial guidelines, as they must comply with the channel’s mission to produce quality contents that “encourage democratic participation, build citizenship and create national identity” (Señal Colombia, 2012, p. 3). In this sense, both the organisation and its employees follow (either directly or indirectly) moral dispositions and norms that anchor their activities, not only making them behave ethically, but also compelling them to produce outcomes that are meant to enhance the viewers’ experience; nonetheless, most participants perceive a high degree of freedom when it comes to suggesting stories and developing audio-visual narratives:

“What I like best of my job is planning. Thinking of new projects, that’s wonderful creatively” (Commissioning Editor, IV 30).

“You are always autonomous in the way you choose to tell your stories; what you want to show; what audiences are going to see; the channel has some guidelines, but they are not specifically related to political issues” (Independent producer, IV 1).

The guidelines this independent producer is referring to concern regulations regarding the depiction of sex and violence; in addition, both the organisation and its members must comply with regulations and other pressures (both financial and political) that might compromise the moral motivations of their work, taking producers away from the level of autonomy to the one of responsibility and duty. This duty is summarized in a comment made by the then Deputy-manager of Television:

“We portray government plans in our own narratives, in our own formats” (Former Television Deputy-Manager, IV 4).

As shown in the preceding chapter, those plans are translated into an annual list containing the main topics to be addressed by the channel’s programming. The desired topics emanate from the presidency, pass through ministries, then on to the RTVC manager, and finally to the channel’s director and commissioning editors. Some independent producers find these guidelines helpful when developing their narratives, and are grateful for the commissioning editors’ ‘help’. This is especially true with independents who have, as yet, little experience in the field. However, for those who have been there longer, this help is unwanted and, indeed, often perceived as an interference:

“After our proposal was selected, we spent almost 11 months producing it. Once the commissioning editor and the executive producer were evaluating the final cuts, they asked us to re-edit, in order to change the focus of the programme. We didn’t do it, of course. We produced what was in the original proposal they had chosen. When the programme was to be aired for the first time, the channel didn’t promote it. There was no way audiences could know, just by watching the channel, when our programme was going to be broadcasted. It went totally unnoticed. They just aired it because it was part of the contract and they had to. It was a shame, we were demoralized after all that effort. After that, we stopped participating in their calls for proposals”. (Independent producer, IV 14).

Nonetheless, producers have an overall perception of enjoying creative freedom while they work, which they expressed as having had opportunities to produce their stories autonomously. Nonetheless, the fact that the programmes are under continuous revision by the commissioning editors seems to encourage the alienation of producers,

who detach themselves from the outcomes, notwithstanding their physical and emotional investment. This is how a freelancer director describes the situation:

“(...) this is not my project. I was hired to bring the project to fruition, and I accepted the conditions they offered. Then, my job is to accomplish the project’s goals, not my personal goals. I am a team leader, not an auteur. (Freelance Director, IV 18).

Not many participants were as open as this freelance director in relation to their emotional detachment from the projects they work for. Only one commissioning editor expressed similar feelings, but in a way that reflected positively on her work performance, believing that her peers share a similar sensation:

“One thing I find wonderful is that, as commissioning editors, we have no emotional connection with the projects, so we can objectively guide producers when they face narrative or aesthetic difficulties, we can offer a wider view of the project” (Commissioning Editor, IV 30).

Yet, it could be argued that this detachment is partly due to the commissioning editor’s gatekeeping, as well as to a professional standpoint that is applicable to any other circumstances in their professional lives that could help the producer (in this case a freelancer director) avoid negative experiences when the outcomes are not as successful as expected. These findings parallel Zoellner’s on the ambivalent influences on producers’ identities in the creation of television contents. She found that such detachment helps producers “to displace or dissolve aesthetic or ethical conflicts between culture and commerce by referring to seemingly objective professional and production values of the television industry” (2016, p.155), a consequence of which is the perpetuation of the status quo, with producers fulfilling superiors’ requirements whilst developing “a sense of pride in doing this well and according to industry-specific standards”, emphasizing “form over content and thus ignoring creative compromise with regard to the latter” (2015, p. 155). In sum, they put their creativity in the service of the government’s objectives, not their own. This demonstrates that producers are driven by professional and personal interests that have less to do with the satisfaction of producing programmes in the public interest, and more with consolidating their career. Their answers confirm Hesmondhalgh and Baker’s understanding of the motivations for performing cultural jobs being highly individualized, as “choices are made possible by social conditions and political struggles” (2011, p. 228). However, the

uniqueness of the structural constraints that Señal Colombia operates under, being financially and editorially dependent on the state - which is therefore the main “client”/audience for the channel’s scheduling - makes this case different to a purely commercial UK TV station, or even to any other public TV station. In the following section, the notion of *independence*, as one of the main indicators of autonomy, is addressed along with its implications for a model of good work.

6.3.1. Workplace Autonomy and Independence: Our Client is the State

Independence is another variant of autonomy and is specifically related to the production of public media. Although this aspect was not included in Hesmondhalgh and Baker’s model of good work, it is determinant for my case study because independence is a *sine-qua-non* condition for media in the public interest. For Bennet and Strange (2015), the notion of independence can be understood as the “freedom to report, comment, create and document without fear of persecution” (2015, p. 1). This understanding of working with independence follows a liberal idea of public media supported by international organisations such as UNESCO: “independence, entails a situation of self-regulation whereby media professionals themselves are responsible to uphold the high ethics of public interest which they voluntarily profess to follow.” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 2). The notion of ‘media independence’ equates with the one of ‘good work’ since both refer “to the kinds of conditions that might be enjoyed by those in the media and creative industries, where working with freedom, dignity and autonomy is aligned with the potential to create cultural products of quality” (Bennett & Strange, 2015, p. 3) that can potentially contribute to the common good.

However, in this sense, media independence is not the same as being independent in the cultural sector, neither does being independent necessarily mean one is creatively autonomous, but simply that one is self-employed or an entrepreneur. Furthermore, as Zoellner (2016) argues, independent television producers, although enjoying opportunities to fully develop their creativity and expression, and cannot be completely free when working for a particular employer. According to Zoellner, for independents to keep getting commissions from the broadcaster (in this case, for TV production), they must comply with the employer’s preferences, therefore promoting self-restricting and

self-censoring practices that “limit producer’s creative autonomy” (2016, p. 150). Still, as Banks states, within large and small cultural production companies “there is a durable tendency to operate under ‘workshop’ conditions of relative autonomy where artistic and craft labour are implicated in the co-creation of new cultural commodities” (2010, p. 311). Nonetheless, this is just a portion of autonomy producers achieve once they demonstrate they are able to follow government mandates.

Producers view Señal Colombia as an open door for anyone who has a concrete proposal; and they likewise acknowledge the channel as a medium for representing the country’s plurality and diversity, albeit in a non-political, non-controversial way. Commissioning editors have a clear understanding of the role of public service television, and they can effortlessly place the channel’s aims and practices into a regulatory context to fulfil these aims. They are socialised into a habitus that implicitly ‘knows’ what is acceptable and what is not, reinforced at every general meeting where they are reminded of the topics that should be addressed by the programming. In addition, they recognise their own role and its responsibilities and limitations in the practice of producing public television under state control. Independent producers propose the topics they want to cover; the channel provides tutoring for formal features, such as storytelling on general narrative, but tries not to interfere in the contents. However, these topics must follow, or be compatible with, the National Development Plan:

“Although our contents follow the government’s development plans, it is not our aim to promote officialism” (Freelancer director, IV 18).

This situation was clearly described by a participant who represents a government office:

“Although the president was re-elected and the government’s development plan remains the same, we have been told to follow three particular lines: culture, education and peace. What we do with SC is to work according to these lines, producing contents, but it is not mandatory. We don’t produce institutional contents, we don’t want the channel to be a continuous promotion of policies and governmental plans, but we want it to be educational, cultural, and entertaining. We work with the government lines and we have our own strategic plans” (Ministry of Culture Representative, IV 34).

Accordingly, the autonomy of practitioners, their independence, can be exerted insofar as it does not clash with the government’s intentions of communication, hence their

autonomy and creativity are confined, limited to the implicitly agreed topics and points of view. Compliance with this norm is such that no evidence was found to claim that producers have ever challenged the status quo. On the contrary, the observation conducted aided me to determine that independent producers and commissioning editors have no desire to produce controversial contents, so they prefer to work with people who already have a demonstrated track record of producing 'white' contents. They opt for safe topics they know beforehand will not create any disturbance, and they preserve their autonomy in the realm of an unspoken borderline. For example, at the time of the fieldwork they were working on documentaries on national music legends; the country's natural resources and havens; historic characters who made an important mark on the country's past; athletes; etc.; to mention just a few topics. Certain commissioning editors were very critical of this:

"I see myself as liberal and open-minded, and I think no one will stand out from the crowd by being a great bureaucrat; people who stand out are those who take risks, and that's what PSTV is for. (Commissioning editor, IV 31).

The fact that they choose the upbeat side of all the stories they tell can also be explained by Señal Colombia's organizational dynamics. The channel dependence on the government's ups and downs, as described in a previous chapter, leaves scope for undesired political interference. Another way in which participants describe this situation is that they do not produce news programmes, for example, because they would be more exposed to political interference in the contents; and if they became politically relevant, the entire scheduling would be in the government's focus and they would lose their creative autonomy, as Señal Colombia's Director and General Producer explained:

"Thankfully we don't produce news, because it would make the channel become politicized, we were there 20 years ago (when SC produced news programmes), and we can see it now in the local public TV. We, as a cultural channel, don't matter to the government, we have a low political profile" (SC Director, IV 21).

To which the general producer added:

"Our client is the state, then, we address topics we like, such as freedom, equality... but we work for the government, and that's our disadvantage. We depend on the government. Not having news programmes or current affair programmes gives us some room for independence". (General Producer, IV 22).

According to these response, it is the state, along with state-determined values, that are the gauge of the programmes' social value. This is how producers and commissioning editors negotiate their autonomy and freedom to produce the contents they want to talk about, even though these contents are not of much public interest. By not addressing sensitive issues, they create a safe space for creation and experimentation, but these dynamics contradict their narratives and discourses on creating contents that are of use to the audience, unless we agree with their own idea that what they create is valuable and worthy enough to be considered as being of public value.

Here we have an evident tension between the notions of creative autonomy –which producers protect and defend- and doing good work that others might value. For producers, the sense of internal and intrinsic autonomy and control over their practices is far more evident and related to the idea of doing good work in the text rather than using that same autonomy to produce contents that are popular or have social relevance. Therefore, there is a disconnection between the producer and the audience, and the notion of good work that producers hold is purely inward-facing, related to their own personal assessments of the value and efficacy of their own production. It is not 'tested' in any discernible way by audience response or metrics.

I did not ask participants whether they were aware of the contradictions in their discourses or not. I didn't want them to think I pretended to diminish their personal accounts or their importance for my research by challenging them or confronting them with their own contradictions. They were being open and cooperative, offering their views about the world that surrounds them, which I was very grateful to have access to. Furthermore, I didn't want to hold a position they could interpret as moral superiority, or that they felt manipulated to say more that they intended (Ball, 1994), or to change their perspectives on the topic. When the research was being challenged by these situations, I had to take into account my position as an "insider" in the field in order to make meaning of the phenomenon (Shah, 2004) by linking situations and events, and assessing their implications (Griffith, 1998).

This approach helped me to identify from their responses that they have built their professional identities relying on narratives they learned in the field about the value of the contents they produce, but in exerting their autonomy, they inflect the opposite of a genuine 'public value' narrative, since the public are absent as meaningful or contributing subjects. This indicates that, by assuming the state as their final customer or recipient, the real consumers of the products they create, commissioning editors and producers are patently neglecting audiences and the chance to have any real impact on them. It is simply assumed that, if audiences happen to watch the programmes, they are expected to have a positive experience because the products are good *per se*, but they are not ultimately produced for them, or to reflect their known interests; therefore, all producers' narratives and discourses about making a contribution to society through their work are adapted rationales from the state-managed public field, used to justify the producers' and the channels' unchallenged activities. This is a clear case of producers producing for producers, in a Bourdieusian sense.

6.4. Identity and Self-esteem through Recognition and Visibility

The professional identity of cultural workers has been described using terms referring to their motivation, satisfaction, independence, autonomy and outcomes, placing them in a material context that determines how these concepts are played out; for example, it has been a common understanding to associate cultural worker's professional identity with flexibility, uncertainty, precarity, instability, among other descriptors of their working conditions, that have ended up being understood as the main components of their professional selves. In addition, this construction of their identity is strongly linked to their outcomes, giving relevance to the idea that "you're only as good as your last job" (Blair, 2001), where cultural workers must develop and promote their professional identity in connection with what they have produced. According to Elliot, as cited by Zoellner, "adopting a professional identity has an impact on thought and behaviour through the development of distinct ideologies, (understood as) the belief systems developed within the profession through which the practitioners make sense of their work experience" (1972, p. 132 in Zoellner, 2016, p. 161). To understand cultural workers' perceptions and experiences about their professional selves, it is necessary to

explore their system of beliefs and how it is moulded by the professional context, to understand both their attitudes and the effects on the cultural outcomes they produce.

