World Cup television

Felisbela Lopes, Luís Miguel Loureiro and Phillipe Vieira

Abstract

In the second year of the second decade of the 21st century, on the verge of breaking into the era of digital television, it is important to know what kind of television model is currently available in Portugal. An analysis of the news coverage of the FIFA 2010 World Cup certainly helps to provide some answers. In this article, the authors present a study that centres its focus on news formats related to this great media event, broadcast on both generalist as well as cable news networks between 11 June and 11 July 2010 (the opening and closing dates of the tournament). The analysis, based on 604 broadcasts, seeks to discover the means for viewer integration in television broadcasts, and also who was summoned by the television studios to participate in the discussions they promoted. The data collected clearly show that World Cup TV is still very much closed to public participation and is circumscribed to a small group of guests, most of whom come from the journalistic field. It seems impossible to envisage a third stage in the audiovisual world, in the face of this reality. Post-television can wait.

Keywords: broadcasting, interactivity, participation, post-television, sport, television, television news, World Cup

Introduction

The medium of television is constantly evolving. Technological innovation that allows the existence of dialogues between the instances of production and reception, surely improves the odds for developing a third stage of television. Left behind are

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the models of a *paleo-TV*, the window television that was the default during the period of state-owned television monopoly; and of a *neo-TV*, a mirror television that appeared during the era of deregulation. To the television that has emerged with the promise of the digital world, one must take into account the potential for transforming audiences/the public into producers or, at least, into active partners in the process of television programming, given the potential of the new technologies made available in this sector. But does current television programming allow one to talk about a third stage in the audiovisual market? This question is broached in the course of analysing Portuguese television news coverage of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.[1]

Throughout just over half a century of television broadcasting in Portugal,[2] it was mainly the grand media events that were responsible for evolutionary leaps in the audiovisual panorama. This was the case in 1957, when Queen Elizabeth II visited Portugal, and again during the 1966 football World Cup in England, where the Portuguese team – nicknamed *Magriços* – finished in third place. Other examples include the revolution of 25 April 1974; the ceremonies surrounding Portugal's admission to the European Economic Community in 1985; and the coverage of the Gulf War in the early 1990s. Ceremonies, large-scale conflicts and international sporting events have consistently proven worthy of ample media coverage and, as a consequence, represented progress in the evolution of television. On the other hand, these events made perennial the message of what television is: a space for the collective celebration of a social present.

Television as a place for collective celebration

Taking television as one of the central elements of social life, it is tempting to view broadcasts as if they were rituals. This is not an innovative comparison. Those who study rites and discover new places for them have already made that comparison, as have those who analyse the field of television and argue that a form of communication, inspired by rituals, comes to life on set. Bringing together the work of different authors offers fertile ground for rethinking the audiovisual as a place for collective celebration and for the social present, which is intended to be as participative as possible. Therefore, it no longer makes sense to think of television as having two distinct sides: that of the producer (of the broadcast) and that of the passive receiver (of the televised message).

Mixing individual time with collective time, linking the present to a reference past, the ritual leaves room for collective mental states and memory stimulation; it changes experiences and exposes a pathway to disorder. More than transmitting pre-established messages, the rite, through its manifestations, permanently channels new information, becoming in its own right a potential source of knowledge. Composed by specific languages and updated by repetitions that are established in a specific

time and space, ritual manifestations adopt diverse configurations (positive or negative, festive or formal, commemorative or expiatory, etc.), but they all intersect, to a greater or lesser degree, with the everyday. Here we speak of rites, but we could reiterate that it applies to each word, if television were the referent. In writing about primitive rites, Jean Cazeneuve (n.d.) discusses certain of their functions which could also be applied to television. Assuming that the 'rite is always a symbolic action' (p. 269), the French researcher defends the idea that ritual practices correspond to the need of individuals to 'set themselves in a human condition and situating that condition in relation to what is avoiding them' (p. 279). To reinforce this position, he quotes Saint-Exupéry who, in Citadelle, states that 'the rites are in time what the address is in space' (ibid.). Such anchor points, to be precise, is what each and every one of us must be able to actively create.

Circumscribing themselves to particular happenings which they call *media events* (MEs), Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz approach television as if it were a ritual. The references for these researches are the 'television ceremonies', meaning 'live broadcasts of historical moments that make the country or the world stop' (Dayan 1999: 17). Promoted by agents outside of television, MEs are planned and advertised in advance, creating great expectation among audience members who feel 'compelled to watch' and, surely, would like to participate in what is being broadcast. According to Dayan and Katz (ibid: 23), 'even when they're dealing with conflicts, they're celebrating reconciliation', constituting themselves, in that way, as 'ceremonial efforts to remediate conflict or to restore order or, rarely, to establish change'. Is that not what rituals do as well? Examining the literature on rites, it is evident that some attempts were made to distinguish the ceremonial from the ritual,[3] but these two terms are frequently understood together. As far as the authors of this article are concerned, the ceremony constitutes an integral part of the ritual, as it is through the ceremonial that rites are situated within a scene, and norms and social values become more expressive. By analysing the effects of MEs, Dayan and Katz (ibid: 183–207) argue that these events 'interrupt the rhythm of people's lives', installing a 'time for leisure, but also a sacred time' that demands 'active participation' on the part of the viewers. Notwithstanding the fact that production and reception usually take place in differentiated territories, there should always be a connection from the *centre* (the scene) to the *periphery* (places from which audiences can watch television broadcasts, converted, in this respect, to public spaces united by the reterritorialised media scene of the television screen). 'Television removes the events from the ground and places them up in the air', argue Dayan and Katz (ibid: 30).

