

## The Evolution of the Format of the Presidential Debates on Chilean Television: 1989-2017. A Speciation Case

*La evolución de los formatos de debates  
presidenciales en la televisión chilena:  
1989-2017: Un caso de especiación*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v2019i0.7374>

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We seek to explain that the evolution of the format of televised presidential debates –in each country– is determined by the interaction between the specific characteristics of the political system and the media system. As a framework, we use Anstead's (2016) application of the concept of *speciation* to the evolution of debates in parliamentary systems, together with Strömbäck's (2008) scheme for the evolution of mediatization. We applied this scheme to the Chilean case and we concluded that the original model used –the same one that the United States used until the mid-1990's– evolved to adapt to a multi-party presidential system and a commercial television system.

**KEYWORDS:** Television, debates, speciation, mediatization, electoral campaigns, Chile.

*Buscamos explicar que la evolución del formato de los debates presidenciales televisados en cada país está determinada por la interacción entre características específicas de los sistemas políticos con los sistemas de medios. Como marco utilizamos la aplicación que hace Anstead (2016) del concepto de especiación a la evolución de los debates en sistemas parlamentarios, junto con el esquema de Strömbäck (2008) para la evolución de la mediatización. Aplicado este esquema al caso chileno, se concluye que el modelo original usado –el mismo que se utilizó en Estados Unidos hasta mediados de 1990– evolucionó para adaptarse a un sistema presidencial multipartidista y a un sistema de televisión comercial.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Televisión, debates, especiación, mediatización, campañas electorales, Chile.

### How to cite:

Porath, W., Ortega Gunckel, C. & Rojas Soto, A. J. (2019). The Evolution of the Format of the Presidential Debates on Chilean Television: 1989-2017. A Speciation Case. *Comunicación y Sociedad*, e7198. <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v2019i0.7198>

<sup>1</sup> A first version of this work was presented in the Annual Conference of the International Communication Association ICA, in Czech Republic, Praga, 2018. Project financed by Fondo Nacional de Desarrollo Científico y Tecnológico (FONDECYT), Project N°. 1170843.

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Submitted: 14/06/18. Accepted: 24/10/19. Published: 04/12/19.

## INTRODUCTION

The televised electoral debates have evolved to become one of the most relevant mass communication mechanisms for contemporary political campaigns (Boydston, Glazier & Pietryka, 2013). Breaking with the discursive dynamics instituted by campaigns based on advertising, monologues and journalistic reports, this new modality offers more engagement in a limited time, as well as being easy to use by the viewer. Therefore, it also serves to strengthen democracy by providing several tools that might have some bearing on future decisions from voters at the polls.

The debates provide the public with an opportunity to learn about policy proposals, salient issues and ideals for each candidate (Benoit & Henson, 2007). In addition, being in real time, viewers can observe how the candidates behave and the spontaneity with which they address issues at the moment of confrontational exchange. Moreover, the debates provide the citizens with an opportunity to compare the candidates, their proposals, personality traits and merits (van der Meer, Walter & Van Aelst, 2016).

Nevertheless, despite their growing importance, little is known about the factors that explain why and how a country adopts a particular format for these debates. As both Anstead (2016) and Téllez, Muñiz and Ramírez (2013) point out, little research has been carried out into how the political or the political party systems have shaped the format of electoral debates that is ultimately adopted by a country. Nor has there been any meaningful research into how the context can determine the dynamics within the negotiating processes between political and media systems that lead up to the production of a debate.

This article attempts to fill that void and observe, through the evolution of the format, which system (media or political) has more influence in the process. For this end, the televised presidential debates developed in Chile between 1989 and 2017 were taken into consideration, basing the analysis on Strömbäck's (2008) theory of the four phases of the mediatization of politics and Anstead's (2016) metaphor of social speciation, adapted to presidential democracies.

We wish to focus on the historical development of debate formats as we believe that they express the tension and the balance of forces between the political and media systems. We want to propose a model to deconstruct the staging, evolution and institutionalization of televised election debates in a specific political system. Our approach assumes that events and trends specific to each social system, (specifically the changes in political and in the media systems), cause the format of debates to be adapted to the reality of each country's political communication, even though the original idea might have been taken from the United States.

