

50

QUADERNS DEL CAC

**Radio: memory, resilience
and transformation**



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de Catalunya

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Introduction

We have already reached issue 50 of *Quaderns del CAC*. This edition dedicates its monographic section to radio to commemorate its centenary in Catalonia. But despite this historical milestone, the aim is not to talk exclusively about the past but also –and above all– to collect theoretical and empirical works that help to understand the present and look resolutely to the future.

To talk about radio is to talk about a medium that has been able to adapt to multiple changes: political, legislative, social, economic, technological, etc. The wide thematic range of the articles collected here clearly proves this.

We open the monograph, precisely, looking ahead, with the article “Radio in 2030: A study on the crucial variables in the future of the sector in Catalonia”, by **Francesc Robert-Agell** and **Santiago Justel-Vázquez** (Universitat Internacional de Catalunya). With a prospective look, following an empirical work based on surveys of key players in the sector and having the media economy as a theoretical basis, this research identifies the critical aspects of the most immediate future of the medium. Without falling into pessimism, the authors talk about the opportunities and threats of digital transformation and warn of the tendency towards forming conglomerates, the result of the concentration of audience and advertising into certain groups and chains, and the growing weight of legislative and regulatory intervention.

In this look towards the future it is essential to reflect on the role of women and this monograph would have been incomplete without this contribution. **Silvia Espinosa Mirabet**, **Monica Puntí Brun** and **Jordi Serra Simón** (Universitat de Girona), in the article “Women on the radio 100 years on”, present a study on the evolution of the presence of women as professionals and executives on Catalan generalist radio. The research highlights very positive trends and that the situation has improved, but there are still milestones to be reached. For example, prime time programming is in male hands with one exception: Radio 4 with Gemma Nierga and her *Cafè d’idees*, a programme broadcast simultaneously on TVE Catalunya.

From a historical point of view, this monograph includes two highly significant contributions, especially because of their potential to help us understand the present. First, the journalist with a PhD in Audiovisual Communication and Advertising from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona **Marc Vidal i Juanola** analyses the origins and evolution of the Catalunya Ràdio project. In “Catalunya Ràdio: Genesis, crisis and reorientation of the Generalitat’s first radio project (1982-1984)”, Vidal i Juanola talks about it very aptly in terms of an adventure. His conclusion is clear: this station established a successful model, but the road was tough. Secondly, **José Ignacio Wert-Moreno** (PhD in Social Communication from Universidad San Pablo-CEU) and **José María Legorburu Hortelano** (Universidad de San Pablo-CEU) published the text “Presence and influence of Grupo Godó on Spanish national radio (1982-2022)”. Their study defines two stages with disparate trends. The first (1982-1994), as a major shareholder in Antena 3 Radio, and the second (1994-2022), as a minority partner in the services company Unión Radio, later called PRISA Radio. The creation of Unión Radio meant the dismantling of Antena 3 Radio.

“Comparative analysis of music content legislation on radio and digital platforms: what is the future for quotas in the new scenario?”, by **Carlos Llorens Maluquer** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), looks at the legislative-regulatory field. Based on a documentary and comparative analysis of several countries (France, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia), where the regulation of platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music is reviewed, ideas are reflected and noted to avoid leaving excessive power in the hands of these new intermediaries.

This monograph also deals with alternative and community communication with three specific proposals. The article “Half a century of independent radio stations in Catalonia. The sustainability of the sector in the present day”, by **Núria Reguero Jiménez** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) and **Eloi Camps Durban** (Universitat Pompeu Fabra), examines the current situation of Catalonia’s independent radio stations. The work concludes that the social dimension is basic for the sustainability of a sector characterised by fragility. From the forty existing radio stations in the country at the end of the 1980s, it has fallen to the current nine. **Raul Anthony Olmedo Neri** (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) reviews the situation of community radio stations in Latin America. The text, “Ten theses to (re)think Latin American community radio stations in the 21st century”, concludes that, in an adverse socio-political context, these initiatives represent counter-hegemonic projects that contribute to democratising the information. And, finally, **Nelia Del Bianco** (Universidade de Brasília), **Elton Bruno Pinheiro** (Universidade de Brasília) and **Debora Cristina Lopez** (Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto) focus their attention on university radio stations in Brazil. These types of broadcasters are

characterised by a strong social commitment: they are not only spaces for dissemination and citizen information but also contribute to the training of future professionals. The article, “Positioning of Brazilian university radio stations towards the public: tensions between the public, institutional and educational dimensions”, talks about the challenges this commitment entails, and the challenge of integrating university stations into the public sphere and the country’s institutional mechanisms.

Finally, a special issue devoted to the world of radio published in 2024 could not fail to discuss podcasts, this new way of creating and consuming radio narratives. The article by **Maria Fitó-Carreras**, **Montserrat Vidal-Mestre** and **Alfonso Freire-Sánchez** (Universitat Internacional de Catalunya and Universitat Abat Oliba CEU), “The perception of linear radio among communication students from Generation Z”, analyses the penetration of the medium among people who are studying communication at university. The sample consulted sees radio as a medium removed from their interests but given their following of podcasts, everything points to this problem being reversible. “The evolution of the dramatic genre on RNE. From radio drama to binaural sound fiction in the age of podcasting”, by **Paloma López-Villafranca** (Universidad de Málaga), presents the study of five representative cases from different stages at the public broadcaster. The results mean that audio fiction is a booming genre, thanks in great measure to the potential of the podcast, despite the need for more investment in human and financial resources. And, finally, we have the study by Ángela **Ruiz Martínez** (Universidad de Sevilla). “The narrative non-fiction podcast in Spain and its evolution over time”, analyses the characteristics and evolution of a format that could be considered the evolution of radio reports. The piece concludes that the narrative of podcasts is gaining dynamism over time.

The miscellaneous section of Issue 50 of *Quaderns del CAC* includes three articles, covering various topics and highly particular approaches. The PhD student at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona **Roger Sabà Riera** shares the results of an investigation into the perception that people with disabilities have of their representation in the media. The article, entitled “Ableism in the media in Catalonia: the perception of disabled adults”, points out that it is necessary to increase the presence of these people, with all their diversity, in the media, as well as change current ableist media representations, which tend to be limited to the pity-suffering or superhero-overcoming adversity dichotomy. “The age of blob communication: trapped within the algorithmic mesh”, by **Cristina Garde Cano** (Universitat Pompeu Fabra), is a work of an eminently theoretical and highly personal nature. The author proposes a new concept, *blob communication*, to give a name to the new hegemonic form of communication, supported by artificial intelligence algorithms. The text aims to create new ways of imagining and narrating human communities. Ultimately, the independent researcher **Ariadna Moreno Pellejero** takes a tour of revealing works by the director Chantal Akerman in “The embodiment of postmemory: encounters with a family’s past in the films of Chantal Akerman”. Moreno approaches this director’s work from a feminist perspective and is particularly interested in the spectral experience.

Amparo Huertas Bailén & Sara Suárez Gonzalo
Directors

Radio in 2030: A study on the crucial variables in the future of the sector in Catalonia

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Abstract

After an initial study on the future scenarios of radio in Spain (Robert-Agell, 2023), the focus is now on Catalonia, which has its own media ecosystem and a radio sector that can be distinguished from the rest of the Spain in its supply, consumption, regulation and players, both public and private. With 100 years of history under its belt, Catalan radio has shown a notable capacity for adaptation (Bonet, 1995; Franquet, 2001) but is now facing new structural challenges that may alter its future.

Using the theoretical framework of media economics and scenario planning, the research drew from a survey of key players to identify the critical variables that will define the Catalan radio industry in 2030. This study adds to the limited structural research on media economics applied to radio and the almost non-existent foresight production on the media. It aims to serve as a guide for addressing the need to update the management models and adapt the regulations within a context of digital transformation and profound demographic changes.

Keywords

Radio, Catalonia, scenario planning, future, variables.

Resum

Després d'una primera investigació sobre els escenaris futurs de la ràdio a Espanya (Robert-Agell, 2023), la mirada se centra ara a Catalunya, que disposa d'un ecosistema mediàtic propi i un sector radiofònic que es distingeix de la resta de l'Estat en oferta, consum, regulació i actors, tant públics com privats. La ràdio catalana, amb 100 anys d'història, ha demostrat una notable capacitat d'adaptació (Bonet, 1995; Franquet, 2001), però s'enfronta a nous desafiaments estructurals que podrien alterar-ne el futur.

Utilitzant el marc teòric de l'economia dels mitjans i la prospectiva, la investigació recorre a l'enquesta a actors clau per identificar les variables crítiques que definiran la indústria radiofònica catalana el 2030. Aquest treball contribueix a la limitada investigació estructural en l'economia dels mitjans aplicada a la ràdio i a la gairebé inexistent producció prospectiva sobre mitjans. La investigació vol servir d'orientació per abordar la necessitat de revisar els models de gestió i adaptar la regulació en un context de transformació digital i profunds canvis demogràfics.

Keywords

Ràdio, Catalunya, prospectiva, futur, variables.

1. Introduction. State of the matter

Catalonia has its own media ecosystem and a particularly rich, diverse radio sector that is in many ways different from the rest of Spain (in its supply, consumption, regulation, public and private players, etc.). This article sprang from the desire to continue the research on radio's future scenarios in Spain (Robert-Agell, 2023) and to transfer knowledge. Criteria for judgement are needed at a time when the media sector is

experiencing a period of profound, radical changes, driven by the ageing of the population and the new generations' disruptive media diet, as well as by the speed and universality of the digital transformation in recent decades.

Catalan radio has proven its ability to adapt throughout its 100 years of history (Bonet, 1995) by playing different roles in different periods (Franquet, 2001). However, today this may be changing, and many voices are warning about the need to update the management models and adapt to an environment

in the throes of transformation (Sellas, 2013; Fernández-Sande & Gallego, 2018; Piñeiro-Otero & Pedrero-Esteban, 2022; Fernández-Sande & Rodríguez-Pallares, 2022; Prata *et al.*, 2024).

The purpose of this research is to determine the possible factors or variables which will define the scenarios for this industry in Catalonia in the year 2030 based on their impact and the degree of uncertainty. The research aims to serve as a guide for addressing the need to revise the management models and adapt the regulations in the context of digital transformation and profound demographic changes.

The answers will be grounded on the theoretical framework of media economics and scenario planning as both science and a methodology: a literature review and a survey of the players and their sphere of interest will determine both the variables and their importance. This article joins the scant structural research and media economics applied to radio and the almost non-existent scenario planning on the media.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Media economics and scenario planning

This study falls within the purview of the media theoretical tradition and media economics, which explains the functioning of this industry and the behaviour of the companies within it, as well as how the economic, financial and regulatory forces influence the operations of media markets and their effects on society (Albarran, 2014; Cunningham *et al.*, 2015). It also justifies individual consumption behaviours and the decisions—media management—taken in this industry (Picard, 2006).

Macroeconomics accounts for overall factors circumscribed within megatrends, the currents where economies will evolve in the forthcoming decade, which are almost impossible to change (European Strategy and Policy Analysis System, 2019). Küng (2016) states that the PESTLE model may be more geared towards professionals and researchers but is useful for organising these major trends, and she highlights the effects on the media of both demographic changes (and consumption changes among the younger generations) and changes in regulation and the digital transformation (which completely alters the relationship between companies, audiences and advertisers (Elavarthi & Chitrapu, 2021).

The application of the Industrial Organisation model enables the market structure, the reasons for companies' behaviour and the performance of this industry to be ascertained (Hoskins *et al.*, 2004). Variables like the number of sellers and buyers, product distinction, entry barriers, cost structure and the degree of vertical integration make it possible to explain everything from the formation of monopolies to perfect competition (Albarran, 2010). In the case of media markets—like the radio market—there is a tendency towards concentration (theory of the firm) because of economies of scale and scope (Doyle,

2011) and the huge entry barriers (Hoskins *et al.*, 2004). The dilemma for regulators lies in calibrating the effects of their intervention: excessive concentration may run counter to consumers' interests, but excessive fragmentation—which makes companies less efficient—may also run against the public interest (Doyle, 2011), such as given the power of digital platforms.

Government interventions come when there are market deficiencies (like the abuse of a dominant position), and the main tools used are regulation and public media management. Positive externalities can be promoted (by encouraging the dissemination of high-quality content) and negative externalities can be minimised (like banning content that are harmful for society) (Doyle, 2011). In both cases, government decisions have direct and indirect economic effects (Alexander *et al.*, 2003). Likewise, the prerogative to become an operator and allow financing from advertising along with the injection of public funds leads to conflicts with private operators. Doyle (2011) reports this and adds that it is not easy to decide what financing mechanism is the most desirable for the public service. Hoskins *et al.* (2004) draw from the conclusions of the Peacock Committee (1986), which recommended not allowing the BBC to be financed with advertising because of its effects on the system as a whole. In any case, the dual market logic pushes public operators into the same battle for audiences as private operators (Alexander *et al.*, 2003). If we add management's risk aversion, we find an explanation for the similarity of the broadcasters' lineups (Doyle, 2011).