Live or recorded, television broadcasts place the viewer before content which is transmitted, at the same time, to a vast audience. In this sense, a present is built inside and outside of the small screen, which enables the formation of a territorially-dispersed community which shares, at a given moment, the common mental picture

provided through the communicative pact of each programme. More important than uncritically watching whatever it is that the networks are broadcasting, would be the fact that each and every one of us feels motivated to act on what we are viewing. Today, more so than in the recent past, television relies on technologies that allow for a connection to be established permanently, if the medium is open to viewer participation and if audiences feel motivated to become active publics.

The *hype* of the hyper and the *centripetous screen*

Despite having outlined a significant portion of its route towards the individual-receptor, the analogically rooted television that we know today can hardly be seen as interactive: we do not do much more with it than zapping. The broadcast, 'a technology of varied messages to a general public' (Williams 1990: 13), organised in the sequential logic of a single timeline, is still provided in a continual flow that the receiver follows without any major possibility for decisive individual content intervention. It is important to analyse why, despite all the technological buzz going on, it seems we are still some way away from dismissing the theoretical frame set in the early 1970s by English sociologist Raymond Williams, who shaped and defined the notion of broadcast television programming precisely as *sequence* and *flow* (ibid: 87–96).

The encounter between the digital interactive world and television has been in the making for at least two decades. Even today, in terms of their ordinary uses, the *computer* is something different from the *television set*, and the interactive experiences performed by television since the early 1990s, based on the development of digital television technologies, had little continuity (Cardoso 2006: 243; Castells 2004: 224) or kept evolving at a relatively slow pace. Digital television exists as a technology, but the social use of its full characteristic digitalisation features (such as interactivity) seems to remain a relatively distant ideal. Evidence shows that broadcast television seems resistant, both in its old and its new forms (Gripsrud 2004: 219; Tay & Turner 2009: 37), which makes it questionable to announce the coming of a *new era of television*, and even harder to agree with what could be termed *the-end-is-near* narrative.

The anticipated *end of television* has actually been an ongoing narrative, especially since the popularisation of the communicational interactive screen, summed up and functionalised by the World Wide Web. Since the late 1990s, numerous scholars have been working on a new television model, or even of an end-of-an-era model. Alejandro Piscitelli (1995: 23) proposed the idea of a *post-television*, advocating that the breakthrough in long-distance computing, along with a proliferation in home video content, would eventually subdue television as we know it. He later developed these ideas into a 1998 book appropriately titled *Post-television*.

In line with some of Piscitelli's arguments (although not using the prefix *post-*), another Argentinean researcher (working in Spain), Carlos Scolari, presented the concept of *hypertelevision*. In a 2006 article[4] he analyses the consequences of digital hypertextuality in a medium such as television, stating that television has indeed surpassed the *neo* stage, having *incorporated* – particularly on its fictional narrative structures of the last decade (and, in part, in newscasts) – some of the features which seem to be characteristic of interactive media and of Internet consumption. Such features include the fragmentation of the screen, the rupture in narrative linearity, the unbridled intertextuality and the quick pace of montage. As a result, 'hypertelevision needs a consumer educated both in the culture of zapping – characteristic of neo-television – as in the culture of videogames and hypertextual navigation experiences' (Scolari 2006: 10). Essentially through an analysis of new reception features that already incorporate interactivity and individual multi-choice features, Scolari (ibid: 13) concludes that we are placed before 'a new kind of television consumption characterized by the fragmented, ubiquitous and asynchronous: a different show on each set at the same time'. In his understanding, this represents a break with 50 years of synchronic television, dragging along with it McLuhan's concept of a global village. In a subsequent article, Scolari specifies his concept as an aesthetical and semiotic approach to the narratives and visuals of the actual television screen, rather than envisioning some sort of *interactive television* on it. Actually, Scolari (2008: 7) speaks of a screen that, while unable to be interactive, *simulates* it. He considers this to be a consequence and an adaptation of television to a new media environment: 'These new television textualities – with their multiscreens, transmedia storytelling and multiplication of narrative programs – would be unthinkable without the hypertextual experiences lived by millions of users during the last decade' (ibid).

Meanwhile, heavily cited American scholar, Amanda D. Lotz, also drew on a set of technology-driven arguments in her 2007 book, *The television will be revolutionized*, to stand not for an *end of television* as such, but for a *post-network era*. She starts by arguing that 'we may continue to watch television, but the new technologies available to us require new rituals of use' (Lotz 2007: 2). These *prerequisite* new rituals mean a decline in social and spatial-temporal sharing, progressively individualised consumption, and the increased possibility for individual content production. Lotz (ibid: 7–8) considers the mid-1980s to represent the beginning of the end of the *network era*. A *multi-channel transitional period* followed until the mid-2000s, when clear signs of a technologically revolutionised *post-network era* finally emerged. *Control* and *mobile technologies*, enabling the viewer's own choice, seem to have created an environment conducive to these kinds of developments (ibid: 16). Contemporary times would then make it difficult to define 'a uniform experience of watching television' (ibid.), as 'post-network television is primarily non-linear rather than linear' (ibid: 19). Lotz ends her introductory chapter by using

and enthusiastically adhering to two quotes on the subject, both by corporate media CEOs (ibid: 19–20).