#### *Insufficient research on the format and its evolution*

Despite the growing role of electoral debates in political campaigns all over the world, and the corresponding academic interest in them (García Marín, 2013), a large part of the knowledge about it is still centered in the experience of the United States (Birdsell, 2017; McKinney & Carling, 2004). This situation entrails the danger of establishing models of analysis based in a format with two or three candidates and only one moderator, which might end up hiding important variations about their development in diverse environments (Isotalus, 2011).

On the other hand, most of the research about debates has been centered on the effects over voters (Luengo, 2011; Maier & Faas, 2011; McKinney, Rill & Thorson, 2013; Turcotte & Goidel, 2014); the interpretations by the media of these instances (Pingree, Scholl & Quenette, 2012); the effects created by real time commentary from the audience in social media (Chadwick, O'Loughlin & Vaccari, 2017; Saks, Jordan, Hopkins & El Damanhoury, 2016); and the analysis of content through the functional theory of political campaign discourse by Benoit (2007).

Thank to this functional theory, Benoit and Henson (2007), Benoit and Benoit-Bryan (2014), Benoit, Henson and Sudbrock (2011), and Glantz, Benoit and Airne (2013) demonstrated that a majority of debates had a similar format to the American model, whether with a journalist panel or with one or two moderators. They also proved that regarding the degree of involvement from the journalists, there is a large variability, but most of the literature on this topic does not dwell deeply

in their roles, even less with respect to the negotiations that explain the analyzed model.

This model of analysis was first applied to US politics, but it has since then been extended to debates in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom (in the Anglo-Saxon world); France, Germany and the Ukraine (in Europe); South Korea, Taiwan and Israel (in Asia), concluding that “results of these studies are generally consistent with analysis of American politics” (Benoit & Benoit-Bryan, 2014, p. 656). In the Ibero-American world, it has been applied to Spain (Herrero & Benoit, 2009) and Mexico (Téllez, Muñoz & Ramírez, 2010).

Regarding the format of the debates, McKinney and Carlin (2004, pp. 219-222) refer to studies that show that the way in which they develop might condition clashes, attacks or substantial answers, as well as the public’s learning. On the other hand, Eveland, McLeod & Nathanson (1994), when comparing the style of the questions formulated by the journalists in the panel format with those asked by the citizens in the Town Hall model, found that the journalists made more argumentative and accusatory questions. They also discovered that, while citizens are more focused in the policies being discussed, the journalists are more interested in the character of the candidates.

On this side, Marín (2003) studied the most used models and, by systematizing them, found that there existed three standard models that could be considered foundational: American, French and German. The American Model is very similar to *Talk Show* programs, characterized by the presence of a studio audience and, in their original format, a panel of journalists responsible for asking questions. In the mid-90’s, the journalist’s panel has been replaced by a single moderator and more interaction has been allowed between candidates, in order to change the character of “joint press conference” produced by the panel of journalists (Lanoue, Schrott, 1991; Turcotte, 2015). Therefore, this model assumed some characteristics from the so-called “French model”, where the role of the journalists limited to being simple moderators is very minor. In addition, the “Town Hall” model was established, in which the questions are formulated by the public on the studio, previously selected by the organizers.

The French Model is distinct from the American Model in that, rather than being designed as a show, it is seen as an informative program where only the two candidates that have passed to the second round are allowed to discuss political issues in depth. It involves face-to-face exchanges between the candidates and is mediated by one or two moderators. The introduction of primary elections in France in the last election has forced changes in this model. As for the German Model, at the present known as *duel*, it is a format that tries to avoid direct confrontation. The questions are asked by representative journalists from each of the two public channels that broadcast the program across the open network, and there are no time limits for candidates—for prime ministers or party leaders represented in parliament—to respond.