The audience's individual listening choices can also be explained by media economics: they are the product of experience that can only be evaluated by their use (Hoskins *et al.*, 2004) and are a choice based on both their utilitarian and symbolic value (Elavarthi & Chitrapu, 2021).

Media economics also points to the need for anticipation in an extraordinarily complex environment (Chan-Olmsted, 2005) and the need to identify long-term trends (Albarran, 2014). On this point, it connects with scenario planning—which makes neither prognostications nor predictions but instead collects knowledge about possible scenarios—which has attracted a huge academic community (Spaniol & Rowland, 2018) equipped with both theoretical frameworks (De Jouvenel, 2019; Minkinen, 2020) and its methodologies (Schultz, 2015).

The first step in defining which variables may be crucial in shaping radio in 2030 is to identify what stage in its life cycle this industry is in today. Picard (2011) and Küng (2016) situated the media in the maturity stage. Lehman-Wilzig and Cohen-Avigdor (2004) use the concept of natural lifecycle from biology and apply it to the evolution of the media environment subjected to digital transformation: the phase of defensive resistance begins after birth, market penetration, growth and maturation. This ends in either adaptation, convergence or obsolescence. Robert-Agell and Bonet (2023) situate the radio industry in Spain in the defensive resistance stage.

2.2 The Catalan market

This description, which is necessarily incomplete due to the scope of the article yet sufficient for the purpose of this study, points to the main features in the evolution of this market (supply, consumption and financing).

2.2.1 Evolution of the supply

We have to distinguish between the programming available, management companies and the number of frequencies. What Bonet (1995) wrote as the definition of the structure of the sector in Spain (the only case in Europe where the public and private sectors coexist where neo-regulation allows both more private and more public radio stations to enter the market) perfectly describes the evolution of the radio sector in Catalonia: in addition to an extensive private sector, each political administrative level (state, regional and local) develops its media system (Fernández-Quijada *et al.*, 2013).

Regarding private radio stations, the business concentration process has been amply documented (Bonet, 1995; Martí, 1996; Bonet, 1998; Bonet, 1999; Martí & Bonet, 2000; Artero Muñoz *et al.*, 2021; etc). The changes in the regulatory framework and political decisions on its enforcement (such as by fostering station affiliation in tender processes) have consolidated a dynamic which is also fostered by economic reasons (gain in volume and efficiency).

The decrease in the number of companies managing private stations, despite the increase in frequencies after the different technical plans, attests to concentration. The main corporate transactions were Prisa's purchase of shares in 2005 and the COPE agreement to manage all the Punto Radio stations (including the frequencies from the former Catalan company owned by Luis del Olmo) in 2013. Concentration is also taking place with independent operators' licences for stations that cover all of Catalonia (RAC1 and RAC 105 owned by Grupo Godó, and Grup Flaix), as well as individual counties.

In 2023, 168 licences were operated by seven groups and broadcast on stations (in Catalan or statewide), and 29 frequencies are local broadcasters or small stations with a regional or county reach. This proportion has remained approximately the same since 2013.

On the other hand, the supply of public frequencies has risen 34.6% since 2001, and in absolute numbers, it has gone from 407 to 548 —most of them due to the proliferation of the CCMA. The private sector accounts for one-third of this spectrum.

2.2.2 Evolution in consumption

The radio audience in Catalonia has remained at around 3.8 million people in the past decade, which is under its historical peak of 4.2 million in 2012. The net loss of listeners is found in music radio stations, and the gradual ageing of the audience as well as attrition among younger generations should also be noted.

Table1. FM Frequencies and Ownership

Years	Private	Municipal	CCMA	RTVE
2001	94	201	155 *	51*
2022	197	213	270	65

Source: Catalan Audiovisual Council, BIAC and Annual Report, except (*) Franquet (2001).

Table 2. Evolution of the average age

%	2000	2023
Total population	40.5	43.4
Total listeners	42.2	48.7
Total general stations	47.9	52.2
Total music stations	33.4	44.5

Source: Idescat for Total population. AIMC, EGM cumulative third sweep, Monday to Sunday, 2000 and 2023.

Table 3. Evolution of the audience and of the population aged 14 to 19

%	2000	2023
Total population (15 to 19)	6	5.5
Total listeners	8.3	6.1
Total general stations	3.2	4.2
Total music stations	14.6	7.8

Source: Idescat for Total population. AIMC, EGM cumulative third sweep, Monday to Sunday, 2000 and 2023.

Table 4. Evolution of the audience and of the population aged 20 to 24

%	2000	2023
Total population	8.1	5.4
Total listeners	10.2	5.5
Total general stations	5.8	3.7
Total music stations	16.6	7.4

Source: Idescat for Total population. AIMC, EGM cumulative third sweep, Monday to Sunday, 2000 and 2023.

2.2.3 Financing. Advertising and public contributions

2.2.3.1 Advertising

Determining the evolution of the radio advertising market in Catalonia comes upon three difficulties: the lack of a systematic historical record before 2007, the atomisation of some of these operators —public and private— and the very definition of what comprises this market. Martí (1996) draws from the estimate of the total volume of the state market (according to figures from InfoAdex) and rates it at 10% (6 billion pesetas), while Martí and Bonet (2001) raise this share between 10 and 11% to 8 billion pesetas. The records based on figures from Idescat do not represent the reality of radio advertising in Catalonia (the income category does not distinguish advertising from subsidies, and the income figures of the state radio groups are included in the totals of their respective corporations).

The lack of comparable data prevented us from establishing a dual market correlation until 2007 when the Associació Catalana de Ràdio (Catalan Radio Association) commissioned the consultancy Media Hotline to draw up a report which would be updated every year (even though the lack of official records compels it to make estimates for municipal radio).

If we compare consumption with share (volume of radio advertising over the rest of the media), we find the paradox that the gradual loss of penetration has not come with a loss of advertising share. However, we should note that radio invoiced €50.6 million in 2023, far from the €75.4 million in 2007 and the €54 million pre-pandemic.

The income of the majority of companies in the Catalan private sector (which is more competitive than in the rest of Spain) depends on musical programming. Seventy-two per cent (26 of the 36 brands) are music stations.

2.2.3.2 Public funds

The public funds earmarked for radio in Catalonia by all the public administrations have never been fully quantified. The resources earmarked to the CCMA's radio stations stopped being published in disaggregated form in 2014. Likewise, we should add the funds that the Barcelona Provincial Council allocates to radio content via the Xarxa Audiovisual Local (Local Audiovisual Network, XAL), the funds that the public corporation Radio Televisión Española earmarks to Ràdio 4 and the budgets of the more than 200 municipal stations.

The government of Catalonia earmarks two types of funds to the private radio sector: generic support or structural assistance (for stations that only use Catalan) and assistance for projects (Catalan Secretariat of Media and Dissemination, 2013). In 2022, the government of Catalonia awarded €2.4 million in subsidies to private radio companies, €1.7 million of which is for projects and €704,687 for structural assistance (CAC, 2023 and Catalan Ministry of the Presidency, 2023). If we add this amount to the advertising resources earned from the market, public funds account for only 5.2% of the financing of private radio in Catalonia.

Table 5. Evolution of radio's penetration and share in Catalonia

	Penetration *	Share **	Volume (€M) **
2000	54.9		
2001	55.2		
2002	55.1		
2003	59		
2004	55.9	9.7	
2005	55.6	10.2	67.2
2006	55.1	10.2	70.1
2007	52.3	11.6	75.3
2008	52.5	13	71.1
2009	56.1	13	57.8
2010	57.8	13.2	56.4
2011	59.7	13.6	50.4
2012	64.7	13.9	45.1
2013	63	13.8	43
2014	60.6	13.5	44.1
2015	61.9	13.5	47.1
2016	60	13.9	48.3
2017	60.5	14.9	51.4
2018	57.9	15	50.8
2019	57.3	16.3	54.0
2020	55.5	17.5	43.2
2021	55.8	16.7	46.2
2022	56.1	16.7	47.9
2023	54.7	17	50.6

Source: *AIMC, 2023. EGM cumulative third sweep, Monday to Sunday.

**Media HotLine & ACR, *Informe de la situació de la ràdio a Catalunya*.

2.3 The differential factors that have shaped the Catalan market

First, the political decisions and legislative framework, along with the existence of its own language, explain the unique radio supply in Catalonia compared to the rest of Spain (Guimerà, 2014). De Carreras (1987) highlights the importance of radio regulation in spreading the use of the Catalan language, and De Moragas Spà and López (2000) describe the linguistic approach of the government of Catalonia's communication policies by both the scarce presence of Catalan after the restoration of autonomy and the lack of authority over telecommunications. Guimerà (2014) credits the successive governments of Jordi Pujol (1980-2003) with creating Catalonia's media system within the framework of a political and communication strategy with powerful public means (CCMA) and the granting of frequencies to local companies. Fernández-Quijada *et al.* (2013) also reveal the centrality of regulation in designing the media systems of

stateless nations and the role of the language. Consequently, Corominas (2003) highlights the growth in the supply and consumption of radio in Catalan between 1981 and 2002, when it rose from 19.3% to 50%. This percentage reached 71.8% in 2022, according to figures from the AIMC reported by the ACR (2023), which situates radio as the medium with the highest consumption in Catalan. Private radio stations account for 74.1% (ACR, 2023).

Setting language quotas is nothing new in radio broadcasting. Balsebre (2002) recalls that during the Franco dictatorship in the mid-1960s, the Spanish Ministry of Information and Tourism imposed percentages of music in Spanish to halt the penetration of pop music in English.

Secondly, the radio industry has adapted to the changes that have taken place in the society in which it operates. The evolution in contents and programmes attest to this capacity to respond to its demographic context (Bonet, 1995 and Balsebre, 2001 & 2002). The main social changes that took place in Catalonia between 2000 and 2023 are the increase in the foreign population (which accounted for 2.9% of the population in 2000 and 16.32% in 2022 —22% in Barcelona—) and the drop in the birth rate, with the consequent ageing of the population. In 1975, the mean age was 33.7 years, in 2000 it rose to 40.5 and in 2023 it was 43.4 years. The largest population group is now made up of people between the ages of 40 and 49, while in 2000 the largest group was between the ages of 25 and 34 (Idescat, Statistical Institute of Catalonia, 2024).

Thirdly, the digital disruption has stormed onto the scene and is auguring changes throughout the entire audio chain: production, distribution and consumption. According to the Enquesta de Participació Cultural a Catalunya (Cultural Participation Survey of Catalonia), among the respondents who stated that they had listened to music the day before, 61.3% had used platforms (Spotify, Deezer, etc.) (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2022). The increase in the consumption of digital audio also has effects on radio, which has doubled the number of Internet listeners in four years. Nonetheless, the sector is not monetising this digital consumption, given that in 2023 digital advertising only accounted for 2.2% of the sector's total invoicing, while for

Spain as a whole, this figure was 3.5% (ACR, 2023).

These figures prove Bonet and Fernández-Quijada (2011) right on the digital growth of new forms of consumption, as well as Sellas (2013) on the maintenance of an analogue business model, with the risk of being left behind in the exploitation of digital audio.

3. Methodology

The goal of scenario planning is to anticipate possible futures, and it usually draws on the scenario methodology. The normative use of scenario planning tools is broadly described—to prevent it from being confused with predictions or forecasts—as are the most frequent errors—based on biases or intuitions (Popper, 2008; Balarezo & Nielsen, 2017). This research falls within the Intuitive Logics scenario planning school due to the purpose, the tools used, the nature of the participants and the identification of forces and variables (Bradfield *et al.*, 2005; Sjøvaag & Krumsvik, 2018; Spaniol & Rowland, 2019). The factors with the greatest impact—regardless of their degree of uncertainty—are examined due to the significant changes they may cause in the future (Ratcliffe, 2000; Lindgren & Bandhold, 2003).

The Intuitive Logics school allows for a broad time frame: between 5 and 20 years (Bradfield *et al.*, 2005). The decision in this study to situate it in 2030 first meets the knowledge transfer goal proposed—to keep a sufficient connection with the present to get the players involved (Das & Ytre-Arne, 2017). Furthermore, in such a changing context as the media, caution and precedents indicate the usefulness of situating it on the low end of the time range.

To identify the variables that will determine the future of radio in Catalonia in 2030, the factors pointed to by the megatrends were crossed with the results of the industrial life cycle research on radio in Spain (Robert-Agell, 2023) and with the literature review on the Catalan market. Seventy-four variables which meet these conditions of influencing the future have been identified. This entails expanding the ones obtained in the prior research by 37% due to the specificities of the Catalan market. They are organised by areas to design the survey.

Table 6. Comparison of digital audiences and percent of digital income over total income

%	Internet audience*	Over advertising income**
2019	5.8	1.4
2020	7	2.4
2021	9	3.2
2022	11.2	3.4
2023	12.6	2.2

Sources: *AIMC, EGM cumulative third sweep, Monday to Sunday.