Actually, as Australian researchers Jinna Tay and Graeme Turner point out, even if it is not immediately evident, there is a strong alignment between technology-driven narratives and current market discourses on emerging television business models (Tay & Turner 2009: 32). A closer look shows that it has been a *geographically specific* narrative, not applicable to most of the world outside of Western countries (ibid: 33). And even in the West, this somehow wishful thinking about revolutionalised television futures has not yet seen a full translation to the empirical record (ibid: 57). While staying in the technological buzz of the *post-network* era – which means insisting that a *significant revision* of Raymond Williams' concept of broadcast *flow* is necessary, 'at least in terms of television flow being determined by someone other than the individual viewer' (Lotz 2007: 34) – Lotz acknowledges the contradictory evidences that keep showing a steady audience prevalence of prime-time broadcasts over all other forms of television viewing (ibid: 22). Lotz's proposal of a *post-network* era also loses ground when applied to the European scenario, where broadcast television implies not only sequence and flow, but also has a cultural, social, institutional and political meaning as a *public service.* This makes it the focus of public debate around the notion of *universal access* (Harrison & Wessels 2005: 835) and therefore underscores a strong *centrality* to European societies (Moe 2008: 221). Norwegian researcher Jostein Gripsrud (2004: 221) seems, then, to be proven right when he states that 'we are still in a social situation that much resembles what was described by Raymond Williams as a set of preconditions for broadcast'. While broadcast television is going through change, it is still far from meeting its own demise, which means an alternative perspective is needed to look (in)to the television screen.

First, to take a commonsensical panoramic view, the living-room's central screen is no longer the only technological screen we gaze at, in our everyday lives – in fact, this has been the case for the past three decades. Perhaps, then, there is no strong reason for our ongoing tech-related surprise or utter astonishment when constantly confronted with empirical evidence of whatever is labelled the fragmentation, or division, of our time and attention towards technological screens. It is quite obvious that we are looking at and connecting to different screens all the time – one of them (and surely an important one) still being the *old* broadcast television screen in relation to which we find ourselves more *laid back* than *laid forth*, more *following the flow than disrupting it*. This assumption brings us to a non-technologically situated gaze at the screen and raises the question of how we should cope with its evolving processes. This also necessitates an analysis that considers technology to be part of the social environment, rather than the sole or main driving force of change. Actually, this is quite a paradoxical approach as, in fact, it harkens back to the *end-*

of-television narrative, but from a different perspective. It draws from research lines other than the *digital optimism*[5] of authors such as Piscitelli or Lotz.

By the turn of the millennium, journalist Ignacio Ramonet and semiologist Eliseo Véron agreed that the signs of the demise of broadcast television were visible just by looking at what television screens were showing at the time. There was a kind of *reality television*[6] which emerged particularly from broadcasts meant for collective *voyeurism* (e.g. Big Brother), but which also found its way into other television formats, including those belonging to newscasts, thus promoting the rise of new, disposable and precarious celebrities, for which 'the symbolic reward is not merely personal satisfaction, the narcissism of having been on television, of one ephemeral appearance (on a game show, a contest, through a testimony). Now, it is becoming a character of a story' (Ramonet 2001). Communicologist Dominique Mehl seemed not to notice any kind of novelty in this, just an 'exacerbation of the features of a relational neotelevision' (Mehl 2002: 95) that the French researcher had already identified during the 1990s. Eliseo Verón (2001: 7), however, added his conviction that a *third stage* in the history of television, jumpstarted by shows that suggested increasing levels of voyeurism, was based 'on a complex configuration of defined collectives as being exterior to the institution of television, attributable to the non-mediated world of the recipient' that would turn into the ultimate stage – one that would decree the end of general public television. In 2006, communicologist Jean-Louis Missika published *La fin de la télévision* [The end of television] in which he further developed these arguments. Following Verón's train of thought, Missika (2006: 7) explained that it was not television as technology that was coming to an end, but television as *medium*. Drawing on Umberto Eco's periodisation, Missika considered that this emerging *post-television* meant a limited rupture or a further development on the set of *neo-television* features. What we see on-screen, then, is a mix of elements, either new or drawn from earlier periods (ibid: 20). *Post-television* (ibid: 27–35) would now correspond to a screen to which the viewer is permanently *called in* and, unlike with *neo-television* screens, he/she no longer has to produce anything *extraordinary* to be there. According to Missika, this produces an *intimacy without interiority* (ibid: 29) and develops a *demediation* process (ibid: 39–53). Therefore, regardless of whether I want the screen, *the screen wants me in*, attracts me in, works its link with me on further identification: 'that one who is onscreen is no longer different from me' (ibid: 29).

Whether or not we agree with (at least some of the arguments of) the *end-of-television* narratives, what is *actually being viewed* on our television screens nowadays? If the thesis of an ongoing evolution still based on the *broadcasting* conceptual frame is accepted, there is good reason to elaborate on an hypothesis that the television screen may be compensating for a possible loss of centrality in people's lives, through a developing metamorphosis based on some kind of

progressive magnetism: the television screen emerges as a *centripetous screen* that attracts, accommodates and combines all sorts of spatio-temporal and socio-semiological resources, in order to retain a central role in our societies. But it is not only because of its *simulational* combined and merged features – what Scolari terms *hypertelevision* – that its centripetous character is noticeable. It is also because it truly mobilises its spectator or, as Missika states, it keeps *calling him in*, to make him feel *he (is not only in but he) is the centre*. In addition, as already argued elsewhere, it increasingly tends to summon up, substitute and totalise an idea of *public space* (Lopes et al. 2011: 229, 237–238). Ours is then a television screen that calls the individual to the core of the televisual apparatus, playing with his fluid and unstable identity and identifications, with his multiple everyday projections, longings, doubts, frailties, and slim real and virtual connections (Bauman 2006: 14–15) which seem to reinforce his narcissistic character (Mourão 2002: 92). However, giving room to a predominance of the *ego*, this *centripetous screen* still summons the individual to a multitude of permanent options that also include, in concomitance, the preservation of old communitarian references of a general public television provider of social synchronicity and communion, democratic participation and shared identity (Wolton 2001: 60–63), alongside all the others that seem to allow him to sketch a completely autonomous, independent and individualised path.