Regarding the studies that have referred to the formats used in Latin American presidential debates, Ruiz and Alberro (2012) systematized what they called the “wave” of debates in Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Bolivia, Honduras, Ecuador, El Salvador, Uruguay, Paraguay, Peru, Brazil and Haiti to analyze how each debate had been organized. In addition, Acosta (2016) analyzed in his work the Argentinian debates and how they were developed by studying some elements of the format.

Kanashiro (2017), through a socio-semiotic approach, concludes that televised Peruvian debates (1990-2011) have been based in the audiovisual format of the US debates in the 1960’s. This situation can also be seen in Chile, where in 1989 the model of the Nixon-Kennedy debate was adopted; a format that, over the years, has been adopted until the development of a new one (for more information on the history of Chilean debates, Hilsenrad (2017) offers a historical review of anecdotes from all the debates organized in the country).

As it is possible to observe, the studies on the format of the debates, despite not being very encompassing ones, have allowed to visualize the facts that the norms under which these communicative instances are realized influence the way in which the encounter happens and how participants relate to one another. In the same vein, as shown by Téllez, Muñoz and Ramírez (2010) in their work about Mexico, Spain and the United States, independently from the existing reference models for

each format, the culture of every country that adopts a specific model affects the use of discursive strategies, and with them the way in which the model of the debate is thought.

## MODELS OF DEBATES AND THE THEORY OF SPECIATION

Televised debates constitute an important and distinct method for conveying messages in the different electoral campaigns (Benoit, 2004). They also play a role in formalizing the conflict between the different component parts, owing to their capacity for regulating and structuring participation (Echeverría Victoria, 2008). This normative capacity throughout the years has been affected by several factors. Among them, this includes the type of format (that is to say, the rules that determine times, order, types of interaction and participation) and the negotiations between media and the political system, which predetermine the participation structure.

In accordance with Anstead (2016) the debate model adopted by a country at the beginning may vary in time until they transform in a new model that responds to the contexts it is inserted in, being examples of this the US models. According to the author, this happens because the debates, like species, “evolve”, which means, according to the theory of evolution (used by the Antead, 2016), that some specimens with the same characteristics may be affected when exposed to different environments. Concretely, the author refers to “allopatric speciation”, which explains how a new species might appear as a result of the geographical division of a single ancestral species (Berlocher, 1998, cited in Anstead, 2016).<sup>3</sup>

According to Anstead (2016) and his adaptation of evolutionary theory to social science studies, the founding debate models, for example the US model, after being adopted and exposed to a new

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<sup>3</sup> For example, if two fish with identical characteristics are separated, with one being placed in deep water, while the other must survive on land, this may cause the first species to adapt itself to withstand underwater pressure, while the second might develop a respiratory system to improve air intake on the surface.

culture, evolves into a new model specific to the country where it is being used. For this to happen, Anstead (2016) proposes that the debates must be exposed to specific environmental factors. According to the author they are: developments and trends specific to each country, changes in political party systems and the logic of political systems (which in Anstead's case are parliamentary).

The author's work focuses on the government and political party system without considering the role of media systems, factor that is also important, since as Anstead himself (2016) recognizes at the end of his work: "The media system may well dictate the strength of political and media actors in these negotiations, while technological change may create new actors, disrupting established relationships" (p. 512).

In this sense, we assume that while the political system is a previous condition to the media system, it also has its own logic of evolution (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This is why when the media system and the politic system bargain the rules of the debate, the agreements between both parts contribute to establish the format. To understand then how the negotiations between both systems are produced and above all its dynamic nature, it is necessary to take into consideration that, in the case of political debates, they have taken place in a broader context that underwent a long process, defined as a mediatization of politics. This framework proposes that the increase in the importance of the media has begun to affect all aspects of politics (including processes, institutions, organizations and actors), which, in turn, has provoked that politics have adapted and adopted to the logic of the media (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014).

#### *The Mediatization of the Politics and its effect in the Speciation of the Debates*

Following Strömbäck (2008), four phases and four dimensions can be identified in the mediatization process, determined by the practices that develop between the different media and politics (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014). The first phase corresponds, first of all, to the concept of mediated politics. Therefore, when politics has reached the first phase, the representations of reality in the media have impacted on how they are perceived. This forces politics to consider the media when formulating an opinion or reacting to public opinion.