**Media Hotline & ACR, *Informe de la situació de la ràdio a Catalunya*.

Table 7. Key variables determining the evolution of radio in Catalonia

Factors		
Social and economic	A - G	7
Political and regulatory	H - S	12
Technological	T - AA	8
Dual market	AB - AH	7
Business and management model	AI - BG	25
New competition	BH - BV	15

Source: Own work.

Once the players and the circle of influence on the radio sector were identified (people in charge with the ability to influence in their respective fields, Heijen, 2005), and the survey asking about these variables was drafted (via self-administered electronic Google Forms questionnaires), 81 emails requesting participation were sent, to a representative sample of middle and senior management profiles of both public and private operators (local, Catalan stations or state stations), as well as their spheres of interest (lawmakers, regulators, government, advertising market and distribution) and a sample of scholarly researchers and other experts.

We sent the emails on 8 and 9 March 2024, and anyone who did not answer by 20 March got a reminder. The text stated that the goal of the research was to provide tools for making decisions that would help to pinpoint uncertainties and guide the sector among all possible futures towards desirable scenarios. The variables had to be rated between 0 and 10, and anonymity was guaranteed in the presentation of the results. 'Impact' was defined as the capacity to significantly alter the sector, and special emphasis was placed on defining 'uncertainty'. The highest level of uncertainty (10) indicated that it was impossible to anticipate how that variable would evolve by 2030, a judgement that should not be based on desire or personal will but instead be an opinion on its potential for happening.

We obtained 48 responses, which accounts for 59.3% of the initial sample. Soriano (2007) considers 60% the high

side of success in responses to social research. Even though the sample may seem small and a limitation of this study, its value lies in the representativeness of the profiles surveyed (due to their professional position in radio or its sphere of interest: political, institutional or academic), which matches the recommendations made by Van der Heijen (2005). The results were organised according to the degree of impact as a factor to support decision-making among operators and stakeholders (Balarezo & Nilsen, 2017), and they are presented in tables to make them optimally readable.

4. Results of the surveys

When interpreting the results, we took all the factors over the average (equal to or higher than 6.9) as relevant in impact, and all the factors equal to or under the mean of 5.1 as uncertain.

The table organised by highest impact (see Table 8) reveals the importance of factors that could negatively affect the future of the sector, unlike the variables organised according to minimum uncertainty (see Table 9): in this case, despite the persistence of negative factors, they are counterbalanced by the variables that point to the strengths and opportunities that the medium will maintain.

The results of the survey according to the highest level of impact (Table 8) show a widespread opinion that the conditions for the development of the radio industry will worsen, which

Table 8. Survey results organised by level of impact (equal to or higher than 6.9) and uncertainty (equal to or lower than 5.1)

	Factors	Impact	Uncertainty
V	FM receivers will disappear in cars.	8.5	5.5
H	Digital listening alternatives will lead to the digital switchover.	7.9	5.8
AB	Radio's penetration will decrease among the total audience.	7.7	5.4
W	FM tuning on household receivers and mobile telephones will disappear.	7.7	5.3
BE	Radio will lose its rights to broadcast football, as has happened with TV stations.	7.6	5.6
Y	Companies owning personal voice assistants and mobile telephones will worsen the conditions to distribute radio companies' signals.	7.5	5.6
BC	The conditions for using the repertoire of copyright organisations will worsen (due to cost and restrictions on the possibility of use).	7.5	5.4
BT	The conditions for broadcasting advertising will be limited for public radio.	7.3	5.3
U	Users will prefer to consume audio accompanied by video.	7.2	5.3
BD	The decision-making and influencing power of media clearinghouses will increase.	7.2	5.6
BS	Advertising will disappear from public radio.	7.1	5.9
P	The obligation to develop DAB+ or an equivalent replacement standard will be imposed.	7.1	5.7
L	The possibility of exploiting licenses of municipal and CCMA stations will become more flexible, allowing private operators to exploit them.	7.1	6.0
AD	The importance of the CCMA will increase in competition with radio audiences.	7.0	5.4
BB	Ground signal distribution costs for FM waves will increase substantially.	7.0	5.5
F	Economic crises will recur more often.	6.9	5.8
K	A new Technical Plan will be approved with an increase in private licenses.	6.9	6.1
AA	DAB+ will develop because of its presence in cars.	6.9	5.3
J	The conditions for licenses in the private sector will worsen (limitation on their length; limitations on syndicated broadcasting, on transfers; new obligations regarding contents; more advertising limitations, etc.).	6.9	5.8

Source: own work.

could affect the entire value chain. Technology, regulation and changes in the supplier-customer power relations in the sector are the most salient. Technology is relevant because intermediation with the audience is no longer neutral and universally accessible (disappearance of FM in cars, higher consumption of audio via voice recognition devices) and the proliferation of competitors for listening attention and time brought about by the digital transformation. These threats are joined by a negative view of the regulatory context, if the variables perceived as plausible end up happening (worsening of operating conditions, imposition of new obligations like DAB+, digital switchover, etc.). On the other hand, all the environments with which radio interacts are gaining power against the sector's status quo in all phases of the chain: audience empowerment, advertising intermediation, organisations that determine the rights (for football and music), etc.

Regarding the strict radio ecosystem, the only factors that the respondents consider noteworthy in terms of impact on public

radio are the possibility of limiting or eliminating advertising on these stations, as well as the fact that these frequencies may end up being exploited by private operators and the possibility that the CCMA may boost the battle over audiences—a possible scenario as long as financing with advertising continues. Therefore, we dismiss possible important effects from the dual local market or the regularisation of third-sector broadcasts.

In contrast, in the table organised according to greatest uncertainty (Table 9), the results of the survey anticipate that it is highly likely that the main strengths of the medium will remain in place, alongside the realisation that the risks and threats once again encompass the entire value chain. What stands out is recognition that radio will maintain its role as a reliable means of communication among both the audience and social institutions, along with its role as an effective influencer among advertisers. There are also a few doubts that technology will continue to gain ground among the threats (more competitors in the supply, lower presence on car

Table 9. Results of the survey organised by level of uncertainty (less than or equal to 5.1) and impact (more than or equal to 6.9)

	Factors	Uncertainty	Impact
AY	Artificial intelligence tools will optimise data management (on the audience and the advertising market).	3.9	8.3
AG	The audience will increase its ability to choose and consume and interactivity.	3.9	7.9
A	The population will age.	4.0	7.4
BG	Radio will maintain credibility and acknowledgement of its efficacy among direct advertisers.	4.1	7.3
BH	Digital native players (podcasting platforms, streaming music services, audio book platforms) will expand their catalogues to include live audio contents.	4.3	7.5
BK	There will be large-scale production of sound contents to be consumed as podcasts.	4.3	7.0
B	Immigration and cultural diversity will increase.	4.4	7.3
AU	Radio will witness improvements in audience studies, both quantitatively and qualitatively, which will include all digital consumption, both scheduled and after-the-fact.	4.4	7.6
AX	Artificial intelligence tools will optimise the production of radio contents.	4.4	7.9
BA	The increase in online radio consumption and podcasts will lead to less interest in new FM licenses and the purchase of existing licenses.	4.5	7.4
Z	Higher development of hybrid radio (combination of contents distributed two ways, radio spectrum and Internet, on the same device).	4.6	7.1
AT	Radios will multiply their supply on segmented audio channels thanks to the Internet.	4.6	6.9
AV	The value of radio and its editorial responsibility compared to digital platforms will be acknowledged due to its contribution to combatting fake news.	4.6	6.9
X	Radio's audio products will lose prominence in vehicles, which are increasingly connected, in favour of online audio services.	4.6	8.2
AF	Radio will lose share in the advertising market.	4.7	7.7
AH	There will be an increase in audience and advertising concentration in groups and stations, both Catalan and statewide.	4.7	6.9
AL	Production costs will decrease.	4.7	7.3
T	The use of voice recognition devices beyond personal assistants will increase.	4.7	7.7
AO	Radio companies will have difficulties transforming the work routines of existing staff to the new digital environment.	4.8	7.1
BF	Radio will lose advertising share in favour of digital media.	4.8	7.3
AR	Radio broadcasters will tend to join local, Catalan or statewide multimedia groups.	4.8	7.1
BL	Social media, Big Tech, etc., will be competitors for sports broadcastings.	4.9	7.4
E	Future generations will live worse than their parents (climate crisis, wars, etc.).	5.0	7.4
BI	New players (Big Tech, TikTok, X[Twitter], etc.) will increase their production of live audio contents.	5.0	7.2
M	Public subsidies for public radio activities will increase.	5.0	7.1

Source: own work.

Table 10. Order of the number of variables according to the category of the factors

Factors	According to impact	According to uncertainty	Total
8 technological	5	5	10
25 business and management model	3	4	7
7 social and economic	1	3	4
7 dual market	2	2	4
12 political and regulatory	2	2	4
15 competition	2	2	4

Source: own work.

dashboards, share lost to the digital advertising market, etc.), but this may be a positive impetus for radio due to artificial intelligence's capacity to optimise management, its ability to efficiently multiply the audio products produced by the stations themselves and the improvement in audience studies thanks to the integration of results on digital listening. The surveys also reflect a continuation of the logic of concentration among the existing private broadcasters, while the respondents do not believe it is likely for new radio stations to be launched, nor would it have a major impact. The certainty about competition in the radio sector revolves around digital platforms, devices and social media.

Finally, the ageing of the population and the increase in cultural diversity because of immigration forms the social context within which radio has to once again demonstrate its ability to adapt.

Even though it was not the area with the most variables, technological factors show the highest number of coincidences in the results on both impact and uncertainty.

5. Conclusions

The opinions collected by this study have enabled us to provide answers on the variables around which the future of radio in Catalonia will revolve in 2030. Players and the environments of interest may use this information according to their objectives.

Taking the results of both tables together, the transformations caused by digitalisation in the value chain are the factors that may most deeply shape the scenarios for radio. This first affects the production of the broadcasters, as they will have to determine how to make the unquestionable advantages of the technological advances compatible with the professionals on staff today. It also affects the distribution of their products, given that until now, operators could manage the radio signal themselves (broadcast centres) or they could use the services of companies that do not seek to exploit the signal for their benefit (carriers like Cellnex and Axion), and FM receivers are cheap and ubiquitous. All this could worsen the access conditions and costs that could be charged to broadcasters to be on the digital audio distribution channels and smart voice recognition devices, and even to guarantee their presence in cars. Finally, this

digital transformation affects consumption with an empowered audience and an exponential increase in competition, given that as an information or entertainment product, sound is no longer exclusive to radio broadcasters. However, digital transformation provides both threats and opportunities: improved audience studies, optimisation of production tasks thanks to artificial intelligence and the multiplication of the broadcasters' channels stand out as positive factors in the business and management model.

According to the results of the surveys, the audience and advertising concentration trend in groups and stations will continue in response to the effect of radio's loss of importance in the advertising market in favour of the digital market, paradoxically despite the improvement in audiences, with all that entails for both the optimisation of the production of sound contents tailored to the target audiences and the improvement in the return demand (metrics) by the advertising market.

The ageing of the population and the transformations caused by immigration are the main factors in impact and uncertainty in the social sphere. Throughout its history, radio has been able to connect with an ever-changing audience, but it is now facing a twofold challenge: while it is adjusting its contents to the listening habits and preferences of a demographic pyramid that is ageing and remains loyal to it (with news and entertainment contents on general radio stations and more talk radio or adult music, or oldies, on music stations), it is not reaching younger audiences (who tend towards digital mobile consumption and the creation of communities away from the radio). On the other hand, the coincidence in the high impact of the population growth of newcomers from other cultures (who now account for one-fifth of the population) coupled with the high uncertainty that comes with it is a symptom of the lack of strategies to address this.

Legislative and regulatory intervention, in the respondents' opinion, may occupy a core role as a factor not because of its ability to shape radio (as it has done in the history of this market) but as a threat or defence and protection against some of the prominent variables in impact and uncertainty. This will depend on the decisions taken. The future of FM broadcasts (like spectrum band, household and car receivers) and the question about the development of DAB+ (without interest

from the private sector and with some recent initiatives in the public sector) generate both uncertainty and a prediction of impact, and it is up to lawmakers or regulators to set the conditions to secure it. Something similar occurs with the competition from digital platforms, which are not subject to the same regime of content obligations as radio broadcasters. Also worth highlighting are the consequences of the worsening of the economic conditions of the rights to use repertoires and the loss of football broadcasting rights, two core areas on the general radio stations' lineups which may ultimately be subject to what is determined by the regulatory provisions. Likewise, the complementarity or competition between the public and private sectors and the destination of the public administration's funds within the system as a whole are prominent regulatory and public-intervention factors in the system.

Radio's continued recognition for its reliability and advertising efficacy should also be noted. In a context in which competition for audience time and attention and advertising market share is increasing, radio will continue to be a safe bet, albeit with a gradual decrease in its audience and advertising share, which is shifting towards digital media.