If this proves to be true, the television we are seeing on our screens behaves as an organic social entity, responding in a *social field* dynamics to an institutional character that implies a continued tendency to position itself in order not to lose its central role or *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu 1994: 71), both socially and economically. This centrality seems to be maintained by combining fragmentational and unifying features and merging them into an interchangeable unit by a centripetous process that works by *attracting everything to its centre*. And this will hardly mean a foreseeable definitive dissolution of the *flow-and-sequence* basis of the broadcast television paradigm that also deals with the notion of *control over centrality*.

The citizens' place in journalism

Journalism as a public space for debate is, certainly, one of the key hallmarks of the journalistic field that only makes sense when the discussion promoted is participatory, diversified, and brandishes arguments of broad consensus (Kovach & Rosentiel 2004: 140). Concepts such as 'participative journalism' and 'citizen journalism' are becoming increasingly common, but do not always find a great deal of receptivity among journalists, nor do they gather quality contributions from the audience.

One may find the connection between participative journalism and citizen journalism which is recommended by both the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and the Pew Center for Civic Journalism. At the genesis of these processes remains

an idea of the public as participating in the information-gathering process, in this way providing an important service while helping reporters solve their problems and thus, consequently, improving the quality of journalism.

With the exception of 'citizen journalism', none of the other forms of participatory journalism dispenses with the journalist. In fact, they see him as irreplaceable in the partnership established with citizens.

'There is no journalism without journalists' is what those would assert who see these technological innovations and the inevitable involvement of the audience as distinctive traces of current journalism. The role of proactive information sources is reserved for citizens who would, in turn, set in motion the productive process. The increasingly technological environment in which we all circulate has potentiated that dialogue, made possible from the moment the news industry opens effective communication channels. If the journalistic class does not abandon its ongoing responsibilities at the level of information scrutiny, this may turn out to be an interesting alternative pathway for the field of journalism.

In turn, what is called 'citizen journalism' envisions that the news content be produced by the citizen who does not need, in order to do that, any journalistic training. It comes down to a kind of 'amateur journalism' that may take various shapes: writing commentary on websites/blogs; sending photographs/videos; creating news websites updated by users (for example, the *ohmynews* site); elaborating discussion lists, creating forums; podcasts. The defenders of this new trend, which has in Dan Gilmor (2004) one of its main promoters, point to the democratisation of production and the access to information as an inalienable victory of 'citizen journalism'. There are also those who believe that this is a way to value news reporting, since it adds the observation of facts by eyewitnesses. In *We media: how audiences are shaping the future of news and information*, Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis (2003) define this kind of journalism as an act of citizenship, where the citizen has an 'active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information'. However, many remain sceptical of this understanding. One of the main critiques launched at this type of journalism is that it abandons the journalistic principle of objectivity to which citizens are not bound, thus allowing for the publication of many 'stories' on matters in which a content producer is an interested party. Vincent Maher (2005) notes that citizen journalism is linked to the fatal three 'Es': *ethics*, *economy* and *epistemology*. Miroljub Radojković (2010) also has doubts about the new role which is entrusted to citizens, questioning whether the absence of ethical, professional, cognitive requirements for the practice of journalism could not do more harm than good to society.

In the midst of apocalyptical and integrated theses, the journalistic field traces its own path, slowly and in ways that have proven unpredictable to researchers. On the threshold of digital television, it would be interesting to evaluate how television

information integrates viewers in the contents it produces. The news coverage of the FIFA 2010 World Cup – a four-yearly media event that attracts mass audiences of different origins – is the focus for this empirical study.

Authorised television voices during the 2010 World Cup news coverage

One nation rooting for its football team, a planet united around pitches that bring together countries at war, rich and poor communities, people of different ages and social classes, and individuals of mismatched tastes – it is that glue of the world which brings people closer, which constitutes the magic of an event such as the World Cup. The media, and television in particular, enlarge this sporting event to a planetary scale. It is around the small screen that an invisible community gets together to watch the games and the pre-shows, as well as the debates which arise once the referee has blown the final whistle. In a technological context that potentiates viewer integration in television shows – particularly those that discuss what happened or will happen on the pitch – it is important to understand to what degree television networks make that participation possible.

Methodological path

The World Cup, assumed to be a media event, in the meaning that Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1999) give this concept, tends to create significant changes in the television programming schedule, which are more visible in the network that holds the broadcasting rights. However, all networks create special information formats to follow up on happenings around the World Cup, or integrate specific contents in existing news shows. The goal is always to attract the interest of the audience, but do those broadcasts really want the audience to be a part of the show, or do they expect passive behaviour from their viewers? This is the question the authors of this article tried to answer, using as reference the generalist networks (RTP1, SIC, TVI) and the Portuguese cable news networks (SIC Notícias, RTPN and TVI24) and having, as basis for their analysis, a set of programmes selected in accordance with the criteria explained below.

