

Volume v.36  
issue 1 / 2017

Contracampo e-ISSN 2238-2577  
Niterói (RJ), 36 (1)  
apr/2017-jul/2017

Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication is a quarterly publication of the Graduate Programme in Communication Studies (PPGCOM) at Fluminense Federal University (UFF). It aims to contribute to critical reflection within the field of Media Studies, being a space for dissemination of research and scientific thought.

## Times and places of Radio Rebelde Zapatista: The Ritualities of Social Uses

**ISMAR CAPISTRANO COSTA FILHO**

Doctor in Communication Studies at the Graduate Programme in Communication Studies of the Minas Gerais Federal University (UFMG). Assistant professor at the Undergraduate course in Communications at the Federal University of Ceará (UFC). Brazil.

ismarcapistranofilho@gmail.com

WHEN CITING THIS ARTICLE, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING REFERENCE:

Costa Filho, I. C. (2017). Times And Places Of Radio Rebelde Zapatista: The Ritualities Of Social Uses. Contracampo, 36 (1), 26-41.

Submitted on 12th January 2017/ Accepted on 4th April 2017

DOI – <http://dx.doi.org/10.22409/contracampo.v36i1.971>

## Abstract

This article analyzes the ritualities of Radio Rebelde in the autonomous communities of the Mexican Zapatista insurgent movement, located in Oventic, in the State of Chiapas. To do that, the times and spaces of the station's formats and listeners are investigated, realizing the relationship proposed by Jesús Martín-Barbero. It is possible to notice a rupture between temporal organization and commercial radio, since the station does not have defined programs, operating in the fractured hours between 5 am and 9 am and between 5 pm and 8 pm, following the Zapatista time zone of the Southeastern Combat Front. These characteristics point to the autonomy of the format. Some of the listeners interviewed, mainly from autonomous rural communities, appropriate this temporality in the various listening spaces. Other listeners have difficulty adapting to the station's rhythm.

### Keywords

Radio; Zapatistas; Ritualities.

## Introduction

The Radio Rebelde is a radio station operated by the autonomous Zapatista communities<sup>1</sup> of the “Caracol” Resistance and Rebellion for Humanity <sup>2</sup> located in Oventic, about 50 km from San Cristóbal de Las Casas, a city with over 200,000 inhabitants, located in the region of Los Altos de Chiapas, considered the state’s cultural capital (Piug, 2006). The station emerged in 2006 with the consolidation of the transfer of the administration of the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (Marez) to civilian rule. Before the station, which transmits at 101.9 MHz frequency, belonged to the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and, alongside two other stations located in the Tzeltal Forest and the Border Forest, it was called *Radio Insurgente* and aimed to show “the advances Of the process of autonomy in Zapatista zones and to promote the diffusion of the word and the music of the indigenous communities.”<sup>3</sup> The aim is for each autonomous municipality to have a broadcasting station, to cover more people where the signal does not reach.

The Zapatista cause is founded mainly on the struggle for autonomy, being understood as self-definition, self-government, “self-limitation” and “self-regulation” (Barcenas, 2011). The first characteristic is the possibility of determining by themselves the persons who constitute them. The second is construction of its own management. The third characteristic is the definition, by themselves, of the limits of their territory. The last is the promotion of social organization in the way that suits them best, by designing their own development. The Zapatista territories are inhabited by other families that do not belong to the movement and have systems for education, healthcare, safety, justice, government, transportation, economy and communication, independent from the