In the workplace, in the field, individuals acquire the posture and attitudes to perform the professional work they chose. According to du Gay, by immersing themselves in the field, individuals acquire “particular normative and technical regimes of conduct”, or as he calls it, “forms of personhood” (du Gay, 1997, p. 314). For Hackley and Tiwsakul, “a sense of identity generally is negotiated through an “internal-external dialectic” (2011, p. 210). They argue that professional identity requires external validation, such as acquiring qualifications and belonging to sectorial groups that reaffirm the individual’s ability to perform their professional role, hence the need for constant feedback from superiors, peers and audiences. However, as Deuze and Lewis (2013) argue, identity also relies on the individuals’ performance and the negotiations they establish with the given context, to create a place for themselves in their field of work. The success of cultural contents is assessed by members of the same network, who evaluate the performance and impact of the outcomes, creating opportunities for celebrating the individual investment, therefore outlining cultural workers’ sense of professional identity as they negotiate their personal and professional goals with the context where they want to place their products.

This is how cultural workers’, and notably television producers’, willingness to accept the flaws of the field is explained by “the tantalizing possibilities thereby for securing social recognition and acclaim, that is self-affirmation and public esteem, and partly by the possibilities for self-actualization and creativity (be it aesthetic or commercially entrepreneurial). For workers, television production is simultaneously a source of potential rewards, both material and existential, and a source of definite exploitation” (Ursell, 2000, p. 819). Thus, cultural workers rationally display their autonomy in the quest to achieve their professional and personal goals, and the possibility of fulfilling their objectives helps them endure the adversity of the field.

As seen earlier, producers at Señal Colombia have developed a circle of discourses and practices that fosters the construction of their self-esteem and professional identity, based on their perceptions of how to build and strengthen their visibility in such a way

that sustains them working with the desired level of autonomy. As it is shown below, strategies such as public relations, participating in contests, and an intricate discursivity around the relationship between the channel and its audience are the main elements of their identity as public television producers, as well as a means to avoid frustrated development.

Notwithstanding the reasons or motivations behind the production of a given programme, producers want to do it well and capitalize on every product as much as possible; one of the best ways to do so in Colombia is by garnering free press that exalts either the programmes, or their makers. Unfortunately, mainstream media are not really interested in public service TV, and only publish news related to Señal Colombia when the channel writes press releases and carries out all the necessary lobbying to get them published. Typically, their lobbying is successful after the channel wins a national or international award, or when they are airing sports competitions. Apart from these situations, it is highly unlikely that any news about the channel be found outside the public media system.

Aside from press releases, another way for producers to get their work known is by airing it, obviously. However, once it has aired and it comes to getting recognition for the work done, there are contradictory perceptions from participants, especially because producing for a free-to-air TV channel necessarily puts their programmes under the measure of ratings. This is a complicated topic among Señal Colombia's workers because there are conflicting understandings and perceptions about how the channel should deal with this issue; moreover, most of the participants believe the channel's acceptance or success should not be measured by quantitative methods. The following quote illustrates their narrative on the matter:

“Until now, it was of no concern at the channel how many rating points we got, because PSTV is not to satisfy audiences, but to build them up. When we create, we can experiment. It's an aim of PSTV to change the chip of those viewers”. (General Producer, IV 22)

During fieldwork, it became apparent that, despite their will to produce contents that audiences can relate to and use in their daily lives, some participants acknowledged that the channel has difficulties engaging viewers, and that their programmes have little

recognition from Colombian society. This creates a sense of frustration among most producers:

“It's sad that not even your family watches the programmes you produce. A lot of people have this idea that PSTV is something boring, slow, but if you are not used to enjoying art, photography, architecture, literature, then our contents will not touch you”. (IV 10, Executive Producer).

And this perception also extends to below-the-line participants:

“I feel that it doesn't matter how much you care about what you do, how much passion you invest in it, no one will watch your programme”. (Freelance Field Producer, FG Participant 5).

Consequently, Señal Colombia has developed strategies to raise the channel's visibility among viewers and the audio-visual sector, such as participating in festivals and competing for national and international television awards. Winning an award is a much-desired outcome for any programme, to such a point that a former independent producer argued that winning prizes is the channel's only goal:

“Every content is custom-made to fit contest requirements. From the very beginning, they already know where it will participate hoping to get an award. It is television for festivals” (Former delegate producer; IV 7).

This became patent one evening during the field work, when an executive producer came to the commissioning editors' office, bursting with excitement and happily announced that the categories for the India Catalina awards had just been released. Everybody in the office listened carefully and once she finished, they clustered together in groups to plan the sort of programmes they could produce in order to match these categories and ensure the most possible awards for the channel. This strategical meeting indeed produced the expected results: in 2015, Señal Colombia swept up 11 out of 30 categories, while in 2016 it triumphed in 11 out of 31.

Furthermore, the channel has intensified participation in television contests and festivals, where some of their programmes have garnered international or national awards. They have reaped visibility through this practice, gaining symbolic capital in the field of cultural production over the past four years by winning national festivals such as India Catalina Awards, and being recognised on international stages such as *Prix Jeneusse* and the Latin American Tal Awards. This external recognition permits government representatives to create a convincing idea that the channel produces

educational and cultural material, not pro-government contents; furthermore, this recognition works as a positive indicator for the manager of the public media system and the channel's co-ordinator. This very indicator is also exploited as a covering letter when requesting the channel's annual budget allocation, without having to struggle excessively for it to be granted. The awards figure as an outstanding feature in relevant CVs and have equally helped the channel to reach production agreements with foreign television companies.

According to Ursell "popular recognition (is) for some television workers their main labour market strength. An additional or alternative source of such strength is the critical/aesthetic claim of colleagues and art critics, and/or contributions (e.g. scriptwriting, production management and lighting) to successful programmes which colleagues will know about even if the viewing public does not" (2000, pp. 816-817). In this sense, the mode in which producers exert their autonomy is more aligned with their own personal and professional motivations than with any real evidence their outcomes have an impact on society. This means that the most valued asset is not the cultural product *per se*, or the societal contribution it might be making, but their own involvement in its production, since becoming renowned in the field through their professional roles is what determines their chances of employability and achieving wider recognition, and is therefore an integral part of their professional identity, as exemplified below. Thus, autonomy and independence cannot be taken as guarantors of good work (to use Hesmondhalgh and Baker's terms) under these particular circumstances.

The contradictory condition of not being popular with domestic audiences but receiving recognition from the field in the form of international awards, represents an advantage for certain producers, as the following quotes illustrate:

"I feel very satisfied. I tell the stories I like and I don't care if people watch them or not. For me, it's not frustrating that people don't tune in to the channel". (Independent Producer, IV 11).

"I like being here because I have the chance to tell the stories I like. So, it's an opportunity for audiences to watch what I produce, and a responsibility for me". (IV 20. Commissioning Editor).

Interestingly, these comments invert the aims of broadcasting in the public interest, putting back on audiences the responsibility of consuming contents that are 'good' for them, while at the same time taking for granted that the contents are of relevance for them. This would be a case of 'bad' work in Hesmondhalgh and Baker's terms, since they fail to contribute to the well-being of others. Furthermore, these quotes demonstrate that audiences have no opportunity to determine for themselves the importance of the contents produced by the channel, instead they should be happy to be given the chance to appreciate them and ought to make the most of them.

This unique context, where a public service television channel under state control fails to take into consideration the response from the audience towards the contents they produce, is inconsistent with the frustration expressed by some participants regarding their contents not being acknowledged by the audience. However, the fact that two participants, an independent producer and a commissioning editor, acknowledged that their programmes are produced with the sole purpose of fulfilling their personal and professional interests, raises questions about the honesty and transparency of other responses from producers who were not as raw and straightforward, and claimed to produce something they acknowledge as valuable and worthy while recognising it did not achieve a good response from the audience. As I said earlier in this chapter, I didn't confront participants with these paradoxes, mainly because I didn't want them to change their answers to accommodate them to what they could believe my expectations were, however, one commissioner acknowledged this situation and made the channels' production flows responsible for it:

"We just can't take audiences into account whilst we are producing a programme. In this model of production, it just isn't possible, except when you are planning new seasons. That gives more relevance to the commissioning editors' role, because programmes are shaped according to their suggestions. We, as commissioning editors', are wearing the viewer's shoes". (Commissioning Editor, IV 27).

The fact that entire seasons of programmes are produced at once, without knowing the audience's response to the pilot or the first episodes, and indeed that entire seasons are not broadcast until months or years after their production, contradicts producers' and the channel's discourse of producing contents that can be of use for audiences, or in their own terms, that create "social profitability", as they have no real knowledge about

the impact of the contents, nor whether they are really making a contribution to society. These questions will be delved into in following chapter, under the light of the notion of public value.

6.5. Summary

The main goal of this chapter was to test the application of Hesmondhalgh and Baker's notion of good work in the Colombian public service media context, paying particular attention to producers' motivations and satisfactions, and their discourses on their own autonomy and outcomes. Firstly, this research found that participants are motivated by the idea of having a project which they know is fixed-term, but that guarantees temporary stability and an income. In addition, the idea of producing contents that will not contribute to the "dumbing down" of audiences is an advantage of their jobs. That is to say, they are responding to PSB aims while at the same time trying to build a career. This context raises questions about the extent to which producers can exert their autonomy at the same time as they fulfil public broadcasting aims, and whether these two situations are compatible. I have sought to draw attention to how cultural workers' motivations and the negotiations of their creative autonomy are not necessarily aligned with the intention of doing good work in this context, even though they are required to do so. However, I am not implying that their work is not 'good', just that it differs from the notions of ethical work studied in the first part of this chapter.

Another significant finding to emerge from this study is that participants acknowledge that having autonomy and favourable working conditions are determinants for their idea of *good work*. However, when it comes to Hesmondhalgh and Baker's call to include the products as important constituents of the notion, with these products being both of quality and of benefit for the people (2011, p. 36), there is a significant difference with how the notion is played out in reality. In the Colombian public service media context, for cultural and creative products to be considered 'good', they not only have to be of high quality, they must also promote and reinforce positive representations of the country. It is good in a benevolent sense, but bad in a democratic or indeed cultural plurality sense, since we only get whitewashed views of Colombian diversity. This is contradictory with the idea of good work as producing TV programmes that challenge

the political power, for example, or tackle inequalities, expose wrong-doings on the part of politicians, or raise awareness on a given topic in order to provide viewers with relevant information to make better democratic decisions. This sort of programming is unpopular among public TV producers in this case, and even counter-productive for the channel and its producers' personal and professional goals, since it would, in all likelihood, lead to a reduction in the channel's funding and harsher controls.

Furthermore, there is a persistent neglect of the audience in terms of not knowing how programmes are having an impact on the viewer's perception of the world, because no real audience research is undertaken, which leaves the discourse of the value of public service TV outcomes to the preconceived notions that managers and producers have about what should be good for the audience, once again contradicting Hesmondhalgh and Baker's model. These situations stress the need to create more theorisation and specifications about what 'good' really means, according to contextual specificities that can expand the scope of the notion.

7. Value and Public Service Broadcasting

Now that the main contextual characteristics of the Colombian public service media setting have been set out in terms of working conditions, and the impact the state has on organisational and production dynamics within Señal Colombia, in this chapter I proceed to analyse how the notion of public value is perceived in the channel's daily routines. So far, the research has revealed an amalgam of ambiguous and often contradicting values that guide the producers' experiences and perceptions of work. They are guided by the idea of doing good work, gaining recognition, while they also express critical reflection on working conditions, and the tight relationship with the government which may well come into conflict with public value orientations.

In this final section of my study, I turn my attention to the notion of public value, which has been applied in some European countries to analyse the production of value by media outcomes. I am interested in the domestic understanding of this notion, and how that knowledge influences narratives of the work and production practices. I focus on the structural conditions under which Señal Colombia must operate – a lack of indicators regarding the production of value, government apathy, political interference and clientelism- which undermine the channel's attempts to produce value.

7.1. PSB and Value

Historically, the value attributed to public service television emerged during the post-war period in European countries, particularly in the UK, where the imperative for reconstruction saw the medium of television as an opportunity “for social cohesion by connecting people together through a shared, mediated culture of provision of information” (Lunt P. , 2009, p. 129). Back then, producing high-quality programmes to provide public knowledge was the norm, in line with the public service aims that John Reith (founder and first general manager of the British Broadcasting Corporation) stipulated for the BBC in the early 20s: “to inform, educate, entertain”. According to

Reith, PSB would also spread knowledge, adopt a high moral tone and endorse social unity. Reith also acknowledged the potential of media to inform and enlighten democracy by broadcasting contrasting contents, so viewers could gain a broader version of public issues and thus become better-informed citizens (Scannell, 1990).