First, the authors selected only news shows which were hosted by reporters and were compiled in accordance with journalistic criteria, excluding from the investigation all entertainment content. This option was only relevant, however, in the generalist channels, since the content on news channels is (as one would expect), essentially informative, though there may be room for a few non-information shows. Having made these distinctions, other criteria were pinpointed.

In respect to the generalist networks, the decision was made to study only newscasts. As regards the news channels, the constant broadcast of information content highlighted the need to be a bit more selective. For this reason, the authors decided to look only at the specific content created for the World Cup coverage and the viewer forums the networks aired twice a day, but only when the subject under discussion was the World Cup.

Thus the focus of the study, between 11 June and 11 July 2010 (the kick-off and closing dates of the tournament), was all the news content of the generalist networks (RTP1, SIC, TVI) and all content related to the World Cup and the debate forums on the thematic news channels (SIC Notícias, RTPN, TVI24), when the theme of the broadcast was the World Cup. The profile of those who were summoned to the studios to discuss this sporting event and the different forms of viewer integration in the broadcast were studied. That analysis provided 604 broadcasts.

Each broadcast was examined under two distinct levels:

- Plateau composition: the aim was to find out who was invited to appear in television broadcasts relating to the World Cup during the period under study. To map the profile of the guests, five different variables were created: geographical provenance, sex, job, relation to the theme of the show and relation to the broadcast.
- Viewer integration: the purpose here was to evaluate how viewers were integrated in information broadcasts – that meant understanding which participation channels were opened by news programmers (i.e., which platforms for content access and interaction with the studio were made available to viewers). To discover the routes for public participation in television broadcasts two variables were defined: whether or not viewer integration existed; and, if it did exist, what technology was used to enable such participation (telephone, e-mail, social networks…).

Viewers avoided televised debates on the World Cup

In Portugal, the television broadcasts during the World Cup did not seem to encourage viewer participation. Of the 604 broadcasts under study, only 84 (about 13%) integrated the viewer, placing at his disposal a few platforms for participation in news debates, via telephone or social networks.

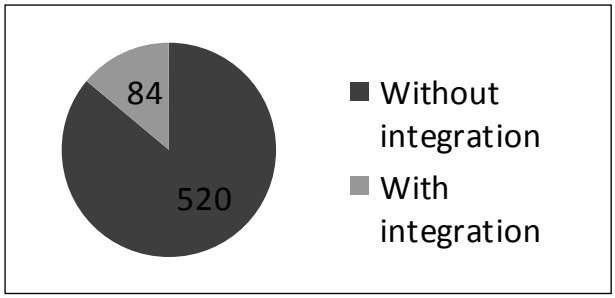

Figure 1: Viewer integration in news programmes during the World Cup

E-mail was, by far, the most commonly used platform for viewer integration in broadcasts (in 83 news shows). The telephone and the social networks were used about the same number of times, in 55 and 52 broadcasts respectively. It should, however, be stressed that in most instances the different forms of participation were available at the same time. Nevertheless, in most cases they were controlled and restricted by those in charge of the broadcast.

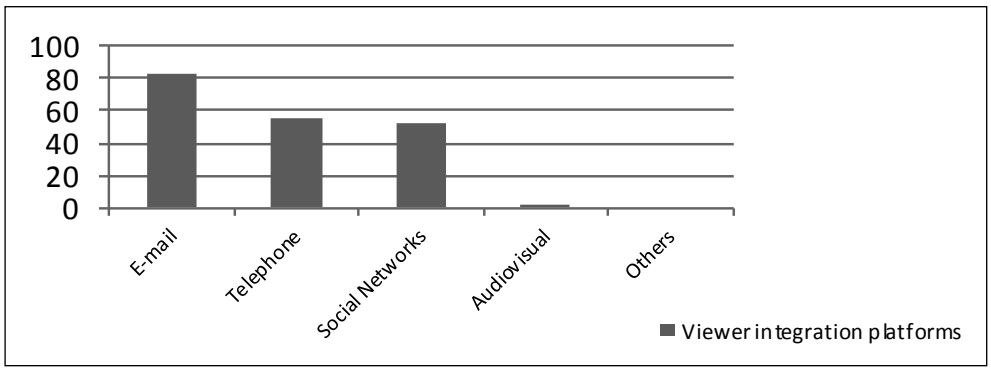

Figure 2: Viewer integration platforms

A closer look at the data shows that in the other 520 broadcasts there was no room for the viewer or his opinion. What this means is that in the vast majority of situations, the networks (particularly the generalist networks) encouraged passive viewing, since none of them promoted viewer integration in even a single programme. The fact is that all of the content that accepted viewer participation was on cable, and was mainly seen in the debate forums those networks aired twice a day. The public service news channel, RTPN, was responsible for the majority of broadcasts that integrated the viewer. In 49 out of a total of 51 programmes, RTPN invited viewers

to participate in the debates, although only audio was heard in the forums. In other formats, participation reached the television screen through text that made it onto the shows via e-mail or social networks, such as in the case of *À Noite o Mundial*, a news show that RTPN created solely to cover the World Cup. In the studio, besides the anchor, who introduced stories by reporters in South Africa and who chatted with the guests, there was a second presenter who, from time to time, was called on to read comments and suggestions viewers had posted on the show's Facebook page.