---

<sup>1</sup> Zapatismo is a movement that was, according to Tamara Villarreal Ford and Geneve Gil (Downing, 2001), known internationally for having inaugurated Internet activism. On January 1, 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, formed by natives of Mayan descent from the Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, Zoque and Cholo ethnic groups, occupied public buildings in six municipalities in the state of Chiapas, in southwest Mexico, and declared war on Federal Army, claiming, in the First Declaration of the Lacandon Forest, land, labor, education, healthcare, housing, food, freedom, independence, democracy, justice, and peace. In defense of these demands, and to avoid amplifying the armed conflict, activists from various groups created a global chain through the then-incipient Internet, not only mobilizing public figures from various countries (such as writer Eduardo Galeano and filmmaker Oliver Stone) and entities (such as the United Nations and the Vatican), but also breaking the news boycott on the subject of Mexican television stations. The messages of support to the movement transmitted in emails, chats and websites, contributed to taking another 150,000 people to the streets of Mexico City, demanding the end of the conflict, leading the Mexican Government to declare the unilateral cease-fire and commence the San Andrés Peace Dialogues. Even though they failed to get the agreement they wished, the Zapatista communities now enjoy political autonomy and have, in addition to their own government and self-defense, healthcare, a legal system, schools, and media. Despite being autonomous, the Zapatistas are not separatists, defending the construction of a socially just and politically plural Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Caracol is an administrative division of the Zapatista territory. It is formed by the set of Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (Marez), which, in turn, are formed by the Zapatista communities. The headquarters of the Caracol is home to the Good Government Junta, which is responsible for the administration of this territory, featuring representatives of the MAREZ.

<sup>3</sup> Available at <<http://www.radioinsurgente.org>>. Retrieved: June 15, 2010. Translation by the author.

Mexican government. Even so, the Zapatistas are not separatists. The movement advocates a radical transformation of the Mexican State, aiming to include the diversity and plurality of the original peoples with their own political and social identities and organizations.

In my doctoral research, I investigated, between 2012 and 2015, the relationship between the struggle for autonomy and the Zapatista stations *Radio Rebelde* and *Frecuencia Libre*, based on the theoretical and methodological proposal of Jesús Martín-Barbero (1998). According to the Spanish-Colombian philosopher, the reflection on communicational phenomena requires two displacements. The first, represented by the metaphor of losing the object to find the way, means to understand the process of communication through mediations, i.e., the transit of significances and meanings in the different groups, institutions, territories and times in which it circulates. The second is the return to the media, reflecting the centrality that they gain in contemporary societies by conditioning agencies, flows, and rhythms. The methodology for the study of social uses is based on four conceptual operators: cultural matrices, production logics, industrial formats and receptive competences that are related to the institutionalities (matrices and logics), technicities (logics and formats), ritualities (formats and competences), and socialities (competencies and matrices). In this article, I outline the study of the ritualities of Radio Rebelde. I thus seek to answer how autonomy is reflected in the organization of the programming of the station and in the listening patterns of the listeners.

To do that, I will initially define the methodological axis of ritualities. I will then review the organization of the station's programming. Finally, I will review the listening practices of listeners based on the times and places. For this research, I employed the analysis of the station's programming addresses (Hartley, 2000), which consisted of recording Radio Rebelde's broadcasts in July 2014 and listening carefully to them while making notes in the field journal and transcribing the excerpts deemed most relevant to the research. The priority in this type of analysis is to acknowledge the public's questions and the expectations of the audience that the station seeks to meet. To learn about the recipients, I sought an exploration inspired by ethnographies, so that, based on the recognition of alterities, I could describe the observations, conversations, contacts, experiences and interviews with the listeners, which were presented more fully in my doctoral thesis, while this article only used some essential elements.

Although I was not able to get permission from the Oventic "Caracol" Good Government Junta (JBG) to visit the surveyed station to interview the producers, I was able to meet the listeners based on pre-exploratory questionnaires applied to

mailing lists of political and cultural activists in the region. From this initial contact, I interviewed 18 recipients. Of these, 11 listen to or have listened to Radio Rebelde. The others listen only to *Frecuencia Libre*, being thus excluded from this article. Five of the listeners surveyed live or commute constantly around San Cristóbal de las Casas. The other six recipients live in the autonomous rural community of San Isidro de La Libertad, with roughly 60 families, in the municipality of Zinacantán, located 15 km from San Cristóbal de Las Casas, where I conducted field research with the permission of the local authorities. To protect the anonymity of the interviewed listeners, I use fictitious names.

Radio Rebelde breaks with temporality and social rhythms prevalent in industrialized urban societies. In order to understand the relationship between this station and time, I use the analysis of ritualities, proposed in the 'nighttime map' of the social uses by Martín-Barbero (1998), such as the articulation between industrial formats and reception abilities. The organization of time is crucial for the achievement of autonomy, as it allows the control of the calendar and agendas that mark social relations, as will be discussed later. The media, radio in particular, play a preponderant role in helping to create the rhythms of everyday life and construct meanings about the present, the past, and the future.