Lunt, drawing on Blumler (1991), further outlined certain common features of PSB, including notions of independence from populism, government or commercial interests, and a public information provision, to enable legitimizing its existence and activities. These concepts associated with public service provision through broadcasting can be further summarized in the definition of PSB offered by UNESCO:

“Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) is broadcasting made, financed and controlled by the public, for the public. It is neither commercial nor state-owned, free from political interference and pressure from commercial forces. Through PSB, citizens are informed, educated and also entertained. When guaranteed with pluralism, programming diversity, editorial independence, appropriate funding, accountability and transparency, public service broadcasting can serve as a cornerstone of democracy” (UNESCO, 2011).

The conditions that define and integrate the concept of public service broadcasting are formed by the quality it ought to have, its impact on society and its aims, since these aims are to be achieved through public service television outcomes. As such, these ideas should be expected to guide the production practices of TV practitioners, so they can actually create the value PSB outcomes are supposed to have, and offer them to audiences. However, public service media have constantly struggled to defend and legitimise their actions, so they can indeed accomplish the public service aims that gave birth to them in the first place. On this matter, Bolin (2009), adds that PSM must convince three different parties in order to guarantee their survival: firstly, the audiences who are paying licence fees; secondly, politicians, who are in control of regulations and the legislative context and who “need to be convinced about the value of having a strong public service company” (p. 278); thirdly, PSM employees themselves, who need to be convinced of the value of their work and its outcomes. For Bolin, it is not sufficient that public service channels “are ascribed higher legitimacy than the commercial channels” (2009, p. 279), he argues that their value must be recognised in other fields of symbolic power, such as the political, economic, and academic. For Bolin,

“symbolic capital is most powerful when acknowledged by agents and institutions in all of the other fields of power” (2009, p.281). Accordingly, the organisation and media workers must constantly create strategies to gain legitimization, to create public value. The following section demonstrates how, through management strategies, public service broadcasters have found a way to prove that value is created by the organisation, therefore legitimising not only the existence of PSB but also its outcomes.

7.2. Organisation, Public Service Television, and Value Creation

The idea of creating value from not-for-profit organisations was developed by Mark Moore (1995) in the early 90s and denominated Public Value Management (PVM); its aims are to “overcome the inefficiencies inherent in the traditional model of (bureaucratic) public administration” (Pfiffner, 2004, p. 446), to enhance the performance of the public sector. Specifically, this improvement was expected following the application of private sector strategies and techniques to public institutions, in order to increase their efficiency by dismantling top-down hierarchies and internal regulations, focusing on explicit standards, output control, timing, and better usage of money, and more importantly, decentralising government functions.

Moore developed a model to assess the production of value by public institutions; this model was called *strategic triangle* and included three factors: 1) support and legitimacy, 2) the public value it sought to produce, and 3) operational capabilities (Moore & Khagram, 2004, pp. 5-6). The first leg of this model is also understood as an “authorizing environment”, and relates to the socio-political relations that the public manager builds in order to construct and maintain the organization’s goals. The second component of the model, the public value outcomes, refers to the intended results, which after going through a process of assessment, will determine whether the enterprise successfully achieved its goals. Finally, the operational capacities are the production activities, the resources needed to accomplish the organisation’s aims.

The relevance of PVM for this thesis resides in its subsequent adoption and adaptation by the BBC as the cornerstone of its manifesto for the renewal of its charter (BBC, 2004), when they developed a strategy to assess the value produced by their services against

the resources used in the production and the contextual relevance of the expected outcomes. This assessment, called the Public Value Test (PVT), was created with the intention to standardize a process of authorisation, creation, and measurement of public value before the provision of a given service. According to the BBC Trust (2012), the notion of public value creation is used to indicate the building and strengthening of institutional trust and legitimacy, through the organisation's commitment to working for the common good; this concept is what public service broadcasters have been trying to use as the outstanding justification for their continued existence. Their role in the promotion and conservation of national and cultural features, as well as their existence as a living example of freedom of expression, are what supports their need for public funding.

The PVT has two legs: a public value assessment (PVA), and a market impact assessment (MIA). The PVA involves "seeking representation on the proposal from licence fee payers, stakeholders, and any particular groups for whom the subject of the proposals may warrant specific input" (BBC Trust, 2012, p. 10) to determine "how, and to what extent, the proposals if implemented, will properly reflect the diversity of the BBC's audience and, in particular, whether the proposals will duly serve particular parts of that audience" (2012, p.11). The extent to which an activity really creates public value is assessed with reference to what the BBC considers key drivers of public value: quality; reach; impact; and value for money. On the other hand, the MIA "assesses the effect of the proposed service or activity on the wider market" (2012, p. 15); its focus lies on market conditions as economic objectives, representing economic assessments of primarily negative market impacts (Knoll, 2012, p. 164)²³.

²³ As an example of how public value assessments are carried out for the BBC, in an 11-month process, the BBC Trust accepted the proposal of closing BBC Three as a broadcast service and its reinvention as an online-only offer, the launch of BBC One +1, changes to BBC iPlayer and extended hours for CBBC. As this proposals constituted significant changes to the UK public services, it was required to conduct a PVT that assessed both the public value and market impact of the proposed changes (BBC Trust, 2015). The rationale given for this proposal was the falling income of the BBC, the changing television landscape towards new types of services and business models, and changes in audience consumption towards a more on-demand dynamic (BBC Trust, 2015, pp. 1-2). The proposal, driven by the financial necessity of saving and trying to avoid the 'salami slicing' of the budget that would incur in the depressing the performance of BBC's TV series, states that the increase in the ownership of mobile devices between people aged 16-34, who are also the most likely group of age that would watch programmes via BBC iPlayer, presents an "opportunity to develop new forms, formats, different durations, and more individualised and interactive content" (2015, p. 3). The proposal was then followed by a public value assessment to determine how public value would be generated with the execution of the proposal in terms of quality and impact, reach, and value for money. For the first indicator, it was argued that the closure of BBC Three and its further transition to an on-line only platform "will encourage innovation in new forms of public service digital content and enable the BBC and the wider creative

Although the idea of putting a public institution under scrutiny is irrefutable, the BBC's public value test has been contested (Lee, Oakley, & Naylor, 2011; Lunt & Livingstone, 2011; Freedman, 2008). It is argued that it increases external pressures on public service, which might push it towards adopting a commercially-oriented logic. Lee et al. (2011) maintain that the notion of public value itself lacks intellectual rigour, but they acknowledge Moore's effort in describing the creation of public value as a process "inwards to the organization, a focus outwards to providing what the public needs, and a focus upwards to provide value to policymakers" (p. 291). Lunt and Livingstone (2011) believe that the strategy of attempting to measure public service with quantifiable data is more appropriate to market-led purposes than to the public interest, because the quality of the services the BBC provides should not be measured by the customers' satisfaction, but by the social or cultural outcomes. In order to do so, Lunt, Livingstone, and Brevini suggest that the debate on PSB should focus on its purposes, "asking not so much what is represented in PSB (or other) media contents but also what is *left out*, so that currently marginalised or excluded voices can be incorporated" (2012, p. 122); additionally, they state that PSB providers must find new ways of knowing their audiences, so they can establish more direct dialogues with them, in terms of values, purposes and features of PSB, with the aim to engage all actors in public debates and processes of government. In a similar tone, Freedman (2008), states that the data generated by the PVT "are far better suited to an understanding of broadcasting as a straightforward economic, rather than complex social and cultural, practice" (2008, p. 157), and adds that it is not the purpose of public service television to compete with commercial television to attract massive audiences, since public service standards of quality differ from those of commercial television. Nonetheless, the public value test is

economy to prepare effectively for the future, developing new skills and experimenting with new ways to deliver public purposes" (2015, p. 7) In addition, after conducting an audience research, it was found that most respondents found the changes favourable both for them as individuals and the society in general. On the reach indicator, the report stated that the BBC's share wouldn't be affected "compared to what it would have been in the absence of the changes" (2015, p.10). Then, a market impact assessment was conducted by Ofcom to identify the impact of the proposals on the BBC's products and services in terms of the possible response from service providers and the changes in competitor's behaviour. "The MIA considers both statistic impacts, i.e. direct effects on those affected without considering how others in the market may respond, and dynamic impacts, i.e. effects resulting from changes in behaviour by others in the market. It also looked at wider impacts—e.g. impacts higher up the value chain, such as in the market for content rights, but Ofcom note that such impacts are subject to uncertainty (e.g. because rights negotiations are ongoing)" (2015, p. 16). Taking into account the above considerations, the BBC trust found that the public value case was balanced, and likely to deliver public value. Furthermore, the MIA indicated that any market impact was likely to be positive, therefore the proposal was approved.

still being applied to the BBC and, with local modifications, to Belgian, Dutch, German, and Norwegian PSTV (Donders & Moe, 2011).

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The Deputy-manager's secretary told me that I was invited to attend a meeting with some of the staff. I didn't know what the purpose of the meeting was, but I accepted anyway. As I get to her office I see a group of people I know waiting outside. The director of the channel is there, along with the general producer, the director of programming and her assistant, and a commissioning editor. I say hello and they all look at me with surprise. It is obvious that they didn't expect I could have access to that meeting. Someone I haven't seen before arrives and greets everyone except me, then we all enter the office. They take seats around the table and I decide to sit on a sofa, alongside them. The deputy-manager asks me to sit at the table too. I do so. I expect someone will introduce me to the "new" person in the room, but nobody does. I decide to keep quiet and wait until I realise who this person is.

At first they discuss some issues related to budgeting and scheduling. The deputy-manager jots everything down and proceeds to state the purpose of the meeting: revising the investment plan for the following year, glancing at a document that will guide them through the process. The document they are working on is the rationale for requesting their budget for the upcoming year. To sort it out, they need information about audiences. The programming director's assistant reports: "our audiences are interested in cooking programmes; doing family things. They trust us, they like finding out about other cultures, they follow social causes".

From what I understand, they are checking that everything in the document is related to the current government's development plan. They must list every single official document that supports them their arguments for requesting an increase in their budget.

The assistant continues "people from 25 to 44 are our audience, and children". "How is that related to the National Development Plan?" The deputy-manager asks, but nobody answers. She then requests that the director fill out that section of the report.

The person I don't know remarks that the channel is using the wrong statistics (she's talking about quantitative ratings) or that, at the very least, they work against the channel's best interests if they wish to justify the budget they intend to ask for. She suggests that instead of writing in the new document that they are producing what audiences are asking for, they emphasize the constitutional definition of public TV; otherwise, if they say they will produce what "audiences are asking for", it would push aside documentaries and other important contents that audiences don't value. She speaks with assertiveness, and everyone pays careful attention.

She continues "we are not a channel to be preferred over others. We have to reinforce the arguments about public service television, so they won't ask us to make things that are related to commercial TV".

Señal Colombia's director replies shyly that the channel must be in the interest of its audiences, saying that she has a very different concept of the audience in mind. She argues that according to the previously written document, the channel addresses children, movie lovers and sports fans. The word "experimentation" comes from a line in the document; this woman doesn't approve of it and suggests that when requesting budgets, it's easier for the channel to stick to the "Public Service Television Decalogue". According to her, by doing so, they won't have to change the document every single year. At this point I surmise that

she must be higher up in the hierarchy than anyone else in the meeting, including the deputy-manager, probably a consultant. She simply tells everyone what to do.

She continues to argue that the channel needs a general discourse that fits every financial purpose. The deputy-manager agrees, and adds that the document they have been using dates from 2011, in which detailed information about the use for the budget must be written into one section of the document, but they don't have to change it all. However, she notes that they must be very detailed, because the people who will read the document have no knowledge about TV production; then she encourages the team not to use professional jargon. She also suggests they emphasize the number of awards the channel has received as "that will say more to them than anything else".

The consultant keeps insisting on using the Decalogue she mentioned earlier. "This Decalogue was foundational for the current version of Señal Colombia. It was approved back then as a navigation chart for the channel". The deputy-manager adds that they should use the Decalogue for everything related to the channel, and that the channel keeps addressing citizens, not consumers. "We are aware that we don't promote democratic participation, but what we do is to stimulate cultural and democratic values".

However, the director maintains the document must be updated; that experimentation must be defended because this was what enabled the channel to win several awards. He also suggests that every document must refer to convergence and multiple screens. "But this multi-screen thing is not relevant to the ANTV", argues the consultant. "They move against TV markets", she adds.

The deputy-manager intercedes, stating that the channel has achieved precisely what they have not by ratings but by positioning the channel's programming. Accordingly, they must establish a set of indicators that work in the channel's interest, but likewise do not commit the channel to goals that are impossible to achieve. Saying this, she closes the meeting, saying she to leave to another meeting.

The rest of the team remain and discuss among each other. I grasp the opportunity and approach the consultant to introduce myself, as I approach she looks at me and says "I know who you are and what you are doing here, and I have no time to talk to you". "Perhaps next month?" I ask. "Hmmm, maybe", she replies. That moment never came.

I research her online and find out that she was in charge of creating the current structure and editorial guidelines for the channel, back in 2002. She has been a consultant there ever since. She has always been behind every decision made, as per the relevance that past administrations have granted her. The current administration, as was evident in this meeting, is totally under her thumb.