These conclusions are a sample of how exploiting these data using the Intuitive-Logics participatory methodology may be useful, and this is why the complete results organised by impact have been included in the annexe.

From here forward, two pathways are possible: one, which should enable the scenarios to be sketched following the scenario planning methodology, and the other, which entails setting priorities based on these results: the organisation of the variables according to impact and uncertainty are a fairly clear indicator for strategies in the present—for both the players and the spheres of interests—to guide the probable ones, and of those, the desirable ones, among possible futures.

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Annexe

We believe it is valuable to offer the results of all the statements on the variables organised according to their level of impact while indicating their degree of uncertainty. These data can provide guidance on what is predicted not to have a relevant effect and may be useful for both the players and their spheres of interest. The variables have been organised from the highest to the lowest impact, regardless of the level of uncertainty.

	Variables	Impact	Uncertainty
V	FM receivers will disappear in cars.	8.5	5.5
AY	Artificial intelligence tools will optimise data management (on the audience and the advertising market).	8.3	3.9
X	Radio's audio products will lose prominence in vehicles, which are increasingly connected, in favour of online audio services.	8.2	4.6
AC	Loss of penetration among younger audiences.	8.1	4.5
H	Digital listening alternatives will lead to the digital switchover.	7.9	5.8
AG	The audience will increase its ability to choose and consume and interactivity.	7.9	3.9
AX	Artificial intelligence tools will optimise the production of radio contents.	7.9	4.4
AB	Radio's penetration will decrease among the total audience.	7.7	5.4
B	Immigration and cultural diversity will increase.	7.7	4.4
W	FM tuning on household receivers and mobile telephones will disappear.	7.7	5.3
AF	Radio will lose share in the advertising market.	7.7	4.7
T	The use of voice recognition devices beyond personal assistants will increase.	7.7	4.7
AU	Radio will witness improvements in audience studies, both quantitatively and qualitatively, which will include all digital consumption, both scheduled and after-the-fact.	7.6	4.4
BE	Radio will lose its rights to broadcast football, as has happened with TV stations.	7.6	5.6
BH	Digital native players (podcasting platforms, streaming music services, audio book platforms) will expand their catalogues to include live audio contents.	7.5	4.3
Y	Companies owning personal voice assistants and mobile telephones will worsen the conditions to distribute radio companies' signals.	7.5	5.6
BC	The conditions for using the repertoire of copyright organisations will worsen (due to cost and restrictions on the possibility of use).	7.5	5.4
BA	The increase in online radio consumption and podcasts will lead to less interest in new FM licenses and the purchase of existing licenses.	7.4	4.5
E	Future generations will live worse than their parents (climate crisis, wars, etc.).	7.4	5.0
A	The population will age.	7.4	4.0
BL	The social media, Big Tech, etc., will be competitors for sports broadcasters.	7.4	4.9
AL	Production costs will decrease.	7.3	4.7
BF	Radio will lose advertising share in favour of digital media.	7.3	4.8
BG	Radio will maintain credibility and acknowledgement of its efficacy among direct advertisers.	7.3	4.1
BT	The conditions for broadcasting advertising will be limited for public radio.	7.3	5.3
BI	New players (Big Tech, TikTok, X[Twitter], etc.) will increase their production of live audio contents.	7.2	5.0
U	Users will prefer to consume audio accompanied by video.	7.2	5.3
BD	The decision-making and influencing power of media clearinghouses will increase.	7.2	5.6
BS	Advertising will disappear from public radio.	7.1	5.9
Z	Higher development of hybrid radio (combination of contents distributed two ways, radio spectrum and Internet, on the same device).	7.1	4.6
AO	Radio companies will have difficulties transforming the work routines of existing staff to the new digital environment.	7.1	4.8
P	The obligation to develop DAB+ or an equivalent replacement standard will be imposed.	7.1	5.7
L	The possibility of exploiting licenses of municipal and CCMA stations will become more flexible, allowing private operators to exploit them.	7.1	6.0
M	Public subsidies for public radio activities will increase.	7.1	5.0
AR	Radio stations and broadcasters will tend to join local, Catalan or statewide multimedia groups.	7.1	4.8
BK	There will be large-scale production of sound contents to be consumed as podcasts.	7.0	4.3
AD	Increase in the importance of the CCMA in competition with radio audiences.	7.0	5.4
BB	Ground signal distribution costs for FM waves will increase substantially.	7.0	5.5
F	Economic crises will recur more often.	6.9	5.8
K	A new Technical Plan will be approved with an increase in private licenses.	6.9	6.1
AA	DAB+ will develop because of its presence in cars.	6.9	5.3

AH	There will be an increase in audience and advertising concentration in groups and stations, both Catalan and statewide.	6.9	4.7
AT	Radios will multiply their supply on segmented audio channels thanks to the Internet.	6.9	4.6
AV	The value of radio and its editorial responsibility compared to digital platforms will be acknowledged due to its contribution to combatting fake news.	6.9	4.6
J	The conditions for licenses in the private sector will worsen (limitation on their length; limitations on syndicated broadcasting, on transfers; new obligations regarding contents; more advertising limitations, etc.).	6.9	5.8
I	The conditions for managing municipal broadcasters will worsen (stricter obligations regarding content, management models, etc.).	6.8	5.6
AZ	Artificial intelligence will increase competition for audience listening time with new automated sound content operators.	6.8	5.2
.BR	The CCMA's TV and digital channels will increase competition for the local and Catalan radio advertising market.	6.8	4.5
.AJ	The digital audio products of radio companies will earn profits.	6.8	5.5
O	Editorial obligations will be imposed similar to those of FM stations for large tech operators that distribute audio (Spotify, Amazon, Google, etc.).	6.7	6.1
AN	Radio companies will have difficulties hiring new professionals who are prepared for the new digital environment.	6.7	4.9
AW	Public radio will generate relevant contents to attract children and young people as radio audiences.	6.7	4.8
AP	Private state stations will increase their presence in Catalonia.	6.6	5.8
C	People's amount of free time will increase.	6.6	5.5
N	Public subsidies for private radio activity will increase.	6.6	5.8
D	Commuting time will increase.	6.5	5.1
BJ	Traditional players (TV, press, etc.) will boost their production of live audio contents.	6.5	4.5
AQ	The number of independent private broadcasters will decrease in favour of affiliation with Catalan or state stations.	6.5	5.4
AS	Music will have less importance in thematic radio programming, replaced by talk radio targeted at younger audience segments.	6.5	5.1
AM	Local production will decrease at the expense of station production.	6.4	4.4
AI	Income from paid audiences will be significant (more than 20%)	6.3	5.8
S	The private radio sector will be obligated to contribute to media literacy	6.2	5.7
BV	Competition from illegal broadcasters will increase	6.2	5.3
Q	The CAC will have increased competences at the expense of the Catalan government's competences	6.1	5.6
BM	A new general private station will be launched	6.1	6.4
G	People will have more disposable income to spend on leisure and entertainment	5.9	5.2
AK	Radio stars will be less crucial in achieving companies' audience and advertisement targets	5.9	5.8
R	The public radio sector will be obligated to contribute to media literacy	5.9	5.3
BO	Local public radio will increase its jointly-broadcast programming	5.9	4.5
BN	A new music station will be launched	5.4	5.9
BP	The XAL will increase shared sound contents and its role in the radio market	5.3	4.1
BU	The third sector will be definitively regulated	5.3	5.4
AE	Local public media will increase competition for audiences	5.0	5.0
BQ	Local TV will increase the competition for the local and Catalan radio advertising markets	4.8	5.0
	Average	6.9	5.1

Women on the radio 100 years on

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Abstract

The article shows the important presence of women in Catalan radio one hundred years after its birth. Using a quantitative methodology, the trend of females in the sector has been traced. A notable presence of female directors has been discovered in Catalan generalist radio (12 women directing non-local radio stations), with RAC1 standing out. An important quantitative change has been detected in the technical department. At Ràdio 4 there are currently 5 women working as sound technicians, while at Catalunya Ràdio there are 6 distributed between central control technicians, studio technicians and outdoor technicians. Most women who work in generalist radio do so as writers. The evolution in the first hundred years of radio in Catalonia shows that, despite having a significant presence, women have never had the same relevance as men within this medium.

Keywords

Women, generalist radio, female announcers, journalists, radio in Catalonia.

Resum

L'article evidencia la presència important de dones a la ràdio catalana cent anys després del naixement del mitjà. A partir d'una metodologia quantitativa, s'ha rastrejat la tendència femenina al sector. S'ha descobert una presència remarcable de dones directives a la ràdio generalista catalana (12 dones dirigint ràdios no locals) destacant-ne RAC1. Es detecta un canvi quantitatiu important al departament tècnic. Així, a Ràdio 4 hi ha actualment 5 dones exercint de tècniques de so, mentre que a Catalunya Ràdio n'hi ha 6 de distribuïdes com a tècniques de control central, tècniques d'estudi i tècniques d'exterior. La majoria de les dones que treballen a la ràdio generalista ho fan com a redactores. L'evolució en els primers cents anys de la ràdio a Catalunya posa en evidència que malgrat tenir una presència significativa, les dones no han tingut mai la mateixa rellevància que els homes dins d'aquest mitjà.

Paraules clau

Dones, ràdio generalista, locutores, periodistes, ràdio a Catalunya.

1. Introduction

The last radio announcer in Catalonia from the Republic, Maria Tera,¹ explained in an interview that the radio station of her time had a healthy female contingent. The argument can be placed into some context because before the Spanish Civil War there were 22 women working in the 11 professional radio stations that could be heard in Catalonia. There were not just

female announcers, but also female artists, administrators and translators.

Both male and female announcers did a perfectly defined job: they played and presented records, read advertisements, announced artists, lecturers, musicians and poetry readers and presented programmes that we would now term as being segmented by target audience. The female announcers handled the women's programmes and the male announcers handled

the more sports-based programmes and the stock market news, and both male and female announcers read stories and shared the slot dedicated to children. Neither group wrote the texts they delivered on air. That was not their job. It was their job to read them with perfect diction, in any language, breathing life into the scripts (Pérez Pujol, 1936).

This distribution of roles worked both in the initial programming ideas, designed for a small wealthy audience (1920s), and also when radio grew in the number of stations and in broadcast hours (1931, 2nd Republic) and became more popular. Announcers gained prominence after the Spanish Civil War and during the Franco dictatorship and it would not be until the Transition to Democracy that female journalists again have a presence as active and independent subjects on the airwaves.²

The history of women and radio is not, however, a history of feminism (Espinosa, 2020). It would become more like that following the appearance of independent radio stations that dealt with topics with a marked gender perspective, or the most current podcasts with a feminist perspective, such as *Deforme Semanal*, *Estirando el chicle* or, in a different tone, *Sangre Fucsia*, among others.

The ongoing and erroneous idea that women in radio were historically in the background aligned with Karpf's idea (1987) that men occupy the public spheres and women occupy the private spheres. But it turns out that when in 1926 the women at Ràdio Barcelona opened the microphones to the female listeners, they showed that they not only have weight in the public sphere but that they flipped over the passivity that was expected from the audience (who only listened to the messages) and converted radio into a two-way medium. Therefore, radio has been and remains a medium where female voices have broken the dominant trends. For Chambers, Steiner and Fleming (2004), radio helped women to challenge male or patriarchal prevalence.

Where women have had the least presence in these 100 years of radio has been in management at the highest level, as has occurred in most economic areas. The report by the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia) on gender perspective in the management of Catalan companies (2024) shows that women hold only 20% of management positions in Catalan companies.

That is why it makes sense to highlight the way the roles of women in this medium have grown and been shaped in order to understand the current weight of women in radio.³

2. Chronology of women in Catalan generalist radio

2.1 The early years

The first women who worked in radio did so before radio had started broadcasting. They were secretaries, translators and stenographers who took care of the magazines that would first introduce the radio medium, and then reveal the secrets and facial features of the voices that would be heard over the air. "In

this regard, the pioneers Maria Queralt, general secretary of Radio Barcelona, and Maria Sabaté, the first female EAJ-1 official and secretary to director Sánchez Cordovés in the 1920s, stand out at Radio Barcelona; while at Ràdio Associació de Catalunya, two administrative staff members were imprisoned in 1939: Rosa Trias and Teresa Elias" (Espinosa-Mirabet, 2020, p.22).

The female audience was one of the first segments of listeners to get hooked on the *medium* since the sparse, musical and cultured programming of Ràdio Barcelona and Radio Catalana during the 1920s had lunchtime and evening schedules (they coincided with mealtimes and it was the women who were at home). For this reason, the proliferation of female programmes presented by female announcers "sent messages to women and therefore, and to a certain extent, influenced the construction, projection and circulation of different gender roles in each historical context" (Pérez Martínez, 2016, p. 36). This programme included advice and choral programmes, of various nature and formats, offered by young female announcers who broke the monotony of the conferences of the early years.