According to Jacks (2008, p. 37), rituality, configured within the scope of action of receptors, is constituted by memory, its rhythms, forms, and scenarios of interaction and repetition that build the grammars of action in relationships established with industrial formats. As for the media, it:

implies an ability to place rules in the games between signification and situation, with the warning, however, the meaning of the message is one thing and the sense it acquires when the receiver appropriates it is another one (Jacks, 2008, 37)

Orozco (1996) explains that ritualities are not only actions taken in daily life, but also those that recur frequently, such as festivities, holidays, and vacations. Ronsini (2012, p.92) lists the following possibilities for research based on this concept: the different paths of reception, the way of seeing, hearing and/or reading texts in relation to everyday life, the modes of symbolization of the place, rhythms of daily life, the relative power of the media, customs, class identities, media devices and media as protagonists in the rationalization, naturalization and banalization of ideologies. It sums it up as the "political action of the media (...) appropriated by the recipients to justify it, counter it or negotiate with it."

## Radio Rebelde Formats

In order to analyze Radio Rebelde<sup>4</sup> as a free medium, I displace the concept of industrial formats, which compose rituals in the perspective of Martín-Barbero (1998) for media formats, with the aim of contemplating the appropriation of radio by the producers of this station, excluded from the market regime and from the commercial standards of production and programming. Thus, it is possible to notice the aesthetics and formats of Radio Rebelde, produced outside the industrial and commercial standard. The station, unlike the predominant format in commercial radio, has no programs. Its programming includes the following content: stories, poetry, revolutionary songs, announcements and messages, as defined by its announcers. I was not able to notice a frequency or fixed time for the placement of these predominant pieces of content, which appeared to be executed randomly. The radio also does not feature alternation of intervals and blocks. The content is often broadcast, followed by one to three songs. The absence of vignettes<sup>5</sup> is another characteristic observed during the research. There is only one vignette, usually played at hour changes or at the beginning of programming, with different versions, each with musical tracks and background music of a different musical style (cumbia, rap, romantic, rock, etc.). They feature the same text: "This is Radio Rebelde, voice of mother earth, broadcasting from an unknown location of the Zapatista peoples in the Insurgent in Rebellion and Resistance for Humanity Insurgent Caracol, Altos de Chiapas. Modulated Frequency 107.1 in your radio."

Another peculiarity of the station is the bilingual broadcast, in Spanish, followed by the translation in Tzotzil, the language of the native peoples of this ethnic group, descendants of the Mayas of the Los Altos region. In this language, speakers are much more secure in their speech, as opposed to the broadcast in Spanish, which presents clear articulation difficulties, with unexpected interruptions and stuttering, especially on the part of women. This situation reflects the data presented by anthropologist Fábregas Ping (2006) – 52.8% of these people are monolingual, speaking only Tzotzil.

The stories analyzed in the research clearly address the audience for the strengthening of the identity and memory of the original peoples, not only through language, but because it is a historically present form in these popular cultures, while relating them to the critical, autonomous and rebellious spirit of Zapatism. The poems, frequently presented in the morning on Radio Rebelde, consist of recordings that interweave the narrations and songs. They are not interpreted by the announcers of any of the recorded programmes and appear to be interpreted by

---

<sup>4</sup> Free media is media without prior authorization from the granting authority, without economic motives, managed collectively, and with a counter-hegemonic operation. They usually operated based on voluntary work and have a program engaged in a political project of social transformation.

<sup>5</sup> Sound signals that divide the contents of radio programming.

the authors themselves, given the fluidity of their performances. As is the case with most of the stories, these poems present social criticism as its main element, based on the morality of good versus evil, feeding the imagination of an enemy to be defeated: capitalism. Along with these lessons, there is an aesthetic in the verses, rhymes, and orality. The presentation by non-speakers, but probably by the authors themselves, is a way to demonstrate a popular authenticity of productions, with the social role aiming at not only affecting feelings, but also reinforcing the radical imagination that will be addressed based on the original identity of the community and of Zapatism.