In the second phase media has become more independent than governmental bodies or other political institutions and, in consequence, have come to impose their logic over the logic of politics. In the third phase, the independence of the media is further increased, turning even more autonomous and important than the political system and other social actors, who must adapt to the logic of the media. Lastly, in the fourth phase, the actors not only adapt to the logic of media and its values, but also internalize them (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014).

Both the phases and the dimensions constitute two institutionally different systems (Strömbäck, 2011) that are in mutual tension, to the point that the way in which these tensions are resolved (that is, negotiations) can influence significantly the nature of both logics (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014). For example, in the transition from the third to the fourth phase, we observed that the media logic drives the production of debates, but they are only acceptable to the political logic only insofar as they are useful to the political actors with more power. On the other hand, we assume that the trend toward the debates as a political spectacle is driven by the modernization of media systems, and propelled further by the commercialization of the media system, while an increasingly secularized society is making political actors lose their control on social power (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999).

On this basis, we assume that the common ancestor is the Kennedy-Nixon debate which, according to Kraus (1962), created the genre's mythology. The common ancestral species is transplanted into other environments, where it may or may not establish a different evolutionary trajectory from that of the United States. Therefore, the Chilean case, instead of cases like France or Germany (which started the process with their own model), has proven to be a better example of how speciation of debates operates; it might be a paradigmatic model given that the ancestral species in Chile is the same of the United States, but in both countries it has evolved (*speciated*) from the end of the 20th century in different directions.

Our thesis is that this species began to evolve and to adapt to the needs of each presidential electoral process in Chile, based on nation-specific conditions, causing the ancestral species to acquire new



characteristics, thus initiating a process of progressive differentiation. These specific conditions were given by the evolution of the political system and the media system and the interaction of its logics, which were reflected in the negotiations to establish the rules and formats of each debate. Once the format ceased to adapt further and a standard was set (and maintained over time), a new species emerged, which, despite sharing features with the ancestral species, exhibits characteristics that are unique to the context where it was created.

### *Television and political journalism in Chile*

Previous studies about debates in Chile are scarce. Besides the aforementioned book by Hilsengard (2017), there are specific references in Arriagada and Navia (2011) and in Núñez (2015), who center their analysis in the role assumed by journalists in three debates during the 2013 campaign. Despite this, Chile has been recognized by authors like Hallin and Mellado (2017) as being a unique case study, since it counts with a media system inserted in a post-authoritarian political system, where the actors belonging to the elites determine the rules that must be followed (Boylan, 1996, quoted in Mellado & Rafter, 2014).

In this sense, the Chilean case also represents a study challenge since, contrary to the cases analyzed by Anstead (2016), there is a presidential system, whose party system has evolved from the configuration of two great coalitions to a clear multi-party one with several coalitions running for presidency. In the same way, Chile, as a historical consequence, counts with a specific journalistic practice, since after the military dictatorship in 1990, “Chilean journalists started to become more professional within a typically western media system with constitutional protection focused on freedom of expression and private property law followed by media companies” (Mellado, 2012, p. 382).

As for television in Chile, it has evolved from a public service model with universities as central actors to one mainly commercial, where each network, including the state one, must be exclusively funded through advertising. Besides the existence of new private commercial channels, universities have been forced to sell their networks to commercial

companies (Acuña, 2007). Nowadays, besides the state channel, there are also three open networks with a national reach, as well as two smaller channels in the regional level. In this environment of growing commercial competition, the content of television has tended to prioritize scandal or human interest, sensationalism and dramatic language (Mujica & Bachmann, 2013; Porath, Mujica & Maldonado, 2009).