Field notes, November 2014

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7.3. Purpose and Value of Señal Colombia

The above observation epitomises the ambiguous views about the channel's value among certain of its members; there is no consensus on who the audiences are, how to address them, or how to justify their own doings to the government. Furthermore, it is apparent that they do not want to take risks by labelling the channel under categories

such as “experimental” or “challenging”, as this would require harder work from them, and pose the risk of political stumbling blocks. It is disturbing to find such vague assumptions about the value of the channel among individuals in senior positions, even more so that they must explain what they do to the regulatory agency without using “TV jargon” because the only language they understand is the number of awards received. In terms of the value of the channel, that particular phrase highlighted the value the government sees in the channel, and also explained certain attitudes and perceptions of producers towards their own work. Consequently, the next section explores producers’ perception of the value of their outcomes, as well as their perceived value as professionals and their views on how the organisation produces value through its own organisational dynamics. To address this, most participants were asked about their perception of the role of Señal Colombia for Colombian society; the social relevance of the programmes they produce and of the channel in general; the conditions under which they performed their job, and whether those conditions promoted the creation of public value.

Without exception, all participants firmly believe that public service television plays an important role in society. For them, PSTV can offer quality contents that are hard to find elsewhere, characteristics that make the channel a favourable alternative for the audience, in terms of what they call *white* contents. Many of them also find Señal Colombia’s scheduling to be representative of Colombia’s cultural and geographical diversity. Participants affirm that their programmes have an important impact on their audiences’ lives; they believe that the contents they produce can help audiences develop a wider understanding of the world, in keeping with government expectations. However, those contents do not serve any democratic functions: firstly because they do not have sufficient impact in terms of ratings, which means that audiences are not consuming them, notwithstanding the input the programme can make to their lives; and secondly, because contents overlook crucial issues of national day-to-day life, and promote soft versions of anything remotely controversial. Furthermore, some participants directly involved in content production, such as video-makers and field producers, find making PSTV a life-changing experience because of the opportunities they have of travelling the country, getting to know places and situations they would

never see were they not working for PSTV; an unmistakable value solely for programme makers, not for the public.

The perception of value of the channel is clearer among responses from participants working above-the-line, such as managers and government representatives.

“SC has been trying for years to demonstrate that public TV can make quality contents, following altruistic aims. This is not utopian, we just want to educate people about the country they live in, strengthen their cultural identity, and make them feel represented by our contents”. (Former Television Deputy-manager, IV 4).

Similarly, a representative from the National Television Authority noted that:

“SC represents the diversity of our population; besides, SC fights for the viewers’ rights, and promotes the professionalization of the audio-visual sector” (ANTV Representative, IV 2).

In this quote, three different values are becoming evident in the narrativization of the value of public media: cultural diversity, public rights and industry growth. It is interesting, though, that in ‘fighting for the viewers’ rights’ they are referring to groups of viewers that lodge complaints about what they see on TV; however it should be noted that most of the complaints the ANTV receives are about programmes on commercial/private channels.

From the industrial point of view, various participants see the channel as an important platform for new media professionals, who are just starting their careers in the field:

“The channel is a platform for new producers; we have given them the resources and a place to promote their proposals.” (Former SC coordinator, IV 29).

This is a very important feature they keep reminding themselves of: that public value lies in allowing production to take place and providing a training ground for professionals. While addressing the same topic with interviewees who dealt with the actual production of contents, their responses were a little more specific on what they find most valuable about the channel:

“We like the contents we make because of their artistic potential; we tell the stories we want to tell, not the stories we want to sell” (Independent producer, IV 5).

“(At) SC you have the freedom to tell the stories you like, tell them the way you want. It is also the chance to form a family, I mean with your crew. By doing documentaries for SC, I’ve

had the chance to know Colombia, discover the country, and understand it. Here, you can also find a diversity in the voices, in the participants” (Production Assistant, IV 1).

Specifically, for particular producers there are no other channels in Colombia where they could actually work on producing contents they consider relevant for the viewers, thus displaying a very paternalistic vision of the audience:

“I couldn't produce any other kind of television. I am always thinking of contents that make people grow” (Commissioning editor, IV 37).

By grow, they mean that audiences be informed and educated, not necessarily entertained. This is why, when queried about the impact of their contents, or their knowledge of the use audiences give to SC contents, several of them raise the notion of *social profitability*. Participants argue that Señal Colombia is an option for audiences that provides contents that cannot be found on any other channel of the Colombian public media system, and that the channel is not seeking high ratings but to be acknowledged as a medium where audiences can find new ways of looking at their own reality, hence improving their understanding of the world they live in. In doing so, they argue that the channel's impact should be measured in its social profitability.

7.3.1. From Public Value to Social Profitability: PSB in Colombia

Colombia's history is marked by a still young democratic tradition, a more turbulent public sphere, and a total lack of peaceful consensus over what constitutes public value, a circumstance that explains the absence of legislative provisions for PSB such as that which exists in the UK and most other European countries. However, this does not mean that there is no understanding or definition of public value simply that it has taken on a specific form – one referred to as ‘social profitability’.

According to Herrera Mora (2000), the expression *social profitability* (*rentabilidad social*) is a buzz word that has been in use in Latin America since the early 70s, which refers to the “quantitative assessment of social, qualitative results of public, private, or mixed investments in a given project, and for a specific aim” (2000, p. 56). The projects assessment is executed in two phases: analysis of the project (*ex-ante*), and analysis of its execution (*ex-post*). Consequently, every project that will be executed should be chosen according to the following indicators:

1. “Cause Indicators: a) Includes a presentation of the project and how it is supposed to provide a solution to a particular problem, clearly explaining how much funding is required, and how that money will be spent. b) Diagnosis of the problem, origin, and process of solution. c) Proof of interest on the part of the community that will benefit from the project.
2. Management Indicators: a) Demonstrate the ability to efficiently handle the resources; b) Achievement of the proposed goals; c) Full and satisfactory delivery of the project.
3. Social Profitability Indicators: a) Rate of social profitability ex-ante b) Rate of social profitability ex-post”. (2000, p.57).

To establish the *social profitability rate*, Herrera Mora elaborates a statistical formula that integrates all of the above factors into a quantitative expression. Although he tried to offer an etymological and statistical basis for the notion of social profitability, it is still used simply as a synonym of benefit. In Latin America, the term *social profitability* is used in juxtaposition of the notion of economic profitability, not merely to justify the lack of economic revenues from producing public service television, but also to emphasize the need to keep it free from market pressures, and equally to provide justification for its existence under such conditions. For example, Arroyo et al. (2013), offered a “global proposal for Latin American public media” in which, among other suggestions, they say that “public service aims must be guided by their *social profitability* in equilibrium with economic sustainability” (p. 168). In an attempt to define the notion, Angulo and Zabaleta (2010) argued that it refers to the impact contents have on viewers; changing their ways of thinking; getting to understand social, political, and cultural phenomena; with the consequence of taking action inside their communities to improve their quality of life.

In contrast to the detailed tests that measure public value in the BBC and other European public channels, the notion of social profitability is used more as a buzz word, since in practice it has no specific guidelines, although there seems to be an unspoken agreement as to its meaning and use in discourses surrounding public service TV. Accordingly, there is no concrete way to measure the value of SC outcomes in terms of their explicit impact on viewers, though SC leaders still insist on employing the term as if it were a solid measure:

“My performance indicators are not only ratings; we also have international awards, strategic alliances with global PTV networks, our social media traffic, downloads, the number of regions we visit each year, the number of episodes we produce.... Now I have these indicators accepted; at the beginning it was weird for them (ANTV), because they were used to seeing

ratings as a measure of success, but these indicators is how I measure the *social profitability* of the channel” (Former TV Deputy-manager, IV 4).

It is striking here that this set of indicators lets public value be measured against a set of industry-internal metrics, not against an audience or a set of publicly recognised democratic enhancements or indicators. Awards and symbolic prestige therefore provide the measures of social profitability, as it is garnered in prestige and the esteem bestowed by others.

“Social profitability is a complex, abstract concept. The ANTV is trying to determine how to create value among audiences, how to make them take ownership of the contents, and what use they make of them. I don't know how to measure social profitability, but as long as people value the topics SC is addressing, you might even realize what the value audiences give to PSTV is” (Independent producer, IV 16).

As this response suggested, social profitability is something that determines the aims of every product. However, when producers bid for tenders, the documentation they submit never asks how the aims of the product could be objectively measured; this is implied from the intention that shaped the product's conception process. This leaves room for subjective interpretation, both on the part of the producers/bidders and that of commissioning editors or and government representatives regarding the product's expected impact, thus demonstrating the ambiguity and lack of objective foundations for the application of the notion of social profitability. Therefore, to assess the public value of the channel and its programmes, in the following section I draw on Moore's concept of public value, to determine to what extent it can be applied to the Colombian context.

7.4. Support and Legitimacy: Regulations and Managerial practices

Now, having acknowledged producers' mind-set regarding how value is produced and assessed, I proceed to examine some of the most outstanding specificities of Señal Colombia's organisational practices, and how these affect the production of value. Those specificities are categorised under Moore's strategic triangle, in order to test the applicability of his concepts to my case study. This section focuses on the first element of the triangle: support and legitimacy, as the capacity of the organisation to create value through the approval of, and support from, the authorities, in this case the state.

I begin by studying interviewees' perceptions of the current regulations that support public service television in Colombia. Then, in a subsequent section, I move on to analyse interviewees' perceptions of the resources available for the channel, and their impact on the outcomes. Finally, I focus on the perception of value given to these outcomes, and on producers' contrasting ideas about them.

To start, the purpose of Señal Colombia, and Colombian public television in general, is established in Act 182 of 1995:

Article 1: "Television is a public service subject to the ownership, reserve, control and regulation by the State, which shall be provided through grants public entities referred to in this Act, and to individuals and organized communities...

This public service is intrinsically linked to public opinion and the country's culture as a dynamic instrument for information processes, and for audio visual communication" (Congreso de la República de Colombia, 1995).

However, it is noteworthy that Colombia lacks a Television Act that establishes the mechanisms which protect and promote public television's independence from the government, or that guarantees the continuity of its processes without being subjected to changes of administration. In the views of various participants, this would guarantee the liberties that the channel currently lacks due to its close connection to the government. Participants with longer experience in the field of public media understand the urgency of this need:

"We crave a public act, because that lack of acknowledgement about what the channel represents and does is caused by the absence of a strong presence in the state. We need the state and the government to recognise the aims and importance of PSTV, and that public service media must be independent from political interests, and separate from political ups and downs" (Executive producer, IV 8).

"The problem with this system, and with the state in general, is that we have responsive acts, created by the government in power, instead of state acts, that have long-term impact" (Former SC director, IV 21).

The lack of a specific public television act means that the public media system is regulated by other acts that were not created for public media provision, but for public procurement (Law 80, 1993), which do not address the particularities and specificities of the production of media contents. This situation promotes a sense of frustration and disappointment among producers, who feel that the channel and the public media system in general are not relevant to the government, at least, not sufficiently to

facilitate the accomplishment of their goals in the provision of public service. Furthermore, some of the prevailing regulations seem to constrain the channel even further, by limiting its scope to develop a solid scheduling, as a former director explained:

“We are constrained by regulations. The budget that is allocated to us is very low. We have audience quotas; we must target a very wide audience. It's very hard to accomplish everything that is required from us. It's not only about our financial difficulties but about the regulations, they constrain us a lot. For example, I have to include programmes for minorities, indigenous peoples, children, the elderly, and every time it gets harder to make television for everyone. Next, I must daily air nationally produced contents, from 7:30 pm until 10:00 p.m., but neither are there enough programmes nor the money to produce them. Therefore, I was forced to buy very old soap operas. The bad thing is that, because of it, younger audiences perceive us as an out-of-date channel” (Former SC director, IV 21).

As the only cultural and educational option available in the public media system, the channel is constantly used by the government as a means to fulfil the increasing demands to represent the country's extensive diversity, so it can present itself as a plural, all-encompassing administration; it does so in the easiest and less binding way possible: by funding the production of audio-visual contents that superficially relieve the state of allegations that it lacks interest in remote regions of the country. By forcing Señal Colombia to broadcast specific audio-visual contents that have no continuity in the programming, the channel keeps an irregular scheduling that hinders the promotion of audience loyalty. Moreover, as seen previously, the channel must adjust its scheduling to the tastes of each new director, and is therefore subjected to endless political ups and downs that greatly affect the continuity of processes within the channel.

Participants recognized that this continuous changing of the media system management affects their work flows and processes, since each new manager has their own ideas about how to accomplish the organisation's goals; therefore, employees must adapt to their managerial style. Besides, certain participants consider that managers do not have a concrete plan for the media system or the channel, only personal goals to achieve:

“Every time they appoint a new manager, they arrive with their own team and they change everything they don't like about what the channel is already doing. They throw out projects that were very expensive to create new things (Freelancer Director of Photography, IV 6).