Music is another predominant form of content on Radio Rebelde, which, according to Amarnd Balsebre (1994, p.89), makes it possible to “evoke images that are dormant within us,” composing the Zapatista imaginary. The first hour of the afternoon program of the station is dedicated to marimba tunes, which comprise instrumental compositions generally in the style of Mexican cumbia<sup>6</sup>, played with the instrument of the same name. The intention of the songs is clearly to entertain, as the narration highlights. This part of the program demonstrates that Radio Rebelde also has a playful approach to addressing that, in addition to entertaining, can create bonds of belonging, including with non-Zapatista communities. In this case, the aesthetics of music predominates over the semantic message, because “the aesthetic information of music constitutes a very significant universe” (Balsebre, 1994, p.92). The symbolic and dramatic matrix of the marimba produces proximity between multiple identities.

I also recorded traditional songs from the indigenous communities of Los Altos, interpreted in the native languages and featuring a long introductory piece of prose that presents the locality and culminates in the closure, reaffirming their local identities. In addition to the communities’ songs, instrumental dance songs are featured, serving for shows of typical groups at local festivals. In addition to the traditional songs, I noted another self-definition of a musical style, the revolutionary songs classified by the announcers as belonging to three types and broadcast in different one-hour sequences:

- National revolutionary songs: they are composed of songs by Mexican groups from outside Chiapas with three different themes. The first brings together historical issues that reconstruct past periods of the various

---

<sup>6</sup> Cumbia is a dance and rhythm originated in Colombia, during a long period of mixture between African (sensuality, musical instruments), Native American (musical instruments) and Spanish (singing, poetics and clothing) elements, which became popular in Latin America during the 1940s. Mexican cumbia merges elements of the Cuban montuno genre, the mambo and local rhythms in the Colombian style (such as norteño and huapango music). It is a strong cultural component of the media and in dances, now known as cumbia sonidera.

revolutions of Mexican history, always in the perspective of the natives, peasants, and farmers and their martyrs. The second theme of these songs concerns other Mexican revolutionary movements. The third addresses social criticism or songs that support Zapatism among Mexicans. These songs point to the rapprochement of the Zapatistas with other national movements, groups and collectives, as well as the history of Mexican struggles and revolutions, reinforcing the sense of belonging to the Mexican nation, as clearly defended by the EZLN, which is not identified as a separatist movement, but as a constructor of a new, plural, multicultural, and just Mexico.

- Chiapas revolutionary songs: they portray the Zapatista struggle and ideals in the autonomous communities and in the EZLN. These songs are produced locally, mainly in the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (Marez). Several of them were broadcast on the album *"El fuego y la palabra,"* a set of four albums released in March 2009. The approaches of these songs call for an approximation with the local reality, strengthening the bonds of belonging with communities. Second, they constitute narratives that make a historical record and perform a kind of social catharsis that promote a collective outburst against the injustices experienced by the local communities. These songs thus call for the construction of identities of Zapatista resistance and struggles, present in the bonds of belonging among members of the groups, in the historical role of the uprising and in the sharing of pain, suffering, conquest, and utopias. Furthermore, they call for collective mobilization in favor of the emancipatory struggle.
- International revolutionary songs: they include songs critical of capitalism or in support of the Zapatista movement, non-Mexican artists such as those from Spain, Chile, Cuba, Argentina, etc.

Other identified content includes the program announcements and messages that are, in turn, informative in nature. The former consist of announcements from the Good Government Juntas (JBG) or the Insurgent Revolutionary Command Council (CCRI) of the Zapatista Army, also published on the Enlace Zapatista website<sup>7</sup>. The messages are short, lasting from 15 to 45 seconds and appear to consist of recorded testimonies from ordinary people, edited with musical backgrounds. Again, the use of the presentation by people who are not broadcasters demonstrates an interpellation of the approach and participation in

---

<sup>7</sup> Available at <<http://www.enlacezapatista.org>>. Retrieved: February 10, 2014. Translation by the author.

the station. The themes address women's health, collective work, and dignity. In addition to a historical contextualization, the messages question social injustices.