Regarding the way in which the informative content is given, Mellado and Lagos (2014) discovered that the most common role for journalists is that of “passive disseminator”, that is to say, one that gives news, but is not an active part of them. Behind it are the roles of “infotainment” and the so-called “civic” role, calling attention to the weak presence of the “watchdog” role. This combination is attributed both to the structure of the Chilean media system, the neoliberal economic system, and the journalistic practices inherited from the dictatorship (1973-1989). Coincidentally, Santander (2007) established that between 2002 and 2005, while certain media partially adapted the watchdog role, the dominant tendency is towards spectacularization or sensationalism. Porath, Suzuki, Ramdohr and Portales (2015) point in the direction of a larger journalistic interest in aspects such as personalization and, above all, the strategic frame to cover political campaigns as a way of making politics more attractive to the audiences, at the same time that they present the Chilean case as one of mediatization of politics.

## METHODOLOGY

We research and observe the evolution of 10 live presidential debates –of first rounds– organized and broadcasted together by the main channels of the country between 1989 and 2017. Like Micovic & Gallego-Reguera (2017) an analysis of the format of the televised debates was done through observation of the “conditions and rules of the development of the programs” (p. 189). For this, we focus on four groups of variables.

First, the number of candidates that participated in each debate in relation to the total number of candidates who participated in the election. Second, the format, the rules and distribution of times to ask questions by journalists, the public, the moderator, and between

candidates, and the participation of the audience, replies, closing arguments and themed blocks. Third, if candidates had the right to answer when they were interpellated by another candidate or to interrupt each other. Finally, the type of questions allowed by the rules, if the inquiry was shared by all participants, semi-shared, or directed and personalized to each candidate, as well as whether the journalists had space for counter-arguments or to intervene while candidates were answering.

Specifically, the debates were studied through interpretative observation, because even if we worked with videos, transcriptions and press articles –due to the research being qualitative in nature– there will always be interpretations from the people who analyze the research object (Santos-Guerra, 1990). Furthermore, the method of qualitative analysis of content (Cáceres, 2003) was used because it allows for a systematic, exhaustive and categorical characterization (Porta & Silva, 2003).

In addition, to better contextualize the format of the debate, we realized a revision of the press from the months when those debates were transmitted. The two most important national newspapers (*El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*) were analyzed, as well as one evening newspaper (*La Segunda*) to have the antecedents of the negotiation between each candidate's campaign team and the media.<sup>4</sup> All this allowed us to approach how the negotiations between the media and the political systems have been a decisive factor for the development and speciation of current debates.

## SPECIATION IN THE CHILEAN CASE

### *1989-1999: The beginning, adoption and consolidation of the American model*

After the referendum of 1988 and the victory of the “No” campaign –which defeated General Pinochet and his continuity plan– a new phase began in Chile's political history following 17 years of dictatorship.

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<sup>4</sup> Thanks to the students Pia Aguilar, Matías Coloma, Valentina Fuenzalida, Javiera Lizama Leiva, Claudio Alfaro, Bárbara Castro, Lidia Chávez and Luciana Melio who compiled, collected and systematized part of this material.

In 1989, the first presidential elections since 1970 were held. In this process, the Universidad Católica's Television Corporation (Canal 13) carried out the country's first televised political debate but it was not the first time that presidential candidates had appeared before a panel of journalists on TV (the first time was during the 1964 election; something similar occurred in 1970). This channel was the one with the highest ratings and the only channel independent from the military government.

The debate was made possible by the conjunction of political actors' interests: the opposition to Pinochet wished to gain television access, the challenger (second in the polls, the official candidate) sought to confront the surer winner. In addition, a third candidate was left off the roster (a newcomer without a political base). On the other side, Canal 13 searched for the way to maintain their leadership in ratings and its independence, at the same time they tried to fulfill the mission of public service encouraged by the Universidad Católica.

For this debate, the same format with a panel of journalist that was used in the Nixon-Kennedy debates (still employed in the United States at the time) was decided on. This is perhaps because journalism and the media in Chile were heavily influenced by the flow of information and models from the United States, particularly as the emergence of journalism studies in the country can be traced back to US schools, being affected at the outset by this professional model (Protzel, 2005, cited in Mellado, 2009, p. 195).