Under such circumstances, some participants express that the channel loses part of its organisational memory, and there is a widespread idea that processes start over from scratch with every change of direction.

“In 2005 we tried to make a long-term development plan for the channel, but every new manager just does what he pleases with that plan. There’s no state policy. I realised I had given too much of my own life to PSTV, and the balance was not gratifying. You can have good projects once in a while, but the channel never gets to consolidate” (Former SC director, IV 29).

The lack of a solid state act that guarantees the independence of the public media system from political interference and changes in government, added to the limited room the channel has to develop a solid scheduling strategy, is perceived by producers as evidence of the little relevance the organisation has, a perception that is channelled through feelings of disappointment, frustrated development and low self-esteem:

“People are not aware that the state owes them a channel to recognise the country they live in. And they don't know the channel because the state is not interested in promoting it, they just care that the channel exists, so it's like a checked item in their to-do list. It has never been a priority for them to promote us, so you feel that you work for nothing at the end. You feel that all your efforts are lost, because the government doesn't care about us, we must exist, and that's enough for them. The state owes the people a quality television channel. A place for healing our wounds as a nation; a place to remember our history” (independent producer, IV 11).

“Señal Colombia is meaningless for our political leaders; that’s why there has never been a state policy, or a comprehension of the value of PSTV. Neither they, nor the citizens, have that comprehension. If they decided to cancel the channel, 300 people would demonstrate in protest; and 50 of them would be producers. We are meaningless, also in the quantitative sense; we don’t even get 1% of the total audience share” (Former SC director, IV 29).

Born and Prosser had already warned about the complex structures that constrain PSTV production, and stressed the need for industrial conditions “that foster the creative well-being of productions cultures and that influence in positive ways producers’ capacities to fulfil the other normative principles of PSB, including innovation, diversity, and programming that fosters social cohesion” (2001, p. 270). Furthermore, Ursell and others who have focused their attention on organisational and work aspects of media content production have given rise to a debate on the need to study how these aspects can contribute to creating value; specifically on how creating value is not only an aim for workers but also for the organisation itself, through their organisational practices. As seen from this case study, the general regulatory context that surrounds the provision of public service media in Colombia, added to detrimental managerial practices, are far

from legitimising and promoting a healthy public media system; instead, the channel and the public media system only matter insofar as they exist to fill the role of satisfying the requirement to have PSB and cultural/educational TV.

7.5. Operational Capabilities: Resources

Beside regulations that determine the scope of Señal Colombia's practices, the channel's activities are also limited by the yearly budget allocated to it.

When questioned about the relevance of the channel, policy makers interviewed for this study stated that public TV should be taking more ambitious steps towards the production of cross-media contents, and try to do more with smaller budgets. Another policy maker recognised that the ANTV knows for a fact that Señal Colombia is doing its best, but the ANTV is more interested in determining how they are going to finance the transition to DTT.

"We acknowledge the importance of PSTV, and we needn't worry about their outcomes because they are doing all right. But, you know, most of the board meetings we have are related to the very important moment we are living, which is the digital transition (...) our concern is how to guarantee its funding. Our biggest concern is to ensure that the Public Media System gets the resources to send their broadcasting signal to every TV set in the country" (ANTV representative, IV 33).

Here then, public value is assumed as signal penetration, regardless of the actual contents they offer to audiences. Furthermore, Señal Colombia is what the Colombian government designates as a State Commercial and Industrial Enterprise, which means that they are ruled by private law, have administrative autonomy, and are funded by an independent budget (independent from the government). This denomination forces Señal Colombia to generate income in a sustainable way. However, it does not receive applicable income from the services provided, and still gets the main annual budget from the ANTV. Furthermore, any money the channel earns can only be used to produce television contents, to be broadcasted through the free-to-air signal.

This designation means that the channel is entitled to some funding from the government, but at the same time, it must generate some profit. Accordingly, the channel has kept the same level of funding from the government for the past four years,

because it is expected to find other sources of financing. Most participants believe that the government should increase Señal Colombia's budget, so they could achieve better outcomes.

"The budget they give you is not very big, and they don't take into account that some projects require you to travel, by plane, by boat, or by horse. And all that is expensive. Because SC programming shouldn't be produced all from the capital city or its surroundings. When you want to produce something that requires you to travel, you are forced to reduce your crew, or to pay them less" (Independent producer, IV 1).

However, according to government representatives, the budget should decrease, and the channel should adapt to current ways of producing. Still, commissioning editors are only in charge of making the most of the money allocated by the government, the independent producers are those who have a clearer picture of what can and cannot be done with the money they receive from Señal Colombia.

"We must stop thinking that quality has to do with big budgets. The work of a videographer is not the same as having to hire four different people to do a single job. We must change the production flows we are used to, and our attitude towards this new challenges" (ANTV Representative, IV 2).

Responses such as this one show most participants have the idea that Señal Colombia is not of concern to the government, as they deem budget allocation one of the main indicators of the importance the channel and the public media system in general have as a state project. The government allocates an annual amount of money for the channel, but curiously, the channel cannot count on it, it must go through a long paperwork process to request that money before the end of the fiscal year. They might get the entire amount they asked for, or they might not.

"Colombia's scheme for funding PSTV is perverse; the state doesn't recognise it either as an industry, or as a social project. They only see it as an administrative process, where all the paperwork gives meaning for PSTV's real purposes" (Former delegate producer, IV 7).

This participant, for example, finds the funding schemes unsuitable to develop a strong media system, not only because of its paucity, but also due to the ways in which the budget must be spent.

"The most perverse thing is that they tell you how to spend your budget; for example, we cannot produce our own contents but we must do everything through outsourcing. Hence, all this money that could be used to strengthen the public media system is flushed away, and the channels are getting weaker and weaker" (Former delegate producer, IV 7).

According to Colombian regulations, national public television channels can only use their budget to produce audio-visual contents; which means that the funds they receive, either from the government or from coproduction, can only be spent on television production, not on advertising the channel through other media (billboards, newspapers, radio, or other TV channels), nor on creating internet contents. We must keep in mind that the channel does not have its own production crews, or audio-visual equipment other than for broadcasting. Thus, absolutely all the channel's money goes to third parties (independent producers in this case), undermining Señal Colombia's opportunities to grow and expand; the government's stance to decrease rather than increase its annual budget further limits its possibilities for growth. In addition, PSTV channels are barred by law from selling advertisements; this measure was designed to ensure their independence from market pressures. All these restrictions paradoxically promote industry growth, while at the same time limiting the channel's chances to attract the attention of new viewers.

In summary, in terms of value, the resources available for the channel are scarce, which is perceived by participants as a factor that undermines producers' attempts to develop more risky or experimental ideas, or even reach parts of the country that have never been attained before, therefore restricting their creative autonomy to a very limited set of possibilities. Once again, from this point of view, value is hardly created.

7.6. The Value Sought to Produce: TV Programmes

Although the organisational panorama is not at all encouraging for the production of public service television in Colombia, producers have managed to navigate these turbulent waters to keep on producing contents they consider relevant and important for audiences, notwithstanding the fact that some of them emanate directly from the government's editorial guidelines. Furthermore, by following the channel's production manual, they add rigour and discipline to their own processes and thus build some organisational value. According to Gummerus (2013), the outcome is not the only bearer of value, but the process of producing it can also be valuable when, for example, there is a deep process of research before producing a given TV programme; when the job conditions for the producers are fair; and when providers are treated fairly.

Apart from that, one of the value-related production practices in the audio-visual field is the idea of creating quality contents. This notion has been extensively used as a measure of the relevance of media contents in general, but when applied to public service contents it transcends the technical point of view (quality of cinematography, for example) to focus on the complex relationship between production, contents, and audience response. The greater the quality of a given programme, the more valuable it can be perceived to be. However, the notion of quality is not unique, as it can be understood in terms of high production values, technical excellence, challenging topics and narratives, top-rated stars, positive impact on viewers' experience, or some or all of these. Trying to integrate all these possibilities, Anthony Smith (1990) offered a list of seven types of quality for television:

1. Producer quality and professionalism;
2. Consumer quality and the market;
3. Quality and the medium: television's aesthetic;
4. Television as ritual and communication;
5. Television and the person;
6. The television ecology; and
7. Quality as diversity.

Mephram (1991) added an ethical dimension related to 'truth telling', in an attempt to recognise the intentions behind the production of contents. For McGuigan (2012), this feature contributes to a TV production culture that promotes criticism and questioning, therefore stimulating open debate, which is also a central characteristic of the notion of public service television in democratic societies. However, television aesthetics, narrative and dramatic composition, are also important factors –especially from the audience side - to help determine the engagement with contents and recognition of their quality (Geraghty, 2003), which also remains a matter of consideration for producers when trying to create quality outcomes.

Recent Latin American debates on the notion of quality (OBITEL, 2011), argue that governmental interest, will and engagement in the creation of cultural contents that support cultural programming, are the main needs in the regional context of PSM

production. Nonetheless, it is very important to note that, in the Latin American narrative on public service media, the notion that these media are to inform and educate, not to entertain, still prevails. This understanding comes from the tight relationship between public media and the state, and the aims that gave birth to public media in the region in the early 1960s and 1970s, which determined that quality is proportional to the state-sanctioned educational purposes of the contents, as well as the promotion of “high culture”, or *white contents*, as Señal Colombia staff call them. In sum, quality television is what is ‘good for the public’ rather than simply being entertaining. More recent debates have emphasized the need for public service media to stop supporting the idea that entertainment is incompatible with information and education, while regional specificities must be taken into consideration for creating an adjusted version of the notion of quality in PSM (Arroyo, Becerra, Castillejo, & Santamaria, 2013). This must consider that Latin American public media systems have tried for decades to emulate foreign PSB models, without acknowledging the democratic tradition, and societal or cultural characteristics that supported them and promoted their success in their country of origin, whereas in the region, big steps have yet to be made in terms of state intervention, public funding, audience loyalty, and even basic topics such as universal education and political literacy, that would contribute to a better production and use of public media contents.

As seen in the previous chapter, although producers are aware of the limited range of topics they address for the channels’ scheduling, they praise the contents they produce as they find them not only relevant for social purposes, but also refreshing in the available Colombian audio-visual panorama. They also see themselves as having a special duty to educate viewers, as if they were part of a privileged enclave that is safeguarding the existence and continuation of public service television. This approach is validated by Born and Prosser, who state that it is the producers’ duty to determine what constitutes quality, or not, as they have the “intentionality in combination with the conditions bearing on production together”, therefore determining “the character of the output” (2001, p. 679). The intentionality of producers “is ontologically prior to consumption”, as programming decisions condition audiences’ tastes, as well as public opinion and sensibility. For Born and Prosser, this responsibility of PSTV producers

should be reflected in their ethical decisions and practices before production starts. This standpoint is reflected in participants' discourses on the role of audiences in the conception of a programme, and of ratings as a measure of its success:

"I've always been told that ratings don't matter. We are accomplishing a social mission: we produce educational and cultural contents for people to have the option to watch them. (Programmer, IV 23).

"We can't just take audiences into account while we are producing a programme. In this production model it just isn't possible, except when you are planning new seasons. That gives more relevance to commissioning editors' role, because programmes are shaped according to their suggestions. We, as commissioning editors', are in the viewers' shoes". (Commissioning editor, IV 27)

They express traditional ideas of the value of SC programming, and do so by adopting a higher moral tone that allows them to decide what is best for audiences, in a Reithian throwback of PBS values. However, this attitude has promoted a cynical response from certain producers, who have become fully aware of the audiences' invisible role in the channel's production flows:

"This is not about giving the audience what they want, because, who the hell knows what they want? You have to offer contents. You can offer contents you care about, because you think they are important". (Independent producer, IV 5).

"It's very hard for us as independent producers to know how our programmes do in ratings. You just submit your work when it's done, and that's it; that was the purpose of your contract. It's hard to know if audiences like the programme. It's hard to know the impact, besides, that goes beyond our responsibility. Audiences are not an issue for us; the channel has already thought them through when launching a public call for tender". (Independent producer, IV 19).

"My responsibility is to create a good product, look for interesting stories, make them visually and narratively attractive, and that's it. My filters, my examiners, are my girlfriend, my mother, and my friends. They are my focus group. People don't know the channel, and if the state doesn't do anything about it, that's not my problem. If my neighbour doesn't watch it, it's her loss. I have already made my contribution" (Independent producer, IV 11).

Several questions arise from this: how does this attitude add value to the programmes they produce? More importantly, how are these responses related to their own discourses on the relevance of their contents for society? Or, does this attitude substantiate that they are only looking to build a valuable professional identity and/or portfolio? The interesting point here is that the discourse on the social profitability of the outcomes has overtaken the measure of ratings, therefore producers and

programmers can openly dismiss the channel's low ratings (0,56²⁴); when confronted with this reality, several change their tone:

“That discourse (of ratings not being of relevance) works for us when we have to present reports about ratings, however, it's difficult to produce TV you already know very few people are going to watch” (Programmer, IV 23).