## Territorialities and Temporalities

In addition to the social critiques, these pieces of content have, according to Pross (1989), the role of interpreting the calendar, a Greek term that designates the "book of accounts" and social commitments. The organization of time represents a social control of everyday activities and public life. "Who controls the calendar indirectly controls work, free time and, parties" (Le Goff, 1992, p.494). Even though it is sometimes close to the nature of ordination, such as light and dark (day and night), climate exchange (summer vacation) and seasonal changes (spring, autumn, winter, and summer), time is oriented symbolically from the socio-political order. In the Middle Ages, ecclesiastical power predominated in the calendar. In contemporary times, the rhythm of industrial production overlaps with the organization of official time. There are, however, different temporalities experienced as they relate to the various social meanings that circulate in territories, hegemonic relations, and counter-hegemonies.

According to Rogério Haesbaert (2007), the territory consists of a combination of functional and symbolic dimensions. The first represents the exploitation of natural resources for the satisfaction of needs or the accumulation of wealth. The symbolic dimension, on the other hand, establishes links between places and persons who take ownership of meanings such as mutual recognition, belonging, and shelter. The identity process configured on territories, defined as territoriality, serves as a strategy for creating and maintaining control over part of a surface, connections, the disciplining of spaces, and the organization of time. While territoriality predominantly involves symbolic aspects, and may even exist without a territory (such as the promised land of the Jews), the territory exists only in the material and symbolic dimensions, and thus cannot exist without physical space and without territoriality.

Feelings about such territories, built in certain cultural universes, bring with them meanings and ways of organizing themselves in time and in the rites and rhythms of daily life. Temporalities are inevitably located in territorialities, as time is experienced in a certain place, albeit imaginary. In the field of research, I was able to notice differences between the time and territory of academia, marked with a certain rigor; the rarely punctual time of the intellectuals and interviewed communicators; and the slow time of the indigenous peoples organized in different zones. In the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities, the communities follow

the time zone of the Southeastern Combat Front, two hours behind official Mexican time and three hours behind the daylight saving time of the country. The latter, for example, is not followed by any indigenous community where I was, as they claim to remain in the "time of God." In addition to the differentiated time zones, varying social rhythms are present. In San Cristóbal de las Casas, a city where indigenous and mestizos are found, but following the industrial calendar – despite not having an industrial park or large companies – I was hardly able to find punctuality anywhere, including in commerce and tourism.

In San Isidro de La Libertad, in addition to having low punctuality, the year is divided differently compared to the Mexican urban areas, marked mainly by the New Year, Epiphany, Holy Week, summer vacations, and Christmas. The community divides its annual cycle around the Feast of the Holy Cross (May 5), the only day on which alcoholic beverages can be consumed in the Autonomous Center, summer plantations (July), cleaning the land (September), Harvest (November), and the Christmas festivities (December). In these times, people not only perform different activities in the territories where they circulate, but they also change their slow relationship with time for a more pronounced pace. As is the case in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Sundays are different from the rest of the week in San Isidro de La Libertad, not only because many people do not work, but because they celebrate the gospel in the Chapel. Nevertheless, unlike the city, marked mainly by leisure and rest, in the autonomous community it is the day when people gather in the assembly to discuss the local, and sometimes national, context, and make political decisions, followed by a collective meal.

## Temporalities of Radio Rebelde

As it is inevitable to participate in these times and territories, the media fulfills, according to Pross (1989), the role of communicating these rhythms, creating different senses and climates for mornings, nights, weeks, weekends, and festivities. The Brazilian researcher Mônica Nunes (1993, p.33) clarifies that

the requirement to communicate and participate produces (...) a psychophysical need, translated into ignorance (...). Information is sought for the purposes of filling the deficit generated by the lack of knowledge.

Radio journalism defines current affairs as the news of the present. The instantaneous aspect of the broadcasts, which often occur live, anchors reception to the current time. In news broadcasts, the news of the latest moment, the latest programme or the last week (in the case of weekly programs) predominate,

sometimes following the recommendation of a verbal language in the present time, including past events (Ortriwano, 1985). The present seems eternal in this type of program, even with the inevitable fugacity of the medium. As is the case with sound, what is transmitted on the radio is dispersed the moment it is received, and there is no way to go back unless the programming is recorded, an unlikely situation in radio. "Sound exists only when it abandons existence. It is not simply perishing but rather evanescent in essence, being perceived in this way" (Ong, 1993, p.33). Radio broadcasting in Hertz waves therefore exists only in the present.