Announcing artists or music was the job of announcers who presented content and advertising, both from the station and also "facing the public". They made broadcasts of inaugurations or special programmes from theatres, thus achieving the popularisation of the *medium* and income through sponsorships.

"In 1932, Bayer sponsored the broadcasts of the 'Concurs Infantil de Ràdio Associació' (Children's Contest). The advertising department was also the architect of the creation of programmes such as those put on air by Francina Boris and Teodor Garriga, travelling with the broadcaster's Mobile Unit through different towns in Catalonia to interview their authorities. This programme was not motivated by an informative or journalistic desire, but had a carefully designed commercial purpose" (Espinosa, 2008, p. 261).

Of the 22 female professional announcers who worked in different Catalan towns up until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Maria Cinta Balagué, the first female radio announcer in Spain, stands out. She headed the women's broadcasts of Ràdio Barcelona with the women's literature programme called *Sección Literaria Femenina* in 1926. At the same station, in the 1930s, one could also find Maria Carme Nicolau, the only female journalist who worked on the radio in those years as part of the Catalan edition of the news programme *La Paraula* (Balsebre, 2010), and Rosalia Rovira, the announcer who debuted the broadcasts on Ràdio Associació de Catalunya.⁴

2.2 The Spanish Civil War and the post-war period

During the Spanish Civil War, female radio announcers from both Ràdio Barcelona and Ràdio Associació travelled in turns to the Palau de la Generalitat to read out government announcements (propaganda).

After the conflict, many of the female announcers suffered repression, prison and exile, and some were forced to change jobs as punishment. In some cases, they were able to return to broadcasting under the new regime and reach retirement from

a career in radio, but in many others, they were not. They went from being announcers to being managers of discotheques, which is what happened to Antolina Boda, of the new Radio Tarrasa, for a while. Others were forced to be secretaries, such as Francina Boris at the recently reconverted Radio España de Barcelona (she returned to presenting on Radio España de Gerona) or others, such as Maria Carme Nicolau, who after their exile became not announcers, but scriptwriters. One of the most egregious cases of repression was that of Rosalia Rovira, who after coming out of prison was never able to work again in any media outlet.

Neither women nor the Catalan language would play a prominent role on the radio again until many years later. Once the new regime has been installed and the former personnel of the broadcasters are purged, a new stage began that was marked by strict control of content, heavy censorship and *El Parte*. There was a male slant to the medium and the new female announcers were relegated to a decorative role, except in female programming. They were responsible for presenting and supporting the announcer-presenter of the programmes in charity shows, programmes with a live audience or contests, reading out commercials and call signs and telling the time (Altés, 2020).

After the military announcers and the early female announcers linked to some of the new political leaders, competitive exams were called and new professional female voices appeared. On Radio Barcelona and Radio España de Barcelona, there was success for Enriqueta Teixidó, Pilar Montero, Mercè Carbonell, Mercedes Laspra (the voice of *Consultorio de Doña Montserrat Fortuny*), Carmen Brito and María Dolores Tejedo.

During the 1950s, they were responsible for presenting –not writing– the legendary women's advice programmes. These shows promoted the Franco regime's ideology, based on such innocent topics as beauty tips, home and family, fashion, or childcare (Pérez Martínez, 2016).

According to Altés (2020), in the 1950s there was a notable presence of female scriptwriters, such as Cecília A. Mantua, who gained prominence by writing radio dramas, which were very popular with the audience. Women also took on responsibilities linked to the administration of the radio stations.

The regime awarded new radio licences to people close to the regime and to the Church, and this led to the birth of the Red de Emisoras del Movimiento (REM), Cadena de Emisoras Sindicales (CES) and Cadena Azul de Radiodifusión (CAR).

2.3 From the 1960s to the Transition

The 1960s were characterised by “desarrollismo” (a focus on development) and an apparent openness and modernisation of Francoist society. At that time, women were the main audience for radio (Pérez Martínez, 2016) and the *Consultorio de la Mujer Elena Francis* was one of the star programmes. Its origin goes back to Radio Barcelona and its first scriptwriter was Ángela Castells, responsible for the broadcast of the Women's Section of the Falange. The first voice of the fictional character

of Elena Francis in 1962 was that of Maruja Fernández. Initially the show was designed to sell beauty products from the *Instituto de Belleza Elena Francis* (Pérez Martínez, 2016). It ended up being a showcase for the indoctrination of women towards the Catholic nationalist mentality of the regime.

In the 1960s, some Catalan female announcers once again played a leading role on the air, but always in a programming sphere based around accompaniment and emotional entertainment. Notable among these were the successful programmes by María Matilde Almendros on Radio Nacional de España, Odette Pinto on Radio España de Barcelona and Encarna Sánchez on COPE.

By the end of the decade, the programming was still full of serials, but radio drama had lost importance because of the rise of television (Altés, 2016). The 1966 Fraga Law eliminated prior censorship of content and the programming was hollowed out.

The Transition saw the creation of Ràdio 4 (1976), the territorial channel of RNE. It started broadcasts to explain the reality of the country in Catalan. There was a young team with many female journalists, such as Montserrat Minobis, or announcers such as Cèlia Motis, famous for being the witch on the programme *Jovenívol*.

1977 saw the end of the news monopoly of Radio Nacional de España and radio stations could now produce their own newscasts (Balsebre, 2002), so they would no longer have to broadcast *El Parte*, the spoken news magazine of RNE. Consequently, it was necessary to hire University-trained journalists to organise the newsrooms. Journalists would now write, not just announce, as had been the case previously.

Radio Juventud de Barcelona was set up in 1970 and served as a “radio school for an entire generation”. It was a CAR that had numerous women making programmes. Elisenda Roca started out there. Maribel Álvarez also worked there, making *Punto y aparte*, a programme that was broadcast on weekends and mornings that was on air until 1977, or Inés Mir, who made an afternoon programme entitled *Colorín-colorado*. These were not isolated cases.

At this time, some female announcers also took on the hosting and the direction of the programmes, especially on Ràdio 4, in addition to acting as editors on them (Altés, 2020). Others start working on news magazines, but there was still a lot of programming with a rather traditional air in which women perpetuated patriarchal stereotypes. On late-night shows, for example, female announcers recreated clichés linked to sensuality when they introduced music. However, the 1970s and 1980s were also characterised by the appearance of a feminist radio that advocated laws for gender equality (Altés, 2020).

Radio news reports explained reality through a social lens. It was new content, in a new media landscape that could incorporate a woman as head of the news department at Radio Barcelona: Mari Cruz Hernández Alvarino directed the newsroom between 1976 and 1978 (Balsebre, 2002).

The 1980s was important due to the appearance of many local stations, some new radio channels and for the birth of Catalunya Ràdio, “the national radio of Catalonia” (1983), thus responding to a political need of the Pujol Government and to a social demand (Vidal, 2024). Women were not greatly represented; some of the pioneers were Adelina Castillejo, Carme Anglada or Eva Algarra, the first female correspondent.

Local broadcasters were in the vanguard when it came to the hiring of female directors. This is a trend that is still ongoing (Altés, 2020).

Cadena 13 was created on 12 December 1983, bringing together 13 radio stations from different parts of Catalonia, with the aim of creating a commercial private radio channel in Catalan. They wanted to compete with Ràdio 4 and Catalunya Ràdio, and for this reason they opted for generalist programming. Cadena 13 had a brief existence (7 years) and featured an important team of women, notably the journalist Marta Balletbó or the comedian Mary Santpere.

In the 1980s, the presence of Catalan journalists occupying significant roles in state broadcasters stands out. For example, Concha García Campoy at RNE directed the programme *Las mañanas de Radio 1* (1986) and, later at SER, she created the magazine *A vivir que son dos días*, which was directed a few seasons later by the journalist Àngels Barceló before she took up the management of *Hora 25* (Espinosa, 2020), becoming its first director.

Ona Catalana was born in 2000, a new attempt to create a commercial radio channel in Catalan. It had premiered in 1998 in the province of Girona and went on to have stations in Andorra. In 2005, it was acquired by PRISA group, leading to the creation of ONA FM. In 2012, the broadcasters ended up forming SER Catalunya. Some of the female voices on these stations were Rita Marzoa, Neus Bonet and even Pilar Rahola hosted an interview programme there.

2.4 Women on today's generalist radio

From 2012, two women, the journalists Pepa Bueno and Gemma Nierga,⁵ ran the radio show with the largest audience in Spain, *Hoy por Hoy*, currently hosted by Àngels Barceló.

At Catalunya Ràdio, Mònica Terribas was in charge of the morning show for 7 years (2013-2020) and Laura Rosel took over the primetime show in 2020-2023.

In Catalonia, in the 2018-2019 season women occupied only 36% of airtime and directed and presented only 30% of sports, entertainment and news programmes, according to a study by Xavier Solà (Niqui Espinosa and Segarra Moreno, 2021). The research showed that Ràdio 4 was the station that came closest to parity, while RAC1 was the one that had the lowest female presence.

A report by the Sindicat de Periodistes de Catalunya (SPC, 2022) to take a snapshot of the staff recognises wage differences between genders and in publicly and privately owned companies, the latter having comparatively lower salaries. «All the media outlets, except one (which has one underway), claim

to have an equality plan. While most of them consider the issue of gender to be important, there are those who qualify that it is ‘important, but not primary’, ‘there is the will and the real facts’, or ‘it depends on the type of programme’» (SPC, 2022, p.14). This trend is corroborated by the data from the *Informe anual de la profesión periodística* (Annual report on the journalism profession) (2022):

“[...] But as one moves up the professional ladder (editors-in-chief, deputy editors, news directors, etc.), the balance disappears and these positions are mostly occupied by men” (*Informe anual de la profesión periodística*, 2022, p. 11).

The data also state that the majority (60%) of journalism graduates are women (between 2011 and 2017), but that they are still only responsible for 20% of the sources of published news (Vargas in CSW68, 2024). Female journalists lose their jobs more often than male journalists do.

In Spain, on average, around a thousand more female journalists graduate (Orús, 2020). According to the Col·legi de Periodistes (Association of Journalists), in Catalonia there are 2,400 female journalists.

In today's *audified* society (Ormaechea, 2024), most listeners wear headphones for a large part of the day. There is surely a cause and effect with the fact that radio consumption is remaining fairly stable (EGM, 2023). We know from the same source that the current female listeners of generalist radio in Catalonia represent 51.8% of the audience. Most of them are married, university-educated, working women, aged between 45 and 54, and with a high average income.

3. Objectives and methodology

The principal objective (PO) of this work is to be able to ascertain the presence and role of women who work in Catalan generalist radio broadcasters, 100 years after the birth of the medium. The aim is to make an initial approach to the subject being studied, in order to understand to what extent female participation has varied in non-specialised radio broadcasts, with Catalan territorial coverage. Thus the secondary objectives (SO) are:

- SO 1: Identify the female executives at Catalan radio stations.
- SO 2: Determine the female directors of programmes.
- SO 3: Count the women who are part of the programmes' staff.
- SO 4: Highlight the women working in technical departments.

To achieve this, 158 radio programmes from the selected stations were analysed, making a content analysis based on the websites, during the week in question of 17-23 February (table 1). In addition, talks were held with editors, managers or journalists (10 people) from the stations under study to verify or expand the information that was available. The duration of prime time programmes conditions the volume of shows in

Table 1. Generalist broadcasters and radio programmes analysed in this study

Broadcaster	Media group	Number of programmes analysed
RAC1	Grup Godó	16
Catalunya Ràdio	CCMA	34
SER Catalunya	PRISA RADIO	39
Onda Cero Catalunya	Atresmedia Radio	19
COPE Catalunya	Ábside Media	19
Ràdio 4	RTVE	31
Total programmes analysed		158

Source: Own work.

the programming. The disparity in the number of programmes analysed lies in the fact that the reruns of the programmes have not been included (which are particularly numerous at the weekend in some channels, as is the case of RAC1) and that only those programmes produced in Catalonia have been considered (at SER Catalunya there is a lot of local short-duration offerings).

To ensure the analysis goes more in-depth, two programmes have been randomly selected from each channel: one news programme and the other an entertainment or sports programme. The purpose of this selection has been to study the composition and tasks of the members of the teams,⁶ thus allowing the role of women to be determined as directors, editors, scriptwriters, producers or sound technicians.