The ‘public’ for Señal Colombia producers is, therefore, a fantasy manufactured by the state-industry media complex. It has been widely said that PSB should not be evaluated under the terms of ratings (Costera Meijer, 2005; Arroyo et al, 2013; Born & Prosser, 2001; Livingstone & Lunt, 2011), as those measures apply to commercially driven media; however, this does not excuse producers from engaging viewers to relevant programmes, especially if producers maintain that their contents can potentially have a positive impact on viewers’ quality of life. It is contradictory that the intention of having an impact is so central for regulators and producers, yet still, SC production practices fail to include audience engagement as an aim for their contents when creating audio-visual proposals. Although ratings are not seen as a true measure of public value, for which other ‘outcomes’ are important, this does not necessarily mean that ratings are irrelevant, therefore they should not be underestimated.

The field of audience research in Colombia has had different focuses over the past five decades. According to Bonilla (2012), before the 80s, the aim was to study the impact of television and radio on educational practices in rural areas, since academic trends of the time were interested on the uses of media for promoting social change. During the 80s, the paradigm shifted towards the relevance of popular culture in building identities, as media consumption was understood as a way to show democratic involvement (Martin Barbero, 1982). A decade later, audience studies focused on cultural consumption and cultural policies, with the aim to acknowledge the diverse social subjectivities and emerging urban cultures. And more recently, the focus has been put on younger audiences and their culture consumption habits, which has strikingly gone back to the idea of the transforming power of media that ruled before the 80s. Nonetheless, today they are looking for ways to promote and develop audience literacy as a way to provide them with tools for choosing better media contents.

²⁴ According to the General Study of Media 2016, Second Wave. (Centro Nacional de Consultoría, CNC, 2016)

Most of these works have been produced by scholars who have made the most of the growing media field in academia, and the increasing involvement of public institutions, and national and international NGOs in the production of media contents. However, Bonilla notices that these approaches have an interesting fact in common: they take audiences as passive receptors of media contents, where a patronizing approach prevails, going from the intention of “modernizing peasants, and educating people for social change, to promoting media literacy specially among children and youth, so they can make an appropriate use of television” (Bonilla, 2012, p. 67), and overall, they only reflect the intention of those who fund the studies.

Still these studies don’t seem to be used by television channels for knowing their audiences. They mostly rely on ratings to determine their success, especially if they are market driven. Although Señal Colombia is not, the channel rarely promotes qualitative studies (as they have to request additional funds for it, and expect the ANTV to approve them) and counts on ratings to determine what sort of impact they are having on audiences, or indeed, whether they are having any impact whatsoever. Nevertheless, as they keep lauding the programmes they produce, they feel the need to know how they are doing in terms of the intention behind their contents:

Apart from ratings, the channel has no tools to actually determine what sort of impact they are having on audiences, or indeed, whether they are having any impact whatsoever. Nevertheless, as they keep lauding the programmes they produce, they feel the need to know how they are doing in terms of the intention behind those contents:

“The state must guarantee the existence of an alternative TV offer, so people can choose, and the state must provide competitive contents, that make a contribution to the country. But one thing is the amount of contents, and another is their effectiveness” (Freelance director, IV 18).

“They have a lot of good things, but what's the real impact? How do they contribute to the transformation of society?” (Former Independent Producer, IV 7)

This is a constant contradiction in producers’ discourses that undermines the sense of public value; it is not possible for them to truly determine whether they are providing a public benefit, however, they must tell themselves, regulators and assorted government offices that they are doing precisely that, otherwise their actions would not count as legitimate. Under a PSB perspective, the importance and value of programming gains

more relevance since PSB outcomes are expected to have a social impact vis-à-vis contributions to pluralism, independence, and accountability. Hence, these values would be expected to guide public service TV production practices with greater formality than merely an ethical understanding of the work, to actually include and transform every intention into clear features not only of the outcomes, but also of the processes and the organisation that produces them. This is why the concept of producing public value in the Colombian context is more adjusted to the requirement of finding an adequate narrative that justifies the existence of the channel and the public media system in general, rather than to really providing a suitable public benefit.

In 2015, Señal Colombia commissioned an audience research, the purpose of which was to characterize the channel's audiences (Brand Strat, 2015), i.e., to get to know the features of viewers who claim to watch the channel, including their demographic profiles, their lifestyles, their opportunities to tune in to the channel, their motivations for consuming TV contents, and their perception of the channel's offer (see Figure 15). Additionally, this study aimed to determine viewers' access to digital devices and the internet, as well as their disposition towards consuming on-line contents, as a way to establish both the weaknesses and opportunities for the channel in this domain. An interesting upshot from this research was that, from 20,530 possible contacts listed for the study, only 6% met the main criteria: having tuned in to the channel at least twice in the past two months, meaning that only 1,232 of them acknowledged having watched the channel. But, since the study was not designed to measure the channel's audience, this result was of no concern to the researchers.

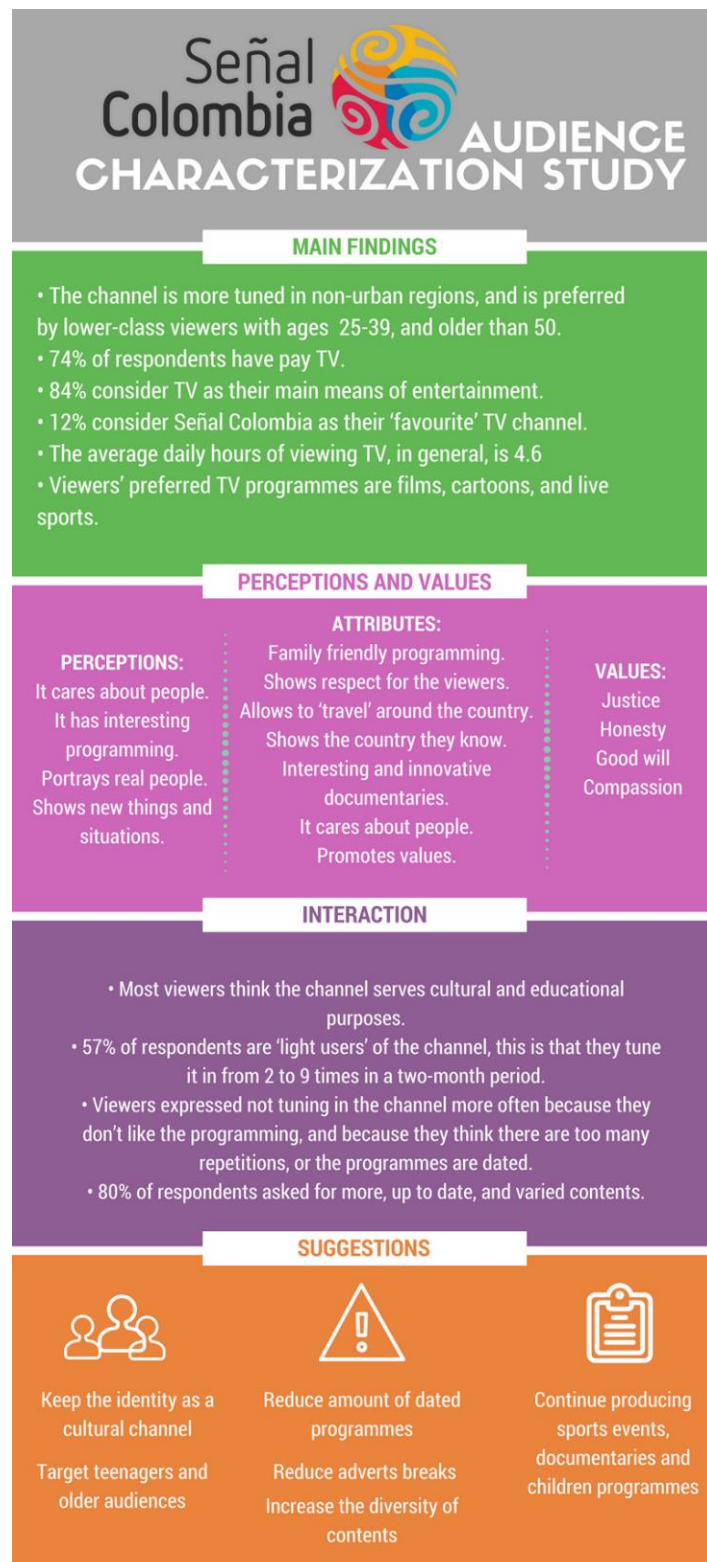


Figure 15 Audience Characterization Study

As the above figure demonstrates, the study asked about very general topics that, albeit related to active consumption of SC, did not provide sufficient information about audience engagement with the programming. There is no reference to any particular title from SC scheduling, and most responses seem to be based on glimpses of the channel rather than on continuous viewing. I tried to follow up the repercussions this study had or is having on production practices, but at the time of writing I haven't had any response on the matter.

The channel's current scheduling shows that foreign soap operas starring teenagers and young adults have been introduced, as well as more slots for foreign films. They have reduced the number of old 80s soap operas and have introduced others from the 90s. At the moment, between 6am and 12am, approximately 10.5 hours are dedicated to children's programming, with 2 hours devoted to younger viewers, another 2 hours aimed at teenagers, and an additional 5.5 hours for family programming.

A second phase of the study was conducted in 2016, based on the need for the channel, and the Colombian public media system in general, to identify opportunities to increase the channel's penetration in Colombian territory, as well as its chances of engaging new audiences due to wider coverage by the terrestrial signal. Furthermore, the need to increase this coverage was also supported in the call for public media to promote "integral human development in social scenarios; promote the construction and sustainability of a cultural identity, the communication of peace, the opportunities for social development and civic development" (RTVC; Señal Colombia, 2015, pp. 2-3). Moreover, they made reference to UNESCO's position on the relevance of public media as the foremost means to disseminate impartial information with a cultural and educational focus, to allow citizens to exert their rights to information, opinion, and freedom of expression. They also took into account UNESCO's suggestion of assessing public media performance in order to determine whether they are maintaining a competitive offer among the general *mediascape*. To do this, UNESCO recommends studies that focus on coverage, cultural diversity, interaction with audiences and viewers' satisfaction, in order to tell how viewers perceive, acknowledge, and identify with the programming. Another rationale for conducting the second stage of the study was the increasing competitiveness and dynamism of the media sector that has transformed audiences' consumption habits, to which the public media system must respond appropriately in order to maintain relevance and sustainability.

With this second stage, the channel aims to identify audience's psychographics, in order to know how the channel's programming can respond to their interests and make them loyal viewers. Interestingly, this stage targets individuals who do not tune in to the channel. At the time of writing, the study has not been concluded.

Nowadays, with the advent of DTT, and the continuous need for justifying the existence of a public media system in Colombia, public service channels are trying to find a way to adjust their programming to audiences' 'new' ways of consuming media. The Colombian National Television Authority, as well as the Ministry for Information and Communication Technologies have stressed on this, and specifically on the development of better and more efficient ways for public service channels to engage larger audiences, hence the recent interest on funding audience research such as the one above. Although producers perceive Señal Colombia contents as high-quality and relevant, this study showed that the channel is only one of several options for audiences, an alternative; producers know SC is not the audience's first choice when it comes to watching TV. The study also confirmed that there is a general perception among audiences that Señal Colombia is an educational channel, due to its tradition of programming educational and cultural contents from the outset up until the late 90s. Back then, the offer of pay-tv channels was very limited and audiences preferred the

free-to-air national TV channels, whether public or private. Today, pay-tv has notably increased its penetration in the country (87.53%, according to LAMAC, 2017), and with it, audiences' preferences have shifted to other channels, leaving Señal Colombia in 25th position in ratings (CNC, 2016).

Most participants assume audiences have little knowledge of the channel's scheduling and are not regular viewers because of a preconceived belief that it is boring and not aesthetically pleasing. Producers argue that perhaps audiences are unaware of what is being scheduled at SC because they hold a negative perception and memory of the channel which precludes their engagement.

"Viewers have this concept of the channel being something boring, ugly, poorly executed, and that's not true. Our quality is very high" (Independent producer, IV 5).

"I really don't care. I lost my enthusiasm years ago. I feel that it doesn't matter how much you care about what you do, how much passion you invest in it, no one will watch your programme. The idea people have about the channel weighs more, so, it's like a waste of energy. That's sad" (Freelance field producer, FG Participant 5).

Producers lament this perception because they consider it harmful for the channel and their own professional objectives; they feel discouraged by the audience's response and feel they are not having the impact they should.

"Our viewers are not loyal. They come across us by chance, and sometimes because they are looking for something new to watch." (Programming assistant, IV 23).

At this point, even discourses on the symbolic capital obtained by the channel from national and international awards, through which producers gain legitimacy to keep doing things the way they already do, is challenged:

"We have received awards, and those awards give us internal and sectorial recognition; but if you ask a viewer if they know about those awards, they are going to say: what awards are those? Who gave you those awards? We have sectorial recognition, but audiences don't recognise us" (Commissioning Editor, IV 17).