This relationship with the present time can be seen in Radio Rebelde, in the announcements of the EZLN and the Good Government Juntas, particularly on the actions of the Mexican Government and the paramilitary groups against Zapatista communities or their members. These texts are written and published on the official website of the Enlace Zapatista movement, which are read on the radio's programming at any time. Updating time is another way of anchoring radio programming in the present, turning the broadcast medium into an invisible clock that helps many listeners to locate themselves temporarily. On the Oventic Caracol station, announcers continually tell not only the time of the Southeastern Combat Front, but also the weather: "Good morning to those who are going to work now!" and "May you be well this evening!" There is, in these greetings, a close relationship between time and the peasant routine accompanied by the station.

In addition to marking the present time, working as a kind of invisible clock, the radio also makes it possible to rescue the past. The role of reminiscence of the medium is possible, mainly, by the transmission of songs and old stories. Nunes (1993, p.39) explains this ritual function of the medium as

the eternal return to the principle of things seeks, above all, to settle the duration of profane time (...) and to secure the very regeneration of time in mythical time. To regenerate time is to renew oneself, and to cross the edges of human finitude.

To listen to a song or an account of the past is not an act of remembering, but a way to create security in the present, as, just as the previous challenges have been overcome or sublimated, the present ones can be too. Thus, the radio seeks, according to Pross (1989), to suppress the emotional psychophysical need generated by the calendar.

The stories of Radio Rebelde serve to present stories of a time immemorial, which provide emotional security on how to act in the face of inevitable unpredictability. The "King of Evil" brings explanations of who allegedly has created and still creates the breakdowns of community life and family – the capitalist system. "How the Groom Flirts with the Bride" rescues successful courtships for

love affairs. Revolutionary songs, such as the episode "October 7" – relating to the death of a Zapatista community authority – revisit not only the memory of the murder but also the character's deeds.

Radio Rebelde also plays the role of signifying the future by creating the radical imagery of autonomy. "Ritualization promises the certainty that the universe remains as it is. The world to come is being built and will not be different from the present" (Nunes, 1993, p.35). This relationship with the future is continually announced in the revolutionary songs, the poetry and the announcements that bring the message of victory of the oppressed, as well as the Popular Unity Hymn: "We shall win! We shall win! / A thousand chains shall be broken / We shall win!"

In addition to strengthening the radical imagery, the investigated broadcaster allows a relationship with time that can contribute to the experience of autonomy. As the control of time represents a social power, breaking with the official time also means denying state power, reinforcing the sense of self-determination of the autonomous communities. Radio Rebelde, in this sense of self-disposition, still has its own rhythm of broadcasting, different from commercial broadcasters. The breaks and silences after a song or a recording, known in the commercial technical standard as failures, referred to as holes in the radio jargon," are constantly observed on the station and are treated naturally by the presenters, lasting up to 15 seconds, as observed on July 24, 2013. Unlike what happens when there is a technical defect, the broadcast does not apologize for the "holes." The 5 to 15 seconds of silence do not appear to mean an error on this station, because the program does not seek the frenetic pace of commercial radio stations that transmit uninterruptedly one sound after another.

The fractured broadcast schedule, on air from 5 am to 9 am and from 5 pm to 8 pm in the time zone of the Southeastern Combat Front, is another characteristic of Radio Rebelde's autonomy of temporality. The station not only differs from the commercial standard, which broadcasts 24 hours a day or, at least, from 6 am to midnight daily, but also dedicates its programming to the schedules of the peasant routine, at dawn (when one wakes up and prepares for work) and at the end of the day (when returning from work and resting), reinforced by the interpellations of the announcers, who explicitly refer to the beginning of daily activities in the morning and the return from work in the field in the afternoon. This organization disregards the idea of simultaneity at work, and consists of listening to the radio while doing another work-related activity. In addition to the fact that the producers are possibly involved in other engagements when there is no broadcast, listeners who are working from 9 am to 5 pm are presumed to be unable to listen to the station.