Whether it is cause or effect, one factor may be helpful in understanding why the networks – particularly the generalist ones – seemed so distanced from the audience: SIC and RTP1 (TVI did not have any particular programme covering the tournament) made the decision to air short newscasts that offered a synthesis of the day's information. Those short newscasts consisted of a sole anchor who was in the studio, and whose sole job it was to introduce reporters' inserts. Furthermore, from this analysis it was evident that in no broadcast under 30 minutes was there any time for viewer integration, which was much more visible in hour-long (44 cases) and two-hour-long broadcasts (39 cases). In this sense, there seems to be a relationship between the duration of the broadcast and viewer integration.

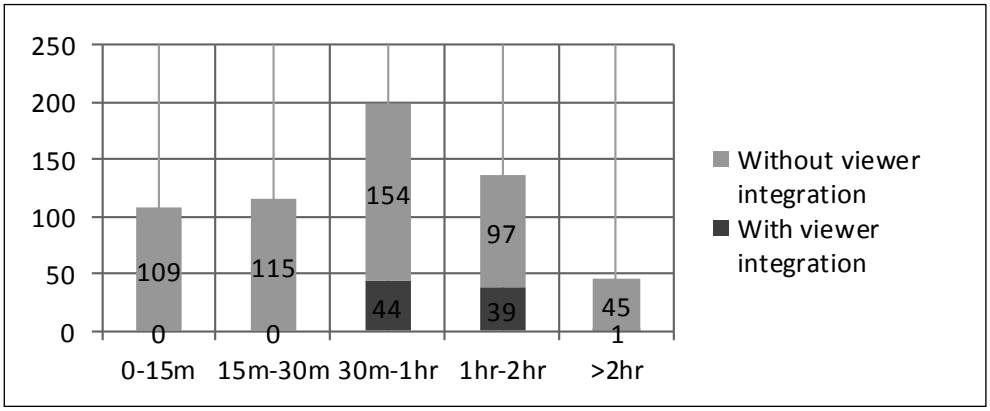

Figure 3: Duration of broadcasts and viewer integration

If viewer integration was largely lacking in televisions coverage of the World Cup, in those situations where it did happen, innovation was not really a feature. For example, by looking at the forums it is clear that despite opening up a channel for viewer on-air participation there was no room for real discussion, and it seems as if viewers' opinions were merely broadcast – there was no real dialogue with the anchor or on-set guest, and no exchange of opinions between viewers. However, what the analysis did show is that the telephone is still one of the few options available to

viewers to participate 'direct' and have their voices heard on television. When it came to e-mails, for example, viewers only saw their comments posted on-screen *a posteriori* and only after having been screened by the producers. The same thing happened with new digital platforms such as social networks, which were hardly explored at all.

Faced with this situation, those responsible for sport – particularly for coverage of World Cup 2010 on the various television channels – were divided on the potential impact viewer participation would have on the quality of transmissions and on the expression of citizenship. On the side of public television (RTP), journalist Carlos Daniel, RTPN deputy director at the time and anchor of *À Noite, o Mundial*, a daily news and debate programme dedicated to the World Cup, considered that viewer participation, via the social networks, email and telephone, had been 'excellent' and introduced in the right measure. As an example of the success of this strategy, Daniel referred to his programme's Facebook page, which had 25 000 followers in just three weeks. In addition, the introduction of a second anchor on the plateau, with the task of interacting with users of social networks was, in his opinion, 'a success', so much so that this model was later adopted by another programme, *Pontapé de Saída* ('Kick-off').

However, this enthusiasm was not shared by private channels (SIC and TVI). António Cancela, one of the most notable editorial sports journalists, believes that opening transmissions to viewer participation does not improve the democratisation of content, nor does it add commercial value. On the contrary, he argued, it can break the momentum of the programme, rehash what was said during the discussion and reduce the overall quality. Luis Sobral, sports editor for TVI, concedes that viewer presence during actual transmissions (by phone, via email or social networks) is beneficial to the extent that it '*helps to better understand how audiences are living the sporting event*.' However, in his opinion, it '*should not represent more than 5 per cent of the total programme*'.

Given these statements, it can be said that private television operators tolerated viewer participation, while public operators seemingly valued it.

Journalists with free access to the news set

Another element of the analysis sought to discover who was summoned to appear on television to discuss the World Cup. Despite football being fertile ground for passionate debate, Portuguese television did not value the conversation formats. One should bear in mind that in 71.3 per cent of all broadcasts studied, the host was the only person on set – a clear sign that networks favoured a traditional approach to the tournament coverage over a more explanatory and/or controversial approach (431 of the 604 broadcasts did not have anyone else on set besides the anchor).

When the news formats did open up to studio guests, they were usually in groups of no more than five. This was the case in 95 per cent of the analysed broadcasts. The option of having between five and ten guests in the studio was only a reality on seven shows, while only one broadcast hosted more than ten guests on set: RTP1's debate programme *Prós e Contras*, broadcast on 14 June.