Neither awards, nor ratings say much about the interactions between audiences and the channel, and in the specific Colombian case, ratings are only measured in major cities, leaving aside rural areas and small cities where the channel has higher levels of approval. Furthermore, Señal Colombia managers and commissioning editors acknowledge the negative impact of ratings in their efforts to maintain constant funding from the government. Numbers do not lie, but the channel has found other ways to gauge its

appeal among audiences, such as using abstract concepts like ‘social profitability’, participating in TV contests, and turning to general discourses on the value of their productions in terms of the contribution they make to the Colombian audio-visual landscape. As described in the introduction to this chapter, so far this has worked to keep the channel both on air and away from political interventions. It is yet to be determined how these recent studies will affect production practices, because as the evidence shows, the problem of audience engagement can be interpreted as having less to do with the programming itself and more with the organisational and institutional practices that do not promote the continuity of programmes. One of these practices is the restriction for renewing commissions after a year, notwithstanding the quality and impact of the programme being produced. Another is that production practices are subject to fiscal years, leaving very little time to allow producers to develop deep research, then spend enough time for recordings and postproduction. Although I have tried to conduct follow-up interviews on this matter with the current director of Señal Colombia, and certain commissioning editors, so far my requests have gone unanswered.

Still, producing high-minded programmes is what keeps producers working and insisting on working for this particular channel. Discourses on the aims of PBS are part of who they are, and they want to make a contribution to society from their own standpoints. The moral economy behind their decision to work for the channel is what has helped it obtain the legitimacy it receives from peers, and what gives rise to hope that, some day, it will truly fulfil public service aims.

“We want PSTV to develop well, that we have more and better contents, that we are watched.” (Commissioning editor, IV 27).

“This is a matter of individual commitment” (Independent producer, IV 18).

This demonstrates that the internal dynamics of both the nation and the organisation greatly affect the concept of public value, making it an entirely relative notion. Where governance is state-driven, workers, notwithstanding their role, subscribe to dominant narratives and discourses that justify their work, therefore contributing to keeping themselves under prescribed autonomy, but worse than that, not doing anything “to

change the balance of power in society” (Raymond Williams in Scannell, 1990, pp. 55-6).

Not only the understanding of the value of the channel, but also the relations interplayed within it and between it and the government, have thoroughly corroborated that Señal Colombia and the Colombian Public Media System are a distinctive case of public broadcasting, in which unique features provided by the context offer new approaches to understand the concepts and notions used so far to describe the nature of cultural and creative work. It could be that the specificities of this case cannot be extrapolated for the entire Latin American region, but they do demonstrate that there is an increasing need to include more diverse perspectives in the study of the topic of production of culture, to be able to identify the specificities and features that enrich its entire gamut.

7.7. Summary

This chapter has focused on the main understandings of the notion of public value in the Colombian context, which is not represented by a strong concept nor clear measures or indicators that determine and evaluate how it takes place, but by discursive references to the idea of *social profitability*. Though there is a similarity between UK/European models of PSB and the Colombian one in terms of striving to produce outcomes that are of value for audiences, facts such as that the government is the main source of funding for the public media system, and that same funding is not affected by the audience’s response to contents, create a unique context where the notion of public value loses legitimacy and reveals a public media system more interested in being a place to pay off political favours, rather than the principal means to address important topics for Colombian society. To boot, producers negotiate their own personal and professional motivations to keep building strong portfolios, all the time arguing that they are endeavouring to make a difference, a contribution to society with the contents they produce, which not only contradicts the overall ways the media system functions, it also reveals that they have adopted and adapted the discourse of public value that legitimizes their performance, which the actual contents and audience response do not. This can be understood as concrete evidence of how the idea the channel and producers

have of what public value is “ends up on viewers’ screens” (Bennett, 2015, p. 123), as Bennett himself concluded from his study of the way producers understand PSM.

In this chapter, I also tested the main elements of Moore’s model of public value production in the Colombian context, in order to identify how value is being created at Señal Colombia in terms of his categories (support and legitimacy, resources, and the value sought to produce). For the first category, it demonstrated that Colombia has not promoted a strong regulatory system that would give public service media the place they deserve in the state and in audiences’ perception. That is due to ambiguous and superficial regulations that give the public media system insufficient financial and legal muscle to operate with the independence it should. This is directly linked to resources, which interviewees perceive as scarce and sometimes wasted, thus their possibilities of producing contents with higher quality of form and content are undermined. Finally, on the outcomes of the channel, the physical evidence of the value that is produced, there are contradictory perceptions as participants do not share clear standards to determine whether their programmes are really of value, so they must rely on their own explanations on the matter, at times even neglecting the possible audience response to these programmes. This is particularly significant for this research, since the value attributed to the programmes, the outcomes, is precisely what I used to link the notion of public value to the one of good work. That the public media system and Señal Colombia do not offer tools to create value from the very conception of ideas that give birth to the programmes, and do not gauge whether audiences are perceiving the value they claim to create, not only generates more contingent relationships between producers and their outcomes, but shows that producers and the channel have been building an experience of public service television production based on discourses of what it ought to be, not one that actually responds to the audience’s communicational needs, which should be included in order to create real public value. This is evident in their contrasting perceptions of themselves as producers of contents that are good for the audiences, whilst not caring about the reception those contents get among viewers.

In terms of value production, there is an increasing need in the Colombian and wider Latin American context to strengthen public media systems, in order to provide them not only with the healthy distance they need to keep from government (regardless of

whether or not it is the main source of funding) and get closer to audiences, in such a way that they continue producing alternative contents, but with the intention of truly generating audiences' involvement in the democratic discussion through their engagement with PSTV contents.

8. Conclusions

This study was designed with the intention of exploring the relationship between media work and public value in the milieu of Colombian public service television, and has effectively identified how producers perceive and experience the impact of working under state control, by focusing on their personal motivations, the organisational structures that surround their professional endeavours, and the material conditions that characterize their daily activities. The research has also strived to identify the extent to which producers' practices are guided by the concept of producing value, and whether organisational practices were conceived to enable delivering it.

This thesis opened with an exposé of the challenging working conditions that public television producers face at a channel under state control in Colombia. It identified that the majority of highly relevant literature on this specific subject is based on investigations carried out in the Global-North, and that there is a dearth of interest in this topic on the part of Latin American scholars, whose focus has typically been limited to describing and interpreting the cultural industries phenomenon from a macroeconomic perspective, or from the point of view of sociocultural comprehension of the cultural products (Barbero, 2007; Rey, 2009; Barreiro, 2013; Villaseñor Anaya, 2014). In addition, the existing general theoretical literature on the production of public service television, media work and creative labour do not address these topics in conjunction, my study therefore sought to answer a set of relevant questions that could provide a more comprehensive, combined approach:

1. How do working conditions impact TV producers' experiences and perceptions of their work?
2. How are power and control played out in the Colombian public service media context, and how do they affect producers' perceptions and experiences of their work and its outcomes?
3. In what way do governmental structures in the public television system constrain or enable producers' autonomy?
4. How is the production of public TV guided by the idea of producing value, and how does this notion mesh with concrete practices?

These questions were addressed on multiple levels, which revealed the interconnectedness of macro- and micro-structures, such as government regulations, organisational practices, as well as subjective experiences and perceptions. The analytical portion of this thesis (chapters 4 to 7) reviewed these issues in detail, revealing the structures under which public service television in Colombia is produced under state control, and how public TV producers experience and perceive this specific context. In this final chapter, I present a synthesis of the results emanating from this analysis, focusing initially on the general implications of the relationship between the state and media production, and on the contradictory discourses producers develop so as to adapt their practices to the highly contingent and unstable context offered by the Colombian public media system. I then proceed with a review of what this particular research has added to current knowledge on cultural work. Finally, I discuss the implications of my research for future work and point out certain theoretical and methodological issues that merit further attention.

8.1. Main Findings

On the whole, the relationship between public service television production and state control presented in this research is a highly complex one, wherein staff employed directly by Señal Colombia, as well as independent producers and freelancers, all find themselves in a process of constant negotiation of their own agency as individuals and professionals, in order to accomplish both the organisation's aims and the fulfilment of their own potential. This relationship is based primarily on editorial and financial dependence, where the government is at the same time the source of funding and the main client of public service TV outcomes, which leads producers to direct their creative efforts to that which complies with the government's known preferences. In their pursuit of professional and financial survival, producers sacrifice the potential public service value of programmes, as well as their connection with audiences, resulting in a contradictory production culture that is marked by servility and pompous, self-aggrandizing references to their own contribution to society.

During the phase involving observation of general activities at Señal Colombia, it became apparent that producers, even when they enjoy a certain leeway for their own creative

proposals, prefer to present projects that conform to what they believe the government would select, rather than being audacious. Moreover, independent producers participate in calls for tenders by submitting proposals to produce specific programmes that were already designed by commissioning editors, hence the former's creative input is minimal. This can be explained by their unrelenting economic necessity, as well as by their need to build up a portfolio that functions as symbolic capital in the media field. These relationships are generally explained under a more traditional political economy approach, since producers are well-aware of the control the state exerts over the channel when setting out the rules that must be followed. However, this power does not want to appear deterministic, thus the government allows the channel a certain degree of autonomy in their choice of formats, and by granting freedom to move across a given spectrum of topics.

It is thought-provoking, though, that most producers do not feel that they are under pressure, except for that related to deadlines. On the contrary, they maintain that they are creating what they consider is best for the channel and its audience, which just happens to be in line with what the government expects the channel to produce. However, some do not refrain from voicing criticism and being slightly more reflexive about this situation, arguing that the discourse of compliance and acceptance is merely a pose that facilitates having a more or less constant source of income, whilst they develop other projects on the side with independent companies or other channels. In either case, these negotiations increase their feelings of suffering frustrated development, which demonstrates that they are fully conscious of the conditions and the constraints they face, such as precarity, uncertainty, scant job protection, overwork and low ratings, and that all of these weigh more than their actual motivations for the job. Yet, they carry on reproducing these constraining structures, adjusting themselves to them either by adopting the institutional discourse of value, or simply by doing their job as professionally as they possibly can, without becoming emotionally involved with the programmes.

In this setting, the only option producers have is to embody the government's directives and act accordingly, negotiating their own perceptions of their professional selves with the actual conditions offered by the job. This is both a Bourdieusian deployment of

capital, and Foucauldian subjectification, under a traditionally coercive power environment. Producers manifest their passion towards the work, finding a suitable narrativization for the negotiation of their expectations, while at the same time pleasing the government with the intention of keeping their jobs. Although there was ample evidence of traditional top-down power, it is the competition in capital formation that appears to explain this field most comprehensively, as people are playing off their social capital in their work, a fact that is also patent in the clientelistic arrangements. They are calculating, creating strategies of survival so they need not face consequences; all of which is borne out by the precariousness of the working conditions.

The problem with this dynamic is that the discourses on the value of the outcomes that justify spending resources on public service TV are, in fact, a channel tactic aimed at maintaining the *status quo*, the current state of affairs, so that producers can keep their jobs and eventually develop their own ideas, while the government can continue using the public media system as a political bastion of clientelism. A further challenge lies in the fact that the field of public service television in Colombia is dominated by an extremely limited number of people in senior administrative positions in the government, all of whom, to boot, have little or no interest in promoting and developing a healthier public media system that truly satisfies the audience's requirements for enlightening audio-visual contents. Contrastingly, the public service TV sector is the sole option independent producers have to actually develop contents that are not constrained by market pressures, such as advertising or ratings, or by audience preferences. However, although this is a clear advantage for producers, it also poses a dilemma since this production culture promotes an endogamous, self-referencing system of content production and viewing that is only advantageous to those who are involved in it, to the point of leaving the relevance of the outcomes and the value of the programmes to be determined by those who fund and produce them.

This situation is far more complicated at the individual level, since producers share contradictory perceptions of their own professionalism and their ideas of contents that (ought to) entail a positive impact on viewers, as PSB outcomes should. A case in point, they demonstrate high levels of acceptance of the institutional rationale behind production dynamics, while at the same time, they express a strong conviction of doing

what is best for the audiences. Some of them emotionally detach from the outcomes, arguing that it is just a job and they trust that the organisation has done all the necessary to keep the products to the required standards in terms of social impact. Others, on the other hand, display a high degree of emotional attachment to the programmes they produce, and claim to have contradictory feelings when they invest so much time and effort in producing something that has so little acceptance from the audience. In a display of the Bourdieusian *illusio* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), producers argue that they are doing their best under the prevailing conditions, therefore obtaining from other sources the satisfaction they require to keep on doing their work, be it in the form of a portfolio, an award, or receiving a new contract.

The research revealed a distinctive moral economy, one marked by an intricate discursiveness that allows producers to pursue their own personal and professional goals, by taking advantage of the specificities of the channel's circumstances to produce contents that are not in the public interest but in their own. Seen from this perspective, the situation transpires to be highly detrimental to any practice that strives to add value to public service television dynamics and outcomes, but it is even thornier that this is not simply a subjective response to material conditions, but that actual institutional structures end up negatively affecting the outcomes' chances of gaining public value. It all begins with the absence of any clear definition of what public value actually *means* in the Colombian public media system, and the resultant lack of protocols that ensure the creation of value from production practices, followed by the dearth of an appropriate mechanism to measure how audiences attribute or obtain value or benefit from the channel's programmes, which is problematic since viewers are, ultimately, the *raison d'être* for PSB.