## Times and Places of the Listeners

Some interviewed listeners naturally welcome this fractured schedule. Mr. Josiano and teacher José, both from the community of San Isidro de La Libertad, say they only listen to the radio before going to work and upon arriving home. Although the former has a portable radio, he only listens to it when he “has time,” i.e., when he is not working in agriculture or performing other work-related activities. On the other hand, listener John, who lives in the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, was unaware of the fractured schedule of Radio Rebelde. He thought that, when he turned on the radio of his car and did not manage to tune in the radio, it was because the station was defective or out of reach. “Since I was not able to tune in, I thought the station had changed frequency or had gone off air.”<sup>8</sup>

Listening times are also related to the territorialities of the audience, which involve, in radio technology, in addition to the senses, the reception devices used. Until the 1950s, according to Ferraretto (1998), radio was usually “watched” in the family, occupying the living space and gathering several people. With the advent of television, which, with its popularization, took the place of radio in households, the medium reinvented itself, mainly with its miniaturization and portability, made possible by the invention of the transistor. The predominant social space of radio became no longer aimed at collective listening, but rather at each individual who carried a portable receiver, establishing an intimate and personal relationship with them. Programming is affected by this change and, instead of the spectacles (soap opera, entertainment programs, and comedy), broadcasters began developing content that focuses more on being the rhythm and a background for the listener’s daily life, with the predominance of music and quick news.

Among the eleven listeners of Radio Rebelde interviewed, I found three who listened to the station collectively. Collective listening was observed at the home of teacher José, the student Maria, and Diego, in the community of San Isidro de La Libertad. The former lives with his wife and two young children (under the age of five), along with his father, mother, and two other brothers. The house has four rooms, one for him and his family, one for his parents, one for his brothers, and a small store where his wife works. In the living room, his father, one of the founding authorities of the community, has a radio with loudspeakers, which he uses mainly to listen to Radio Rebelde. “When he turns on the radio, we always listen to the station even if we do not want to.”<sup>9</sup> José’s listening is involuntary. The station, however, becomes the background and rhythm not only for his daily life, but also

---

<sup>8</sup> Interview with John, conducted on January 13, 2014, in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Translation by the author.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with José on July 10, 2014, in Zinacantán. Translation by the author.

for the store, as well as being a diacritical signal, i.e., a signal different from the political position of his family, adherent to Zapatismo. Maria lives with her parents and two sisters. She listens to several radio stations, including Radio Rebelde, in the background while cooking or caring for her sisters. The radio in her home is always on, whether because of her, her mother, or her father. Diego was another interviewee who listens to it on the radio at home upon returning from work. He performs, unlike most of the community, sporadic jobs in construction. The station helps him to relax after the workday. I was able to note that Radio Rebelde's collective listening, in addition to serving as a background, serves, in these cases, for the political identification and inclusion of listeners, allowing them to broaden the radio station's broadcasting role.

Individual listening in this community is performed by Mr. Juan and Mr. Josiano. The former is a former community authority. He has no stereo at home, having the radio on his mobile phone as the only way to listen to Radio Rebelde. Usually, Juan listens to it when going to work. Like Diego, he does not work in agriculture, but in sporadic jobs, mainly in construction. He complains about the difficulty of tuning in to the station, because his listening experience takes place in different places, many of which have a weak capture signal. He says, however, that listening to the station in his daily life brings motivation for the struggle. For the same reason, Mr. Josiano listens to on his cell phone. Although his house has a stereo with a radio, he prefers to listen to it on his mobile phone so as not to disturb others and to be able to listen as he commutes through the community.

Among the listeners of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, I did not report any collective listening. Even different media (car, mobile phone, stereo with speakers, portable device, and computer), they always listen individually. Listener John, as already mentioned, listens to the station while in traffic through the car speakers. Because the time he travels in the car and the Radio Rebelde broadcast do not always match, he regrets that he is able to listen to the station very little. There is a clear discrepancy between the temporality of the radio and his own.

The rituals of Zapatista radio listeners in the various territories also reveal uses of different supports. In San Isidro de La Libertad, receivers usually use only one device, usually a stereo with the loudspeakers. In San Cristóbal de Las Casas, in turn, listeners listen on multiple platforms. Among the listeners in the city, five usually listen to it from a single device and, of these, three use mobile technologies that allow them to listen in different places. The others use different devices. This nomadic audience does not mean the devaluation of the place, but the multi-territoriality, in which listening can gain different meanings. Listening to the station at work or while in traffic means to interviewers a background for conducting their

core activities, which often leads to inattentive listening. On the other hand, at home, even while performing other activities, the radio listening experience may be more attentive to the action of the moment.