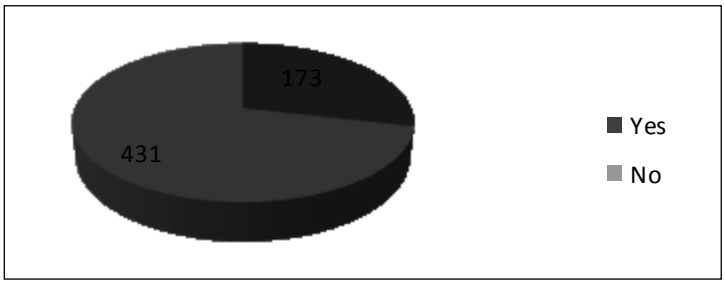

Figure 4: Guests on set

As for the guests who appeared on television during the World Cup, the authors were interested in knowing who these people were. To obtain that information the authors gained data on their jobs, sex, geographic origin and their relation to both the programme and the topic being addressed on the show (in this case, World Cup football). In terms of profession, sports journalists were the professional class appearing most frequently on television during the 30 days of the World Cup. Of the 366 guests, 214 were either sports reporters or sports commentators (58.4%). The numbers are even more overwhelming if one takes into account the fact that ex-footballers were the second most sought-after professional class, with 55 participations in World Cup programmes. The third class, coaches, only appeared on stage 38 times. After eliminating from this analysis any jobs linked to football, the most represented professional class on set was the culture industry – musicians, actors or directors – who counted 12 presences on set. Politicians from almost all parties were guests on these shows on 11 occasions. In terms of gender, women as a group were virtually silenced by the networks: 358 out of the total of 366 guests on the shows were men. Apparently women did not present themselves as an enabled group when it came to discussing football.

Regarding the geographic provenance of the guests, there was a clear preference for people from the Greater Lisbon area. In fact, 238 of the 366 guests (65%) discussing the World Cup during the tournament hailed from that specific region. The northern region was the second most represented, with 26.2 per cent of the total. The rest of the country was, apparently, irrelevant and excluded from discussions. Internationally, Brazil was the only other nationality present in Portuguese broadcasts, accounting for 22 studio guests.

Another variable was the link between the guest and the theme of the programme. The question was whether the guests' professional profile enabled them to speak with authority about football. At this level, guests with a connection to the theme made 295 appearances, while those who had no visible relationship with football were only seen on television talking about it 71 times.

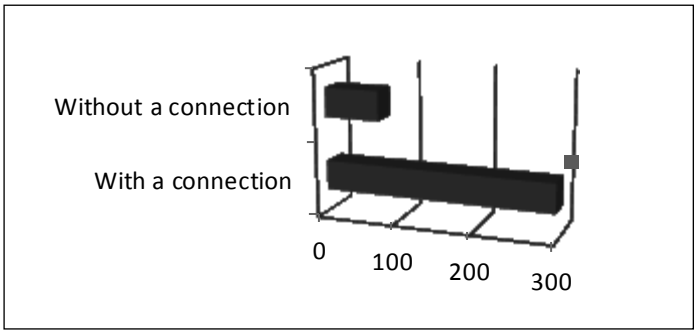

Figure 5: Guests' relationship with football

Conclusion

The televised programmes during the World Cup seemingly did not cater for viewer integration. Given that the World Cup attracts large crowds and is part of a major industry, it would be more than reasonable to assume that the audience would have a much more active role in the television broadcasts relating to the tournament. However, that was not the case. The generalist networks, usually associated with the general public (Wolton 1994), were completely impervious to viewer participation in their broadcasts. The cable networks, however, were slightly more willing to give viewers an opportunity to share their opinions with the general audience. RTPN, the state-owned cable news network, by far made the biggest effort to integrate the viewers in its broadcasts. Surely this is a plus for the network that was not, however, capable of influencing the groups' generalist channel, RTP1, which did not show a clear interest in presenting itself, as one of its slogans suggests, as the 'television for all Portuguese' – at least, not at an information level.

Looking at Portuguese television broadcasts during the World Cup, the design is seemingly still highly similar to the one Umberto Eco created for *neotelevision*, a television that is mostly interested in attracting an audience, but is not concerned with transforming viewers into active partners, in terms of production. Empirical evidence underlines the notion of a continuously developing *centripetous screen*, which attracts everything to its core: the individual viewer, the semiological resources that configure discourse and screen aesthetics, public debate on any given issue. This

screen, however, is still a *broadcast television* screen. By being *centripetous* it shows its capacity for continued metamorphosis, for the aggregation and combination of new screen aesthetic elements and discursive features, with the old *sequence and flow* being defining characteristics of Raymond Williams' *broadcasting* concept.

It may seem strange that the television channels did not take advantage of an event like World Cup 2010 to motivate for viewer participation. However, as discussed before, Portuguese television producers are divided on the potential impact of that participation in terms of attracting a bigger audience and enhancing the quality of transmissions. Public television producers see the benefits, while private channels remain sceptical. Also interesting is the fact that every single broadcast that allowed viewer integration was aired on cable – a platform that, despite its recent growth and territorial expansion, still affords reduced access and low visibility.

As for the studio guests invited to debate on the World Cup, over half of the participants were journalists, which strengthens the 'circular news structure' identified by Pierre Bourdieu (1997). There is a dominant discourse that reflects a given reality, but that does not support all aspects of reality. Apart from everything that was said, there were also things that remained unsaid, and this gives room to a huge silent majority of voices that were not heard: the supporters, for example. By confining airtime to elitist groups, the debates around the 2010 World Cup froze the dynamic of the plateau. A glance at the news programmes that the different networks championed (specifically around the World Cup, most notably the televised debates), repeatedly showed inflected masculine discourses coming from interlocutors who lived in Lisbon and belonged to three specific professional groups (journalists, ex-footballers and coaches), with a tendency to interview the same people over and over again. Surely a larger number of people could contribute to interesting debates around football?