4. Presence of women on the radio 100 years on: roles and profiles

4.1. Female executives (SO1)

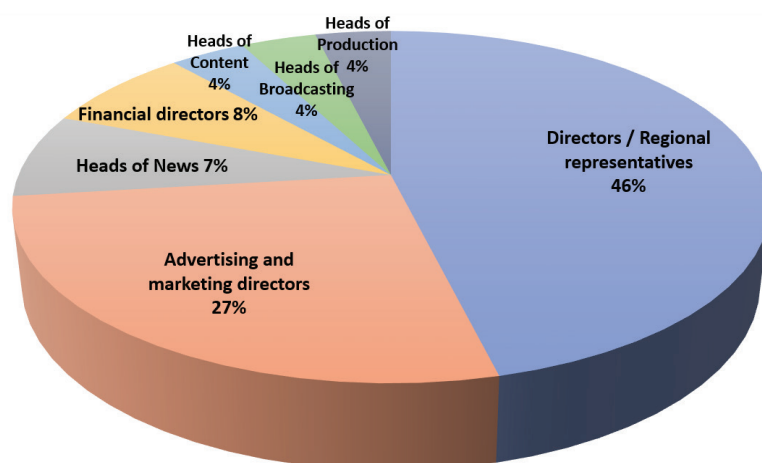
Responding to Secondary Objective 1, this research has been able to determine the women in managerial positions who work in the companies under study. Directors of broadcasters or

regional representatives and women occupying high positions in commercial, administrative or financial departments have been identified (table 2).

Table 2. Managerial positions of women in the studied broadcasters

Position	Number of female executives
Regional representatives / radio station director	12*
Managers / sales, advertising and/or marketing directors	7**
Manager / Head of News	2
Administration / financial director	2
Head of Content	1
Head of Broadcasting	1
Head of Production	1

Source: Own work. *RAC1 has a deputy station director, a position held by a woman. **RAC1 has a director with a deputy director in this area, both held by women.

Figure 1. Female managerial positions

Source: Own work.

RAC1, for the first time in its history, has a female director, Eulàlia Carbonell, who took up the position in April 2023. She has a female assistant director, Georgina Colom, a female administration manager, Elisabeth Sabanés, and two women heading the marketing area, Emma Martínez and Ana Amat. This means the management of the leading broadcaster in terms of audience is made up of 8 men and 5 women. Never before has the station had so many women on its staff.

Figure 1 shows the very high volume of women working in management positions.⁷ This is an unusual fact, not comparable in volume to men, but if we look at the historical chronology of the medium, 2024 marks an important qualitative difference. The data also show that, unlike RAC1, which has a significant female presence in the management of the head office, in the rest of the stations, female executives are not directors of their companies' headquarters, but rather are regional representatives or executives in financial or marketing departments, who always report to a male general manager.

The channels that work on local news with stable branch offices and regional stations that include teams (of very different sizes) of journalists and staff in the administration and sales area in 2024 are as follows: SER Catalunya, Catalunya Ràdio, Ràdio 4 and, to a lesser extent and with local programming only in Lleida,⁸ Onda Cero and COPE. While COPE does not have any women working in Lleida, Onda Cero does. In this regard, Núria Mora stands out, who presents and directs the daily magazine *La ciutat Lleida*. Mora also works as the representative of Onda Cero in the region.

The female representation of these two stations on tasks linked to central sales or administrative management is significant. The Advertising director of COPE in Catalonia and Cadena 100 is Cristina Montori. At Onda Cero, the sales manager is Ana Rotes.

At SER Catalunya there are female station directors in the three Catalan constituencies. Until 2024, this had never happened before. They are Carme Martínez, director of Ràdio Girona, Míriam Lorca, director of Ràdio Reus-Tarragona and Núria Camps, director of Ràdio Lleida. At this station, there is also another managerial profile that is not found in the other stations of the group outside Barcelona: the figure of head of Content, which is filled by the journalist Mercè March. The territorial director of SER Catalunya, however, is a man, as is the position of head of Content for Catalonia. Where the maximum responsibility falls on a woman is in the News division. The journalist Mònica Peinado is the head of News at SER Catalunya. Another noteworthy fact of this broadcaster is the incorporation of female professionals in management and executive tasks: Carolina Pérez, sales director of SER Catalunya; Laia Balastegui, marketing director of PRISA Media Catalunya; Maria Jesús Campoy, financial director of SER Catalunya, and Bàrbara Aspas, project manager of the Ràdio Barcelona Centenary.

At Ràdio 4, the presence of women is much higher than that of men in occupations where decisions are made about content. Its regional representatives are all women, including the head

of News for Barcelona-Catalonia, Sonia Urbano. At Ràdio 4, in Girona they have Gemma Esteba; in Lleida, Pepa Sangerís, and in Tarragona, Pilar Ribas. It should be noted that these journalists, who are representatives of Ràdio 4 in the regions, hold dual positions and are responsible for the radio and the RTVE television representation in their territory. Out of the broadcasters being researched, Ràdio 4 is, also in terms of management, the channel with the most female executives.

At Catalunya Ràdio, regional management have moved from single management (Catalunya Ràdio and TV3) to an independent governance model, both for the regional offices and the newsrooms. It is worth saying that in the integrated model of the CCMA there was always the figure of the representative and the deputy representative who shared out the management of television and radio respectively. Currently, Catalunya Ràdio has two female journalists holding the positions of representatives of the stations in Girona, Clara Jordán, and in Lleida, Noèlia Casellas, with the latter also being the station's representative for the Aran Valley. In these two demarcations, the representatives of TV3 are also female journalists: Mercè Sibina in Girona and Teresa Macià in Lleida. At the head office, in Barcelona, the following stand out in major managerial positions: Laura Marín, head of Broadcasting, Montse Ollé, head of Production, and Neus Comellas, Sales director.

Not all the stations studied have regional offices or local stations where content is produced. RAC1 maintains sales teams, but content production is performed from the head office in Barcelona or with correspondents. This is the case of RAC1 in Girona, with the journalist Bàrbara Julbe, the only female correspondent in Catalonia, according to the data published by the radio company itself.

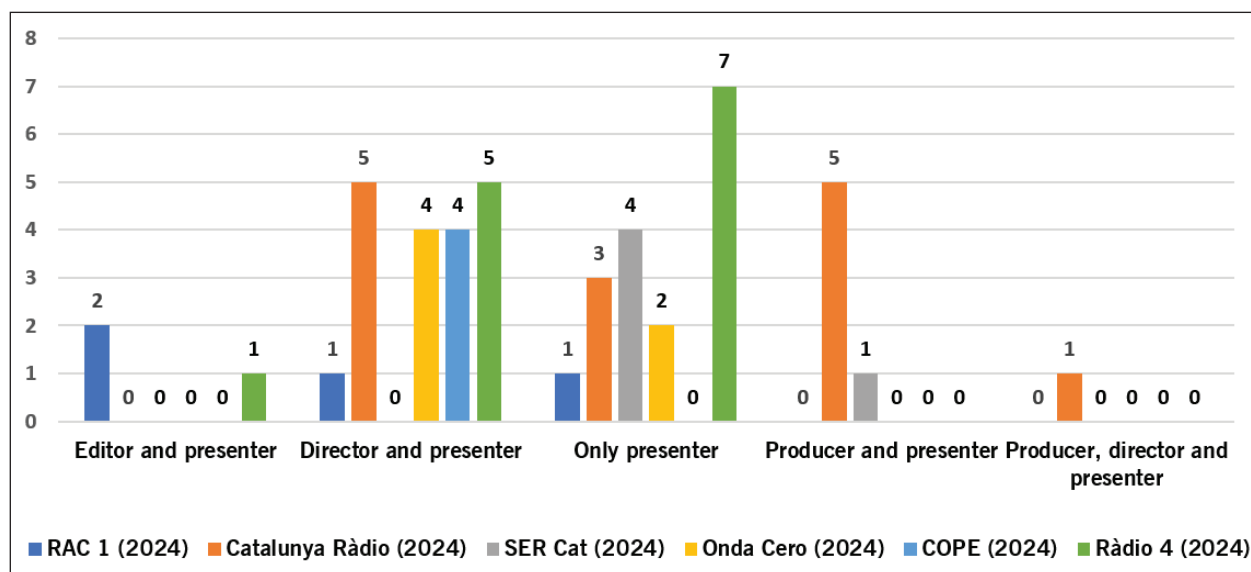
4.2 Female programme directors or editors (S02)

One of the prominent roles of female journalists at generalist stations is that of programme presenter. However, the analysis of the 158 programmes broadcast in the week in question by all the radio stations in the sample, shows that the majority of them are presented by men. The function of directing and presenting the same programme often falls to the same person (figure 2). The study also shows how common co-presentations are. Women present only 29.11% of programmes.

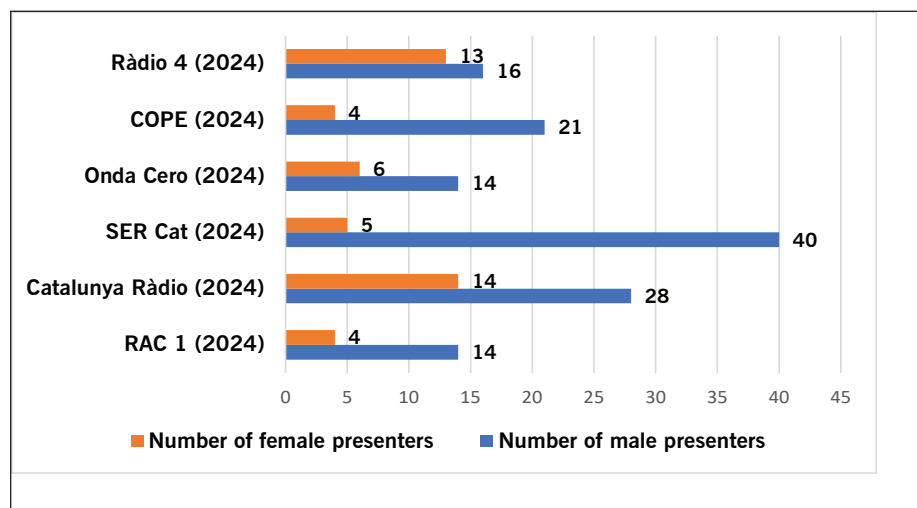
The following women stand out in RAC1: Núria Travesa, presenter of the lunchtime programme *RAC1 Migdia*; Anna Vallhonestà, editor and presenter of *No ho sé*; Noemí Polls, editor and presenter of *La primera pedra*; and Esther Muñoz, director and presenter of the programme *Viatja bé*.

Catalunya Ràdio features, among others, Neus Bonet and Maria Guixà, with the weekend lunchtime news programme *Catalunya migdia cap de setmana*; Sílvia Còppulo, with *El divan*; Xantal Llavina, with *Revolució 4.0*; and Sònia Gelmà, co-presenter of the sports news programme *Tot costa*.

At SER, Mara Torres, with *El faro*;⁹ Àngels Barceló, with *Hoy por Hoy*; Anna Puigbolas, with *El balcó* (at SER Catalunya), and Pepa Blanes, with *El cine en la SER*.

Figure 2. Roles assumed by the female presenters of programmes at generalist broadcasters

Source: Own work.

Figure 3. Proportion of female and male presenters in the 158 programmes on generalist broadcasters

Source: Own work.

Onda Cero (Catalonia) features Míriam Franch, with *La Ciutat*, and Ariadna Belver, with *Lideratges*, while Elena Gijón, with *Notícies Mediodía*, and Julia Otero, with *Julia en la onda*, lead programmes with coverage all over Spain.

On the other hand, at COPE, the following women direct programmes: Pilar García Muñoz, with *Mediodía COPE*; Pilar Cisneros, with *La Tarde*; Irene Pozo, with *La Linterna de la Iglesia* - COPE.es; and Cristina López Schlichting, with *Fin de Semana*.

Finally, on Radio 4 Marga Lluch directs *Més que esport*; Pilar Sampietro Colom, *Vida verda*; Rosa de Diego, *Llibres, píxels i valors*; Consol Saenz, *Territori clandestí*; Conxita Casanova, *Va de cine*, and Gemma Nierga, *Cafè d'idees*, both on radio and television.

The data show (figure 3) that in 2024, in SER Catalunya, as well as in RAC1, COPE, Onda Cero and Catalunya Ràdio, the number of male programme presenters far exceeds the number of female presenters. In the case of Ràdio 4, the gender difference in roles is the least disproportionate in the series. The most significant imbalance between men and women presenting/directing/editing programmes is in SER Catalunya and COPE.

By working with the data obtained from the week in question (figure 3) we can see the disproportion between male and female presenters on the various radio stations in 2024.

4.3 Women on the staff of the 12 programmes analysed (S03)

The results obtained from the analysis of the 2 programmes of each radio station studied randomly reveal that in 2024, women have a prominent presence, particularly at public broadcasters. According to the figures, however, in no case does the female presence reach 50% of the total staff.

The resulting panorama illustrates the deep involvement of women in various operational and creative strata within the Catalan radio ecosystem, carrying out everything from presentation tasks to working at the highest levels of decision-making and management within their programme. Nevertheless, the data (table 3) also highlight the fact that the roles with the most women are those of writer, producer and editor/director of their programme.

In detail, at Ràdio 4 and Catalunya Ràdio, women represent 45.45% and 34.88% respectively of the teams that carry out their programming. These two stations have a substantial proportion of the total number of women identified in this study (57.14%). From the count of the 12 programmes analysed in the week in question, the percentages of female and male workers in the companies are deduced (figure 4).