In the autonomous rural territory, listening is linked to the seasonal cycles of the day. Listeners do not identify the programs, especially given that Radio Rebelde does not have them, but only recognize times when listening to the radio, during the free time before and after the working day.

## Final Remarks

Radio Rebelde's temporalities indicate ruptures with industrial time. The time of fractured transmission, the absence of programs and the constant breaks in the broadcasting point to that. This format strengthens the self-determination of the radio station, which does not submit to the technical standards prevailing in commercial radio stations, reinforcing the autonomic performance of Zapatista experiences. Thus, the station disseminates self-determination not only in the broadcast content, but also in the organization of its programming.

Listeners also adjust their listening time to their daily lives and places, either by listening in the kitchen (as a backdrop to housework), in the living room (at the end of the working day), in the car or on their mobile phones (while commuting or working). Each territory articulated with the motivation creates not only a proper pace of listening, but also a role for the broadcaster: company, leisure, information, or restoration.

The relationship with the past, present and future, presented on Radio Rebelde, creates, respectively, the memory of social struggles, the updating of information and mobilizations, and the radical imagery of social transformations. For that purpose, there is a connection between the radio and the life and experiences of the listeners.

Appropriated by listeners, the station shifts the meanings of Zapatista autonomy to various senses of listening. Thus, autonomy can represent the ancestors' imagined past, the freedom to dance and sing, or the struggles for social justice of the insurgent movements of the entire world.

The analysis of ritualities points out that, in addition to the different times and places of production and reception, there is a plurality of meanings and senses involved in the same process of communication, demonstrating the various transits of communicative mediations.

Even in a singular situation where the media is inserted into a context that differs from the one prevailing in industrialized societies, with different times and

rhythms, the radio remains as an invisible clock that adapts to the calendar, while reinforcing and creating rhythms in daily life and rituals.

## References

- Balsebre, A. (1994). **El lenguaje radiofónico**. Madrid: Editorial Cátedra.
- Bárceñas, F. L. (2011). Las autonomías indígenas en América Latina. In: Ceceña, A. et al. **Pensar las autonomías**. Cidade do México: Sísifo ediciones.
- Downing, J. (2001). **Mídia Radical**. São Paulo: Ed. Senac.
- Ferrareto, L. (1998). **Rádio: O Veículo, a História e a Técnica**. São Paulo: Sagra.
- Hartley, J. (2000). **Los usos de la televisión**. Barcelona, Paidós.
- Haesbaert, R. (2007). Território e multiterritorialidade: um debate. In: **Revista da Pós Graduação em Geografia da UFF**, 17. Niterói: UFF.
- Jacks, N., MENEZES, D., & PIEDRAS, E. (2008). **Meios e audiências: a emergência dos estudos de recepção no Brasil**. Porto Alegre. Sulina.
- Le Goff, J. (1992). **História e memória**. Campinas: Editora da Unicamp.
- Martín-Barbero, J. (1998). **Dos meios às mediações**. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG.
- Nunes, M. R. F. (1993). **O mito no rádio: a voz e os signos de renovação periódica**. São Paulo: Annablume.
- Ong, W. J. (1993). **Oralidad y escritura: tecnologías de la palabra**. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Orozco Gómez, G. (1996). **Televisión y audiências: un enfoque cualitativo**. Madrid: Ediciones de La Torre.
- Ortriwano, G. (1985). **A informação no rádio: os grupos de poder e a determinação dos conteúdos**. São Paulo: Summus.
- Piug, A. F. (2006). **Chiapas Antropológico**. Secretaria de Educação do Governo de Chiapas: Tuxtla Gutierrez.
- Pross, H. (1989). **La violencia de los Símbolos Sociales**. Barcelona: Anthropos.
- Ronsini, V. V. M. (2012). **A crença no Mérito e a Desigualdade: a recepção da telenovela do horário nobre**. Porto Alegre: Sulina.