After lengthy discussions, it was agreed to form the panel with journalists from Canal 13. The debate took place in the Canal 13 studios, with a live studio audience of over 400 people. The questions were personalized (each candidate was asked a different question) and in case of wanting it, the candidate –who was not asked the question– had a minute to reply or comment on the answer given by the other candidate; the minute was followed by 30 seconds, in which the other candidate can answer with a counter-response. At the end each candidate had time for their closing statements.

The same model was used once again in the 1993 debate, but with some modifications being made to the original format. On this occasion, the debate was organized by the channels grouped in the National

Television Association (ANATEL)<sup>5</sup> and therefore, for the first time in the country's history, was broadcasted simultaneously across all channels on the open television network.

The debate was held at the headquarters of the former National Congress, with the participation of a panel of journalists representing each broadcasting channel, a moderator/presenter and a studio audience. Only the candidates from the two major political coalitions were included (other four candidates were not invited). Influenced by the American models too, a public panel composed of independent voters –randomly selected by a polling company– was incorporated in the second block of the debate, clearly imitating the Town Hall model introduced in the United States the previous year.

For the third presidential election after the dictatorship in 1999, after 10 years of democracy the two coalitions, *Concertación* and *Alianza por Chile*, were already well-rooted. However, there was still a dissociation between the social and political (Garcés & Valdés, 1999), which was beginning to provoke a sense of limitation among citizens. According to Paredes (2011), this situation generated political imaginaries that envisaged the construction of “an alternative democracy” and the participation of other actors in the socio-political sphere.

This new idea of a democratic objective not only had repercussions in terms of public expectation, but also influenced the dynamics between the media and the parties, as the latter began to be dominated by the logic of the former, marking the end of an era in which the party machine was used to mobilize the electorate (Huneus, 2000). However, the media system continued to respond to the logic of the political system. Hence, in view of the dispute for political primacy between the Socialists and Christian Democrats in the governing coalition, state network TVN responded by broadcasting, for the first time in history, a primary debate between the two pre-candidates. This debate took place in the former National Congress on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1999 and its format, though similar to that of the debate of 1993, evolved because

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<sup>5</sup> Association that represents the open network television channels (terrestrial television), both regional and national (ANATEL, 2017). In practice, this group operates by consensus.

of the agreements between the candidates' campaign teams resulted in some minor modifications.

For the presidential debate, organized and broadcasted by ANATEL, the duration of the debate was extended and the format increased from three to four blocks –separated by advertising slots– following the format used in 1993. Once again, only the candidates from the two main coalitions participated. Journalists had 30 seconds to put a question to the candidates that had to be answered by both in one minute and 30 seconds. These were general questions with no counter-questions. The second part included four questions from the public. At the end of each block, the candidate had one minute for counter-response or comment. As no candidate obtained an absolute majority in the first round, there was also for the first time in Chile's political history, a run-off between the two top candidates. However, neither ANATEL nor any other media outlet were able to organize a debate.

### *2005, the speciation process began*

This situation changed in 2005 in response to the existing political context: the format of the televised presidential debates became increasingly distinct from the American model. The main feature that marked the emergence of a new species was that for the first time all presidential candidates participated in the debates. This decision was motivated by the internal divisions within the right-wing coalition, as each of its two main parties put forward their own candidate, producing that there had been no way of deciding which one of them could mobilize greater support, and the interest of the channels in generating a more pluralist debate where all the candidates to the presidency had the same opportunities to make their ideas known.

The candidate Michelle Bachelet –the surer winner– along with her coalition, *Concertación*, laid down the conditions for accepting to hold the debate. They demanded that interaction between candidates be kept to a minimum, and for this reason, generic questions were asked (the same question for all candidates) following by a personalized counter-question, and both questions from the public and the right to reply were discarded. In this way, the political system continued to hold most leverage in the negotiation of rules and the format responded to its needs.

That year, some channels also decided to organize their own presidential debates, since the channels discovered that the transmission of the debates was a good business from the point of view of rating, which translated into good public rates. In addition, for the first time ANATEL organized a debate on the second round of the presidential elections.