Private broadcasters show a more varied scenario. SER Catalunya registers 41.67%, indicating notable support for female inclusion. However, Onda Cero and RAC1 have lower figures, with 25% of female presence, and COPE, with 23.08%.

A total of 35 women work in the 12 randomly selected programmes (table 5). These professionals mainly occupy writing positions in the newsroom (11 women), which reflects

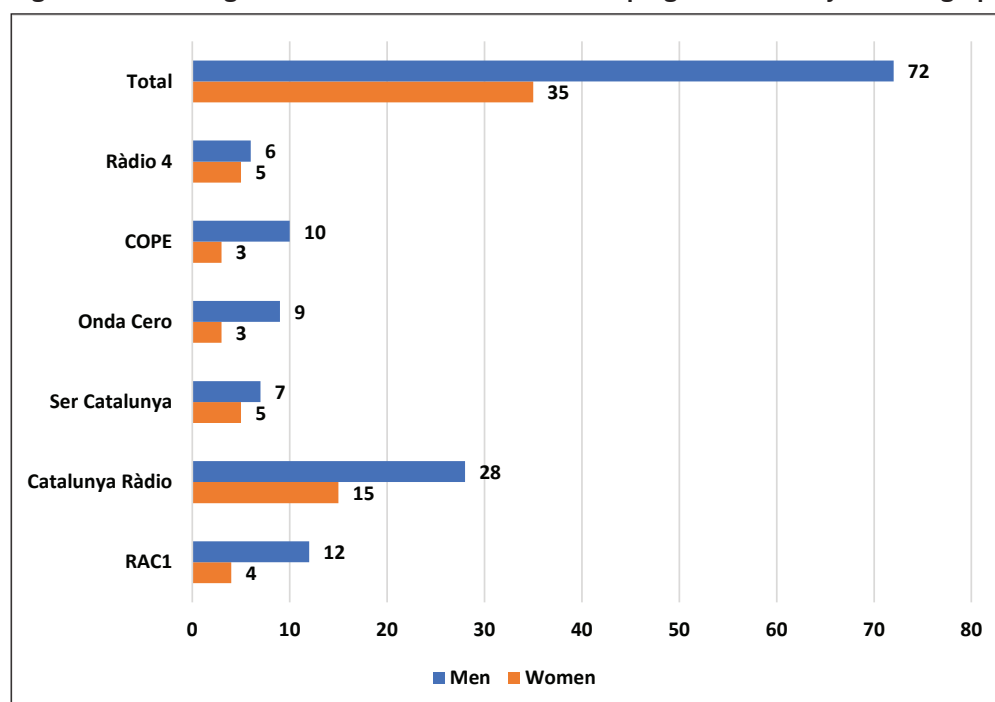
their importance in the creation of content. In addition, they actively participate in production, with a significant presence as scriptwriters, production coordinators, programme directors or handling top-level sports broadcasts, as is the case of Helena Condis at COPE (Barcelona).

Table 3. Jobs held by female journalists from the news and programme teams

Female roles	Number of women
Writer	11
Producer	5
Director / editor	3
Writer and producer	2
Scriptwriter	2
Coordinator and producer	2
Writer / editor / presenter	2
Writer and scriptwriter	1
Presenter and scriptwriter	1
Coordination of regional offices	1
Networks	1
Second presenter	1
Presenter	1
Deputy director	1
Head of production	1
Total	35

Source: Own work.

Figure 4. Percentage of women in the staff of the 12 programmes analysed (bar graph by programme)



Source: Own work.

Table 4. Proportion of staff by gender in the 12 programmes analysed

Broadcasters	Women	Men	Total	Percentage women / men	Percentage of women out of the total
RAC1	4	12	16	33,33%	25,00%
Catalunya Ràdio	15	28	43	53,57%	34,88%
SER Catalunya	5	7	12	71,43%	41,67%
Onda Cero	3	9	12	33,33%	25,00%
COPE	3	10	13	30,00%	23,08%
Ràdio 4	5	6	11	83,33%	45,45%
Total	35	72	107	48,61%	32,71%

Source: Own work.

Table 5. Roles and female presence in generalist Catalan radio in 2024

Name of programme	Women participants	Men participants	Name of women participants	Role of women participants
RAC1				
<i>El món a RAC1</i>	3	9	Marina Arbós	Writer and producer
			Marga Ortuño	Writer and producer
			Montse Girona	Producer
<i>Vostè primer</i>	1	3	Esther Romagosa	Writer
Total	4	12		
Catalunya Ràdio				
<i>El búnquer</i>	2	8	Neus Rosell	Presenter and scriptwriter
			Xènia Vilà	Head of production
<i>El matí de Catalunya Ràdio</i>	13	20	Alba Grifell	Coordination and production
			Gemma Tarragó	Coordination and production
			Marina Romero	Edition
			Roser Perera	Coordination of regional offices
			Herminia Massana	Writer
			Marta Viana	Writer
			Marisa Gil	Writer
			Sílvia Creus	Writer
			Berta Torrades	Scriptwriter
			Tània Tàpia	Scriptwriter
			Vanessa Carrión	Producer
			Sara Llovet	Producer
			Raquel Mateos	Networks
Total	15	28		

Source: Own work.

Table 5. Roles and female presence in generalist Catalan radio in 2024 (continuation)

Name of programme	Women participants	Men participants	Name of women participants	Role of women participants
SER Catalunya				
<i>Tot és comèdia</i>	0	2	-	-
<i>Aquí Catalunya</i>	5	5	Gisela Rodríguez	Second presenter
			Marina Fernández	Writer and editor
			Laura Estrada	Writer and scriptwriter
			Núria Barnils	Production
			Cristina García	Production and advertisement
Total	5	7		
Onda Cero				
<i>Notícies migdia</i>	2	3	Montse Valls	News presenter <i>Más de uno</i> Cataluña and writer
			Anna Utiel	Writer
<i>La ciutat</i>	1	6	Miriam Franch	Presenter and director
Total	3	9		
COPE				
<i>Migdia a COPE Catalunya i Andorra</i>	2	2	Yolanda Canales	Writer
			Mar Puerto	Writer
<i>Esports COPE</i>	1	8	Helena Condis	Writer
Total	3	10		
Ràdio 4				
<i>Cafè d'idees</i>	2	4	Gemma Nierga	Director
			Lorena del Amo	Presenter
<i>Pla B</i>	3	2	Glòria Galiano	Deputy director
			Maria Garcia-Coll	Writer
			Natàlia Sánchez	Writer
Total	5	6		

Source: Own work.

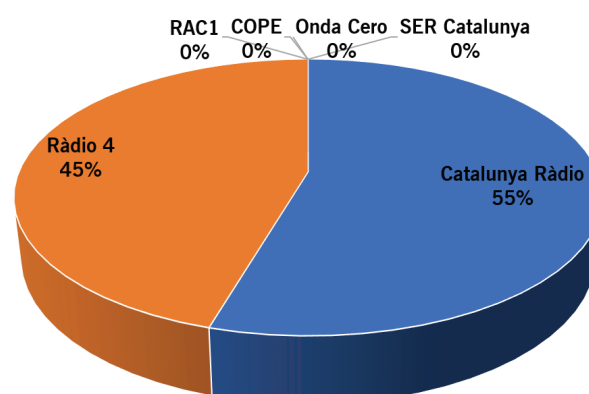
4.4 Female sound technicians (OS4)

According to the sources consulted, the majority of women working as sound technicians at the radio stations being studied do so at the public stations Ràdio 4 and Catalunya Ràdio. At private stations, men carry out this role.

Ràdio 4 currently has five women working as sound technicians, both in news and in programmes: Ester Bages, Adriana Llacay, Irene Moreno, Marta Inglés and Helena Ramos. In fact, women occupying this role is nothing new. Maria Jesús Roman Amezcua worked for many years at the Catalan branch of RNE as a sound producer, until 1992 when she retired. The public station Ràdio 4 has a parity committee within the Works council that looks after, among others, these types of issues.

At the other public broadcaster, Catalunya Ràdio, the technical department is subdivided into 3 areas, and there are women

Figure 5. Women in the technical department



Source: Own work.

Table 6. Women in the technical department

Broadcaster	Women
Catalunya Ràdio	6
Ràdio 4	5
SER Catalunya	0
Onda Cero	0
COPE	0
RAC1	0
Total	11

Source: Own work.

working in all of them. At Central Control there are 6 men and 3 women. The most veteran among them are Montse Duran, Julia Aparicio and Andrea Martínez, who, at 22, represents the next generation. The Live Studio technicians are mostly men and there are only two female technicians in charge of production, and in both cases they are also women with a long career in radio: Mariví Pérez and Rosa Sillué. And, finally, Catalunya Ràdio's Outdoor technicians come to 13 people, among whom there is only one woman, Matilde Seoane, who has been working at the station for 20 years, the last two of them as an Outdoor technician. In this regard, it is also remarkable that the technical direction of Catalunya Ràdio falls to two female engineers. The director of Digital and Technological Infrastructure at the Catalan Audiovisual Corporation (CCMA) is a woman, Natàlia Prats, and Maria Àngels Valera leads the Operations area. They are the only two high-ranking female managers in the technical organisational chart of the CCMA.

5. Conclusions

The most important conclusion in this research (PO) is the evidence that in generalist Catalan radio currently women have broken through the glass ceiling. In the absence of a more in-depth investigation, the data worked on here have revealed the existence, for the first time, of a female director at the station RAC1 and that two radio channels, one public (Ràdio 4) and one private (SER Catalunya), are managed in the regions by women (SO1). This is a significant innovation. It must be understood, however, that only at RAC1 is this management of a radio group, while in the rest of the companies the female directors are either in regional offices or are senior executives from financial or marketing departments and that in all cases they report to a male director at the head office.

Ràdio 4 is revealed as the station in the study with the most women working in managerial positions, but also in all the jobs involved in working on the radio. The rest of the stations investigated show a different gradation, with a predominant presence of women at public broadcasters.

In managerial terms, RAC1 shows, for the first time, numerous women on its management staff. Along with its first female

director, the station has a female assistant director and female heads of marketing and accounting. Even so, the station has the fewest women directing and presenting programmes (SO2), both in news and non-news programmes. Paradoxically, as is well known, RAC1, which is the leading station in terms of audience, is also the one with the fewest regional offices with their own production deployed in Catalonia (none), since regional news is covered by correspondents (the Girona correspondent is a female journalist, the rest are men). It is also the company with the fewest women on the staff of its programmes (OS3). Only 25% of the station's programming tasks being studied here are carried out by women. One conclusion that emerges from this data is that the Catalan audience, for the most part, is indifferent to whether their favourite programme is presented and directed by a man or a woman or whether the local content is produced in Barcelona or outside the capital.

Another interesting point of the study determines that only 29.11% of the presenters of the 158 programmes analysed are women. In the same way, women are identified in positions of responsibility in the sales management of the private broadcasters SER Catalunya, Onda Cero and COPE, and also at the public broadcaster Catalunya Ràdio, which has a female sales director.

The study demonstrates the strong presence of women in technical tasks (SO4) and the substantial difference in these jobs between public and private broadcasters. Neither SER Catalunya, nor Onda Cero, nor RAC1, nor COPE have female sound technicians, either high or low frequency. Meanwhile at the public broadcasters, Ràdio 4 and Catalunya Ràdio, the female figures in this department are notable, although much less numerous than their male counterparts.

In retrospect, female figures, despite having a significant presence, have never had the same importance in terms of their quantity or responsibility within the medium as men. But a certain upward trend has been noted in this regard, and this is a new development. Currently, more women are occupying positions that allow them to make decisions that affect radio programming, either within a programme, or in a department or in a regional office or in the sales field. Certainly, starting out from the basis that historically women on the radio had more of a role in communication than content creation (especially in the early years of the medium, female announcers read what was written for them by men), an important qualitative leap can now be seen. Currently, the women who work at the six generalist broadcasters that have coverage throughout Catalonia work as writers, scriptwriters or producers. Therefore, they are the ones who prepare the content that is broadcast. But, in addition, it is evident that many presenters are also the directors/editors of their programmes, meaning the female journalists are responsible for deciding and prioritising the content that will be presented on air.

Another aspect that attracts the most attention is that the primetime programming at the stations is in male hands, except at Ràdio 4, where Gemma Nierga with *Cafè d'Idees*

simultaneously does the morning show on the radio and at TVE Catalunya. Left behind is Catalunya Ràdio, which had twice chosen female journalists Mònica Terribas and Laura Rosel to headline the morning news programme, in primetime.

Finally, if in the past the female announcers provided the female voices on the radio, now this is done by female journalists. While in Catalonia before the Spanish Civil War there was only one female journalist on staff (María Carme Nicolau at Ràdio Barcelona), now the staffs of the six radio stations studied are made up of journalists, who decide, prioritise and write the content they present. In 100 years, women have gone from working on programmes for women, to gaining more of a presence in programming and in management.