Finally, on the notion of public value in the Colombian context, it was noteworthy that this is not represented by a strong concept with related indicators to determine and evaluate the way it takes place, but rather, by discursive references to the idea of *social profitability*. Although the intention of producing outcomes that are of value for audiences is shared by UK and European models of PSB and the Colombian organisation, facts such as the government being the predominant source of funding of the public media system, and that this funding is never affected by audiences responses to

contents, create a unique environment where the notion of public value loses legitimacy, and reveals instead a public media system more intent on surviving as a place to pay back political favours than actually being the foremost means to address topics of important to Colombian society. What is more, producers negotiate their personal and professional motivations to continue building their own portfolios, at the same time contending they endeavour to make a difference, a contribution to society, with the contents they produce. They use the channel's organisational structures and dynamics to their own benefit, by adopting and adapting institutional discourses that legitimize their self-serving performance.

Notwithstanding the outrage provoked by the idea of assessing the value of public television outcomes in terms of financial impact on the media system, and likely audience responses to changes and new projects, in the Colombian and wider Latin American context, there is an increasing need to strengthen the public media systems, in order to provide them with the healthy distance they need to keep from the government (regardless of whether or not they are the main funder), and also to get closer to audiences, in such a way that they carry on producing alternative contents, but with the intention of actually generating a response from their viewers, fulfilling the desired aim of audience involvement in the democratic debate. The findings exposed that the internal dynamics of both the nation and the organisation significantly affect the concept of public value, making it an ambivalent, uncertain and ill-defined notion. Where governance is state-driven, workers, regardless of their role, subscribe to dominant narratives and discourses that justify their work, and thus contribute to keeping themselves under prescribed creativity.

Understanding the value of the channel, as well as the relations interplayed within it and outward with the government, have thoroughly proven that Señal Colombia and the Colombian Public Media System are a distinctive case of public broadcasting, in which the unique features provided by the context offer new approaches to the theoretical concepts used so far to describe the nature of cultural and creative work. It could well be that the specificities of the case cannot be generalised for the wider Latin American region, but they do indeed demonstrate that there is an increasing need to include more diverse perspectives in the study of the production of cultural work, and PSB, with the

intention of identifying particularities and features that could further enrich the spectrum of the topic.

8.2. Contribution to Existent Knowledge

The analysis of cultural work in PSB undertaken herein has contributed to extend knowledge on the topic, notably in situating it in a specific Global South Context. Furthermore, the findings from this work complement those of other local studies that have been carried out up until very recently, emphasising the need to expand the current understanding of how cultural work is perceived and experienced in Latin America, as a new geographic context for testing out concepts linked to it, such as precarity, good work, autonomy, and others reviewed throughout the thesis. Moreover, this study also introduced Latin America to recent literature on cultural work that has not yet been translated into Spanish and/or Portuguese, and that is of fundamental value when approaching issues related to cultural industries.

In general, the present study provided a holistic account of cultural work study, focusing on what occurs to cultural work in various contexts of control, and the individual reactions to these contexts. In particular, the study has highlighted that there is a distinct understanding of what cultural work means, depending on the geographical location, and also corroborated that concepts vary when situated in different contexts. The analysis of cultural work using a public service television channel under state control in Colombia as a case study, broadened current knowledge on the concepts of network sociality and good work under clientelism, and in a non-free-market.

Although not aiming to be strictly comparative, the project weighed the structural conditions of television producers as cultural workers based on foreign studies, mainly from the UK. In doing so, it was noted there is a great degree of structural similarity between production contexts, which is intriguing, considering that most UK cases come from market-led backgrounds. Even though public media and private media industries have divergent structures and goals, workers' conditions are strikingly similar, as are their practices, values, experiences and perceptions of cultural work. This is explained by the similarities in the structural conditions of cultural production, and the

normalisation of deprofessionalization (Ross, 2000) of cultural work throughout the world. These include: underpayment, poor work-life balance, financial dependence, precariousness, casualization, increased flexibilization, etc. However, certain local specificities transpired from the context of the case study relating to networking practices, structural precariousness, perceptions of what good work is, and a distinctive concept of public value called *social profitability*.

Furthermore, this research also contributed with new approaches to current knowledge on creative labour from a different perspective, also drawing on three key concepts from available literature on creative work: precarity, networking, and motivations and satisfactions of cultural workers, in order to determine the validity and applicability of the Anglophone interpretation of these notions to a dissimilar context such as the Colombian one.

On precarity, this study strengthens the idea that independent work in the creative industries is characterised by poor job conditions that keep cultural workers in a constant state of financial scarcity. Furthermore, it has shown that precarity is a *sine qua non* overall feature of work in Colombia, but that working conditions can become even more precarious when working freelance for the government as they must pay additional taxes on their incomes, and the actual duration of the contracts is regularly reduced by bureaucratic procedures that delay the start of the job.

On the notion of network sociality (Wittel, 2001) this research revealed that it has a different shade when contextual features such as tighter political and kinship ties, and clientelism, are added to the mix of professional network formation. My evidence suggests that there are stronger bonds linking members with shared experiences; bonds that transcend the professional network and flow into more lasting community and familial relationships which, at the same time, work as support for the members facing the challenges of instability and uncertainty in creative professions; this contrasts with the more superficial and instrumental ways of networking described in other contexts, where the main purpose of this practice is to gain access to contacts and resources, in order for workers to remain active and become known in their field. In addition, this closeness creates elites within the network that generate revolving doors within

different media and culture organisations (TV channels, government agencies, universities), where jobs are obtained on the basis of friendship. Moreover, the practice of clientelism adds another dimension that reinforces the need of media professionals to create tighter networks which present different dynamics and complexities.

On motivations and satisfactions, my conclusions differ from current knowledge that suggests that doing 'good work' is the main driver of cultural workers' commitment to their job. On the contrary, most of the participants in this research are motivated first and foremost by knowing they have a project, albeit fixed-term, but that guarantees temporary stability and a source of income. In addition, the idea of producing contents that will not contribute to the "dumbing down" of audiences is another motivating factor. In this way, they are responding to PSB aims while at the same time trying to build up their own career.

The data shows that participants acknowledge that enjoying autonomy and good working conditions are determinants for their idea of *good work*. But when it comes to the call by Hesmondhalgh and Baker to include media products as vital components of the notion of good work, products that should be of quality and of benefit to the people (2011, p. 36), there is a significant variance. In the Colombian public service media context, for cultural and creative products to be considered 'good', they must be of quality and promote and bolster positive portrayals of the country. Which is good in a benign sense, but bad in a democratic and culturally plural sense, since it only provides whitewashed views of Colombian diversity. This study revealed that what represents 'good work' at Señal Colombia is keeping the government happy, which is exactly the contrary of what Hesmondhalgh and Baker meant; for them intellectual and creative independence are necessary for good work to occur, which is not the case in Colombia, where government interference marks every dynamic related to producers' autonomy and also to their working conditions.

It is striking that certain participants reproduce discourses and narratives that parallel the Reithian ethos for public service broadcasting, yet which are often in contradiction with their own work performances. They claim to produce contents that make pertinent contributions to society, however, once these comments are juxtaposed to others on

the inexistent role played by audiences in this model of production, or the impact they intend to have on their viewers, it becomes evident that *good work* in the Colombian context has a completely different meaning, not only because this is a non-market-driven context, but also because it is not guided by a truly inclusive and audience-facing PSB ethos. Several producers are aware of this contradiction, and that they must nonetheless comply with this logic, in order to safeguard a relatively stable work life.

Here professionals are not constrained by audience demands, quite the contrary, the audience is imagined and embodied in the producers' experience, allowing them to determine what programmes and audio-visual narratives might interest viewers, according to the values embedded in the Colombian state. Even when they acknowledge that their programmes are not the viewers' choice, they justify themselves by insisting that it is a responsibility of the audience to tune in to the channel, not theirs to make more compelling products. Knowing that they are not an option for viewers does not alter contents or narratives, nor does it affect the channel's model of production.

However, this is how practitioners resist the government's attempts at stronger interference, so they can keep on having a decent and enjoyable way of life. Their autonomy is subtly exerted as a form of resistance, yet more visible as accommodation, as Toynbee says "autonomy provides a shell for the artist inside which she can retreat as the trade in art carries on all around" (2013, p. 87). Producing blunt, boring programmes is their shell, their strategy to survive and prosper. The biggest losers in this equation are audiences and public service aims, which act as mere discursive locus for justifying both producers' and government's actions.

In this context, autonomy truly exists, it is not a delusion or a pose, and it is the rational and willing expression TV producers so they can work in the field they enjoy. Neither is it self-exploitation, because precarity is the common feature of independent work throughout Colombia: most workers in every field are inadequately compensated for their work, yet are expected to work more hours than they are actually paid for, and to commit to the goals of the organisation where they work. Seen this way, producers actually seem lucky to have the chance to do something they care about, all the more so if by doing it they feel they are making a positive contribution to society, as they believe. The outcomes of this study complement those of earlier investigations that

have evidenced that commitment to the job is not necessarily a mask for self-exploitation, but a deliberate and spontaneous decision made by cultural workers so they can fulfil professional and subjective expectations, investing their time and efforts in producing something they consider valuable, worthy and good (Banks, 2006; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Banks et al., 2013) as long as either the symbolic or the economic remuneration pays off. This study has confirmed that the ethics of workers inform the emergence of a moral economy, supported by their commitment to produce contents in the public interest, therefore creating a narrative of merit for both their professional identities and the companies they produce these contents for. It has therefore been demonstrated that the idea of achieving a symbolic/emotional reward from producing something that creative/cultural workers consider is worthy or beneficial is also a characteristic of creative work in a Global South country.

8.3. Implications for Future Research

This thesis cannot provide final answers to questions of media work and the creation of public value. Instead, it presents an empirical investigation of a precise area of cultural production that describes and analyses the interconnections, processes, values and perceptions in the development of public service television programmes. In so doing, it contributes to the body of media production studies that are concerned with questions of organisational influence on producers' autonomy, it aims to help achieve a better understanding of how public service TV contents in Latin America take on the form they have. One disadvantage is that my results are exclusive to a specific research context, which could well greatly differ from other industrial, and indeed regional contexts. Nonetheless, this research is useful in that it offers a broader picture for a deeper and more comprehensive discussion about media work and cultural industries in general. More research is required, to compare and evaluate the similarities and differences in modes of cultural production in different geographical and industrial contexts.

A further limitation of my research is the relatively small number of participants, and the relatively short time span devoted to participant observation. Responses and field notes are not representative of a whole sector or industry, and therefore cannot be wholly generalized. But this does not invalidate my results, as they are situated in what

can be understood as a typical setting, and provide valuable information about the connections in this research field, which could provide indications of how other actors would respond under similar circumstances. Furthermore, this research has provided observational data regarding commissioning processes and organisational practices which are usually very difficult to obtain for reasons of confidentiality and publicity. However, further qualitative research is required to make a more generalised or comparable statement on the same topics about the studied field. Moreover, the data responds to a particular timeframe, which could well change over the coming years, making an assessment of the sector's progressive development necessary, especially considering its dynamism and continuous adaptation to global dynamics.

8.4. The Way Forward

To make a meaningful contribution to the field of media and communication studies, I suggest that future empirical research focus attention on further empirical works in the field of cultural work in the Global South, stressing the contextual settings and how these affect public service (and commercial) media delivery, as well as working conditions for those involved in cultural production. These contexts could be better explained under new theorisations on autonomy and power, and how they interplay and create the scenarios that allow free creativity to occur. In doing so, the complexity of individuals must also be acknowledged, paying particular attention to how they have to negotiate their aims with coercive or non-coercive environments, and to see whether there are tactics for resisting without punishment, or for adapting and complying.

This is particularly relevant for Latin America, as there is currently very little interest in studying, from either the empirical or the ethnographic points of view, the vast industrial contexts that form the creative industries the region is so proud of. Future work can also contribute to the limited public service media ethnography in the Global-South context, and in particular the Latin American and Colombian environments. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to give due relevance to the role that public service media have played in the development of industrial contexts, and its contribution to local processes of cultural production. Broader theoretical conceptualisations on public service media and public value are needed for the Latin American context, theorisations that address the

uniqueness and specificities of public media systems in the region, and the necessary steps to be taken toward its legitimisation among governments and audiences.

Likewise, how the local industrial settings support and promote the role of public service media should be a constant topic of scholarly and political debate, so media in the public interest gain the social and cultural relevance they ought to have in order to fulfil the aims that justify their existence. This is also the way to develop a solid theoretical contribution to the field of media industry studies, and communication studies in general, from a de-westernized perspective. For the past decades, Latin America has been a key performer in the New International Division of Labour, which has greatly affected the dynamics of labour configuration, enterprise development, and education across the continent; researchers and politicians are no longer in a position to neglect this reality.

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