To sum, the speciation began as a direct response to conditions of the political system, but also taking into consideration commercial TV. For example, the maintaining of the journalists panel is useful or functional for the TV channels, which are broadcasting the debates simultaneously. In this way, they were able to ensure the on-screen presence of an anchor or “face” from their channel. This point is important, considering that the debates also included intermissions to TV advertising, sold separately by each channel.

#### *2009-2013: The Funding of a New Species of Chilean Debates*

In 2009, the political system clearly begins to lose its sway over the debate rules. This reflected the general situation of the loss of legitimacy of political actor and the beginning of a crisis in political representation, which would explode in the country from 2011 onwards, with the rise of large social movements over which political parties did not have any control (Bertelsmann Stiftung-BTI, 2016).

The presidential elections of 2009-2010 can be regarded as unprecedented in terms of televised debates in Chile, not only because of the number of debates held (four), reflecting a general trend across the whole of Latin America at that time (Ruiz & Alberro, 2012), but also because of the diversity of actors involved in their organization (press, radio and individual channels). This provoked the development of new, more flexible formats, confrontational and with rules that favored the autonomy of journalists. New components appeared, such as an opportunity for counter-questioning by the journalists, the exchanges between candidates and the use of new tools such as websites and social networks.

The fourth debate of this year was the one organized by ANATEL. The debate was divided into four blocks. The first two were devoted to the journalists’ questions, each given three minutes to formulate their

personalized questions (with the right to answer). In the third and fourth blocks, candidates could exchange views with one another without the intervention of the journalists. Each candidate had the opportunity to ask a question to the other candidate: 30 seconds to ask it, and one minute and 30 seconds to answer it. The candidate who asked the original question was then given 30 seconds to counter-respond.

For the second round of presidential elections, there was only one televised debate, organized by ANATEL. This debate was notable for its flexible and confrontational format. In the first three blocks, every journalist had 14 minutes to interview both candidates simultaneously. Therefore, the journalists could give the other candidate an opportunity to intervene. In the fourth block, each journalist had two minutes to present his or her questions to a single candidate, while the other could not intervene in the exchange.

During the elections of 2013, since nine candidates participated, we can see the consolidation of a new species for the genre of televised electoral debates. Some instability is apparent in terms of specific rules governing the debate, given that it's negotiated case by case and for each campaign and is determined largely according to each actor's sphere of influence, whether political or media-based. Nevertheless, in the specific context of each situation, there are two clear features that set it apart from the evolution of its ancestral model in USA: the maintaining of the journalist panel, but composed here of journalists representing the organizing channels (such as anchors of each channel) and the participation of all candidates.

Continuing the trend that began in 2009, numerous debates were held: four primary debates and six presidential debates. The presence of the press and radio in the organization of debates was also maintained. But ANATEL'S televised debate was the only one to be broadcasted across the open channel networks, which ensured a high rating of almost 50%.

On this occasion, it was divided into two parts (October 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>), as the organizers felt this was the best way to address all issues with so many candidates. The debate consisted of three blocks: in the first and second, journalists formulated common questions for all candidates and then put counter-questions to individual candidates.



Each block ended with a slot for each candidate to answer other's questions asked by the four journalists present (at the end of each block, candidates could question one another). In the third block, each candidate was given one minute to convey their message.

For the second round, ANATEL organized a debate, which took place on December 10<sup>th</sup>, lasting two hours. The format consisted of four blocks and included six journalists and the moderator. During the first block, each candidate was interviewed by a journalist for three minutes. In the second block, each candidate was asked four thematic questions. For the third block, as in the first part, the journalists established a dialogue with each one of the candidates, following a free form format (which included counter-responses). At last, before the closing minute, a shared question was asked.

#### *2017: The consolidation of the new species*

During the 2017 election, the new species maintained its two stable characteristics (there was a panel conformed by journalists representing the organizing channels and all the presidential candidates took part in it). At the beginning of the debate, each candidate was interrogated by a journalist, having the right to reply in case of being mentioned by other candidate. Then, the journalists asked thematic questions about security, economy, health, and education (where the right to reply was included). After that, each candidate answered individual questions. Finally, each candidate had one minute for the final closing (without the right to reply). For the second round debate, thematic blocks were doubled to eight, in which the candidates had two minutes to answer the journalist's questions, six minutes to make a direct debate, and, finally, each candidate counted with one minute to make their final statements.