As regards the football programming grid, one aspect should be underlined: all television networks debuted specific contents to cover the World Cup.[7] This option could have been accompanied by a greater openness to the idea of integrating the public. There is nothing better than an event like the World Cup – which caters for different audiences, all linked by their passion for football – to motivate viewers to participate in and interact during transmissions. That was not the route taken, either because it was deemed not to increase audience numbers, or because this is not yet a well-established or popular model. Therefore, this World Cup television was, above all, dominated by those who produce and present the transmissions.

The functioning and meaning of these *centripetous* mechanisms is therefore related to the notion of *control over centrality*. Whether the viewer wants to be *in* or *out*, the screen *calls him in*. The screen retains control by creating no more than an illusion of choice, participation and interactivity for its viewers: the viewer is then configured by the *centripetous screen* apparatus as an *individualised consumer*,

not as a *political citizen*, as *audience* rather than *public*. This introduces a question that is becoming central to most analyses of public service television, in Europe: If broadcast television is, as these authors suggest, progressively related to retaining *control over centrality*, empirically translated to a competitive fight for audiences, a growing dilemma is undermining the very concept of public service (McQuail 2003: 158–159). While old *broadcast* television seems to be holding on as *sequence and flow*, its *centripetous* mechanism seems to work against the very principles of public service. Public service television is then being regarded as competing with private commercial channels, and its central role in societies is no longer clear but is becoming increasingly controversial (Bardoel & D'Haenens 2008: 352–353; Moe 2008: 220). This is an ongoing debate that ought to be reflected in further academic research. What is important to underscore is the operability of the *centripetous screen* concept that calls for in-depth scientific insight.

For now, empirically gathered evidence allows the authors to affirm that while Umberto Eco's periodisation of *broadcast television* still holds and shows a continuous development of its *neotelevision* characteristic features, the *centripetous* tendency of the television screen must be closely observed. If a *post-television* scenario based on a deterioration of *broadcasting* is seemingly put on hold, the same cannot be said about *public service television*, which may sooner rather than later fall victim to an unstoppable *centripetous screen* apparatus. Conceiving of the televisual apparatus inside a *citizenship frame* requires critical insight into the sociological development of the television screen apparatus. Such questioning must then be social and political, rather than merely technical.

Notes

1 This work is part of a research project funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology, entitled 'TV journalism and citizenship: the struggle for a new digital public sphere' (FCT PTDC/CCI-JOR/099994/2008). The aim of the project is to map information programming of terrestrial channels as well as cable news channels, and to analyse: 1) the guests/commentators called upon to participate in these programmes; and 2) the space made available in the information content for viewer participation.

2 In Portugal, this channel forms part of the RTP (public television) package, whose regular broadcasts date back to 7 March 1957. For nearly 35 years, RTP operated as a monopoly. On 6 October 1992, the first private television channel, SIC, was inaugurated, followed by TVI on 20 February 1993. RTP1 RTP2, SIC and TVI are open channels. In cable, Portuguese operators offer mainly information thematic channels belonging to the same companies that own the open channels: SIC Noticias (established 8 January 2001), RTPN (est. 31 May 2004) and TVI24 (est. 26 February 2009).

3 Cf. M. Wilson, 1957; J. Goody, 1961. Attempting to provide a distinction between 'ritual' and 'ceremonial' with some sort of content, Wilson notes that a *ritual* is a religious

action destined to obtain benefits from a supernatural power, while a ceremonial is an elaborate and conventional form of expressing feelings, not limited to religious occasions. To Goody, the ritual is a category signifying a formalised behaviour (custom), where the relationship between the ends and the means is irrational or non-rational. The ceremonial has, in his perspective, a negative definition, signifying a category of ritual that is neither religious nor magical, does not presuppose the existence of supernatural powers, or have practical ends; it may, however, have ends in regard to the point of view of actors and latent functions from the observer's point of view. Civil marriage ceremonies would be one example. Cf. Cerimonial in *Enciclopédia Einaudi*, Vol. 30, Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda.

4 Scolari's revised and updated English language version was published in 2009 in the *Journal of Visual Literacy* 28(1) 28–49, as The grammar of hypertelevision: an identikit of convergence-age fiction television (or, how television simulates new interactive media). http://www.ohio.edu/visualliteracy/JVL_ISSUE_ARCHIVES/JVL28(1)/28_1_Scolari.pdf

5 An expression borrowed from Tay and Turner (2009: 32).

6 It should be noted that especially during the last decade, the reality television concept has been developed in various ways by scholars from all over the world, but mainly from Europe and North America. For further in-depth analysis on this subject see *Reality TV – remaking television culture* (Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette, eds., 2009, New York University Press) or François Jost's *L'empire du loft* (2002, La Dispute/Snedit). In 2008 the authors of this article contributed to a book entitled *A TV do real – a televisão e o espaço público* (Felisbela Lopes, 2009, MinervaCoimbra).

7 On RTP1, *Ligados a Portugal* (short reports showcasing the Portuguese national team preparations) and *Mundial 2010* (newscasts aired before and after the matches and at night); on RTPN, *À Noite, o Mundial* (debate and match analysis); on SIC and SIC Notícias, *Diário do Mundial* (on the generalist network, two daily short newscasts; on cable, several short newscasts aired during the day and a longer transmission at night); on TVI24, *Mais Mundial* (match analysis and debate around the tournament).

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