Current electoral campaigning in the country has shown a definitive consolidation of the model. Despite initial statements by the candidate most likely to win the election (the candidate from the center-right) that he would not agree to debate with the other eight candidates because "there would be no time to exchange ideas", his electoral campaign team finally conceded to holding three debates with the participation of all candidates: one organized by the press

association ANP; another one coordinated by the radio association ARCHI; and the debate organized by ANATEL. All of these debates included a panel of journalists.

## FINAL DISCUSSION

This article, based on the conceptual framework of the speciation proposed by Anstead (2016), looks at the development of televised debates in Chile. As the author himself proposes at the end of his article, we have complemented his proposal paying special attention to the negotiations between the candidacies and the television channels. To this end, we have used as a framework the one proposed by Strömbäck (2008) that allows us to analyze the interplay of logics between the political and media systems, which in turn configure political communication in a country under a process of modernization.

We believe that the Chilean case can be a better example to apply the development of new debate models that derive from the common and almost mythical idea (Maurer & Reinemann, 2007) represented by the Nixon-Kennedy debate of 1960. This is because, unlike France or Germany, where they developed their own models in the 70's, Chile shows elements that more clearly illustrate the concept of speciation: the same species in two different environments speciates/evolves in different directions. Similarly, the Chilean case proves that the evolution of debates has been constant, progressing from an imported and rigid format, to a distinctive model characterized by its adaptation to negotiations between campaign organizers and the media.

As noted above, the developments that took place in the Chilean case were not constant. Until 1999 the model reflected the political consensus, where the logic of the political system together with a logic of public service that prevailed in the television system enabled the consolidation of a model of debate inherited from the United States, and that benefited the two great coalitions that held power. This situation begins to change in 2005, when it is possible to observe more clearly the gestation of a specific model with implicit characteristics belonging to what can be called the Chilean format.

The debate in Chile does not have a predefined structure and it is determined and agreed upon on each occasion by the organizers, actors that change with every election year. There are two features that set apart the Chilean model of debate from its ancestral species (the US model): 1) the participation of all presidential candidates; and 2) the maintaining of the panel of journalists representing the organizing channels. This characteristic can be explained by the requirement and necessity of all participating open network channels in the debates organized by ANATEL to ensure the presence of a current personality or anchor from each channel.

These characteristics that configure the new model might reflect the television system dominated by commercial logic where ANATEL has no institutional power over its members, but which keeps the idea of public service television alive. Together with these, in the 2017 campaign it was possible to observe a new characteristic: the flexibility of the question-answer format; a rule that favors journalists who have greater control of their time and more autonomy vis-à-vis politicians. Being another feature that makes the model different from the one used in the US, where flexibility gives more autonomy to the politician, in Chile allows the journalist to get the most prominence.

As a final reflection, similar to Anstead's comparative analysis (2016), evolution of the debate format in Chile came about in response to the national circumstances during each election period. In particular, it derived from the negotiations that took place between the political and media systems, strongly influenced by the development of the mass communications market and the process of globalization faced by political communication (Esser & Strömbäck, 2012).

Early on, the political evolution and logic of the political system had greater influence on the contextual conditions that determined the rules of the debates. However, the inclusion of new actors and technologies and, above all, the growing mediatization of politics in Chile, in which the logic of the television market has begun to dominate forms of political communication, have conditioned the organization and structure of debates. This has meant that it was no longer the campaign organizers who established the rules of debates, but the media itself that can determine the structure to best captivate audiences.

In this new species of debate, unlike in the American model, all candidates should be present, regardless of quantity. This situation allows us to ask the following question: a) will the Latin American debate species tend to have the presence of every candidate? (see Ruiz & Alberro, 2012), and b) can this be attributed to the strong presidentialism and *caudillismo* that are characteristic of the region?

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