Notes

1. Tera worked at Ràdio Lleida and Ràdio Girona, from the network of stations that Ràdio Associació de Catalunya had created across Catalonia since 1931.
2. This research shows the need to carry out an in-depth study on the role of women in radio during the Transition.
3. The study avoids local broadcasters, since, due to their own weight (according to the BIAC (2024), 227 local broadcasters operate in Catalonia), they demand a specific and in-depth analysis.
4. To learn more in detail about these pioneering female announcers, you can consult *Dones de ràdio. Les primeres locutores de Catalunya* (Radio women: The first female announcers in Catalonia). Espinosa Mirabet, S. (2014)
5. In a very different vein, Gemma Nierga had started out at Ràdio Barcelona, at night, with *Hablar por hablar* (1994). Years later, she directed the afternoon news magazine *La Ventana*.
6. Collaborators and talk show/debate participants have been excluded from the composition of the teams.
7. This paper is the first study that seeks to name the many and diverse tasks that women currently do in generalist radio.
8. Consulted on this issue, the cause is explained by a historical trend that has been maintained.
9. At the stations headquartered in Madrid, listeners in Catalonia can listen to dual programming, that specific to Catalonia and that being broadcast by the station throughout the whole of Spain. In these cases, with SER, COPE and Onda Cero, it has been decided to include the duplication of programming, solely in order to identify female programme directors, since all programmes broadcast in the week in question have been analysed.

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Catalunya Ràdio: Genesis, crisis and reorientation of the Generalitat's first radio project (1982-1984)

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Abstract

Catalunya Ràdio was launched in 1983 as an initiative of the first Government of the Generalitat presided over by Jordi Pujol (1980-1984). The goal was to give Catalonia its own public radio and TV that would broadcast only in Catalan in order to spread the use of the language and consolidate its own media spaces under the control of the Catalan executive and Parliament. The radio and TV stations followed different paths, and all eyes were immediately on the TV project, which absorbed most of the resources. This subordination caused precariousness and improvisation during the launch of the radio station, which culminated with the resignation of the first director. These difficulties were magnified by the fact that the initial programming model, with a succession of short programmes, never gained ground, and one year later, Catalunya Ràdio was turned into a generalist radio station with two main magazine programmes in the morning and in the afternoon.

Keywords

History of radio, radio in Catalonia, radio of the Generalitat, public media, Catalunya Ràdio.

Resum

Catalunya Ràdio va néixer el 1983 com una iniciativa del primer Govern de la Generalitat presidit per Jordi Pujol (1980-1984). Es volia dotar Catalunya d'una ràdio i una televisió públiques que emetessin només en català, per estendre l'ús de la llengua i consolidar un espai mediàtic propi, sota el control del Govern i del Parlament. Els dos nous mitjans van seguir camins diferents i totes les mirades es van posar de seguida en el projecte de televisió, on van anar a parar la majoria de recursos. Aquesta supeditació va provocar precarietat i improvisació en la posada en marxa de la ràdio, que va culminar amb la dimissió del primer director de l'emissora. A aquestes dificultats s'hi va afegir que el model de programació ideat a l'inici, amb una successió de petits espais, no es va consolidar i, un any després, Catalunya Ràdio es va reconvertir cap a una programació generalista amb dos espais magazins de matí i de tarda.

Paraules clau

Història de la ràdio, ràdio a Catalunya, ràdio de la Generalitat, mitjans públics, Catalunya Ràdio.

1. Introduction

Catalunya Ràdio was launched in the early 1980s in the midst of uncertainty about the feasibility of a Catalan radio station that depended on the Generalitat and the Parliament of Catalonia, as provided for in the 1979 Statute of autonomy. After the Franco regime, there was only one radio station solely in Catalan –Ràdio 4–, which had been created in 1976 within the organisation Radiotelevisión Española (Font, 2003). Likewise, there were few radio professionals adept in Catalan, nor was there an audience that was used to listening to the radio in this language.

This article focuses on the first stage of Catalunya Ràdio (1982-1984), when the project was in the throes of constant crisis with a succession of three directors in two years. It is proof that launching the Generalitat's new radio station was not easy, and that the broadcaster's first design never took off.

The story of this early stage is part of a broader study on the calls to create a radio station in Catalan in the late Franco regime (Vidal Juanola, 2023). It also tells how with the Statute of Autonomy, the political parties adopted it and the first Government of the Generalitat, with Jordi Pujol as the president, got down to work to make Catalonia's own radio and TV a reality (Guimerà, 2014).

In this article, we will first define the methodology used in the research. Secondly, we will outline the early driving forces behind Catalunya Ràdio and the idea they had, the difficulties they encountered, the results of their first project and how the Government of the Generalitat decided to shift course towards a conventional radio model. Finally, we will outline the findings of the research and point to other lines of research yet to be addressed.

2. Methodology

The research methodology pivoted around three main sources. The first was access to unpublished documents in the archive of the Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals (CCMA). They are incomplete, but they include the first minutes (1983-1984) of the Board of Directors of the former Corporació Catalana de Ràdio i Televisió (CCRTV) and the first report issued by the broadcaster (1983-1984). We have drawn information from them that is crucial in tracking the story of those early days. What are not found in the CCMA archives are materials recorded systematically since the beginning of Catalunya Ràdio.

The second source was research in the specialised literature on the history of radio broadcasting in Catalonia between the end of the Franco regime and the first legislature of the Government of the Generalitat, with a focus on regional radio (Franquet, 2001) (Balsebre, 2002) (Martí, 1996) (Peñafiel, 1994) (Díaz, 1997) (Gutiérrez, 2021). Another source is press articles; we conducted a search in the digital archive of the newspaper *Avui* between 1981 and 1984 to locate articles that contained the keywords 'radio' and 'Generalitat', and 'Catalunya Ràdio'. The articles were organised into a database, and the relevant information for the study was extracted. This newspaper was chosen because it was the closest to Jordi Pujol's circle and the mouthpiece that expressed his party's milieu.

Finally, the third source used in the research was around 20 interviews with people who were associated with the creation of the Generalitat's broadcasters. The interviews were held using an open-ended questionnaire focused on their memories of that experience, which were then checked against the information collected from other sources.

3. The launch of Catalunya Ràdio (1982-1983)

3.1 Two pioneers at the inception of the project

Jordi Costa i Riera (Vic, 1943 - Figueres, 1985) and Josep Maria Francino i Arenillas (Terrassa, 1947 - 2021) were the first ideologues behind Catalunya Ràdio. When the project was launched (1982), they directed Cadena SER's two regional (county) broadcasters in Catalonia. Costa had been at the helm of Ràdio Reus for 11 years, a broadcaster that had become a benchmark in news and innovation (Martí, 1998). Francino was a member of the management team at Ràdio Terrassa,

where in 1979 he had created one of the most successful music stations of the time: Radio Club 25.

'Jordi Costa and I were friends. We always said that we should do things together because we shared the idea of what a radio station should be. When Jaume Casajoana [*director general of Pujol's government*] was charged with finding young people with future prospects to make the Generalitat's radio, he turned to Jordi Costa. Costa accepted the proposal and immediately phoned me and said: "We can finally do things together!", and he offered me the job of assistant director of broadcasters of the Government of Catalonia.' (Interview with Josep Maria Francino)

Jordi Costa had begun his career at Radio Barcelona just after he earned his degree in Journalism from the University of Navarra, at a time when the station was beginning to experiment with new news formats as it awaited the end to censorship. Thus, in February 1970, the programme 'Minuto a minuto' was launched on Radio Barcelona, which pushed the possibilities on broadcasting news on the end of the Franco regime to the limit (Franquet, 2001). The goal was to conduct the station so it would reach what was called the 'news radio boom' coming in the ensuing years with an edge (Balsebre, 2002). The programme had reporters in 12 territories in both Spain and abroad. A total of 23 copywriters participated in this space in sections like 'reports and interviews', 'local news', 'sports' and 'culture' (Franquet, 1994). Jordi Costa coordinated and ran the programme, whose innovativeness made it take off on Barcelona's radio waves.

While Costa was making this programme, there was a vacancy in the management of Ràdio Reus, and he took the post in December 1971. Costa's arrival in Reus, with the journalistic spirit that had imbued Radio Barcelona, left a mark. He transformed a broadcaster bogged down in the more traditional structures of Cadena SER into a benchmark for citizens and advertising in the entire Camp de Tarragona region.

'Works are by people, and the person in charge of transforming a radio that was designed and dedicated solely to entertainment, because it was from Reus, was its director, Jordi Costa [...]. Shortly after he arrived, the station had changed; people were talking about its programmes, but this was mainly reflected in its contents. This was happening precisely when other radio stations had pushed record-playing and cheesy entertainment to the limit.' (Martí, 1998)

Costa brought the news to Ràdio Reus, stretching the seams of censorship with debate programmes and live interviews, as he had done at Radio Barcelona. The culmination of Jordi Costa's project in Reus came in the autumn of 1976 with the programme 'Plaça Major'. Made wholly in Catalan, it is considered the first inter-county radio news programme in Catalonia after the Franco regime and earned the radio award granted by the organisation Òmnium Cultural in 1982.

This award brought Jordi Costa visibility on Catalonia's radio scene. At that time, radio in Catalan was in the minority, with Ràdio 4 as the only station to broadcast solely in that language –its coverage limited to the Barcelona area– within the public organisation Radiotelevisión Española (Font, 2003). Some of the best-known radio professionals in Spain had roots in Catalonia, but the Franco regime had silenced radio in Catalan. In any case, when Jordi Pujol's government was seeking people to lead the launch of the Generalitat's station, they did not choose any of the famous radio announcers at the time, not even those at Ràdio 4. They were seeking young talent who had few ties with the radio model used until then, precisely the profile of Jordi Costa, a person who had no relationship with the Pujol government.

'It was quite curious that the Government of the Generalitat at that time charged Costa and Francino with moving that project forward. It was probably because nobody in the government knew much about the media, nor was the time ripe for understanding that the media could become such an essential tool as it later proved to be. It seemed like a group made expressly for a "mission impossible" like launching a new radio station in Catalan.' (Interview with Oleguer Sarsanedas)

The only connection Costa had with Jordi Pujol's circle was when he directed Radio Reus in the 1970s and Carles Sentís (a journalist who advised Pujol's government on the media) directed Radio Barcelona for a brief time, both broadcasters from Cadena SER in Catalonia. All of this was joined by the fact that when he was the director of Radio Barcelona, Carles Sentís had hired Alfons Quintà to host the programme *Dietari*, where he held social and political interviews. Shortly thereafter, Costa and Quintà both ended up becoming the directors of the Catalan government's projects to make the radio and the TV, respectively. In fact, they were hired the same day: on 1 September 1982.

3.2 The original project (1982-1983)

In late 1982, Jordi Costa and Josep Maria Francino –as he explained for this study– were asked to launch the Generalitat's radio station, with no clear instructions on what the new station was supposed to be like from the Directorate General of the Legal System, part of the Department of the Presidency led by Jaume Casajoana. This Directorate General oversaw the launch of the radio and TV projects, awaiting approval from the Parliament of the law creating the CCRTV.

Just like young professionals from Reus and Terrassa with few ties to radio in Barcelona were sought to start the Generalitat's radio station, they did not want radio announcers with long-standing careers for the day-to-day operation of the project. In fact, they were seeking the opposite. The few guidelines they were given, according to Josep Maria Francino, included that they were supposed to hire young people who could bring fresh new voices and perspectives to the radio station

being created. In fact, Costa and Francino even questioned the fact that Catalonia's public station could not look like a radio-school, as the Government was hinting. They both had the idea of making a great public radio service, comparable to the European corporations, using an innovative approach that would also be mirrored in formulas like Radio 3 and Radio Juventud, according to the testimonies collected for this study. Shortly after taking the post, Jordi Costa outlined his initial idea for the new radio station in an appearance in the Parliament (Parliament of Catalonia, 1982). The main features were:

3.2.1 In Frequency Modulation (FM)

Given the impossibility of securing a mediumwave broadcasting license because it was saturated, the new broadcaster would air on FM. In fact, in 1982, when the Directorate General of Media –at that time affiliated with the Department of Culture– draw up an initial project to create the radio and TV stations (Directorate General of Media, 1982), it stated that this frequency would be used. The sound quality was higher on FM, but a larger broadcasting network was needed because the propagation was lower. Another disadvantage was that the majority of the audience was listening to mediumwave. However, the expectation was that the shift to FM was already underway, and Costa took it on as a challenge.

'Airing on FM is a clear disadvantage for a radio station that aims to cover the services usually covered by mediumwave stations. Still, the advent of private and municipal radio stations working on FM with more interests than only musical programming has managed to break listeners' habits.' (Delclòs, 1983, May 18)

In fact, the other Catalan-language broadcaster –Ràdio 4– was already airing on FM, and new private radio stations on FM were also expected to crop up.

3.2.2 Two stations with different programming

This idea was also contained in the first study drawn up by the Generalitat's Directorate General of Media. It spoke about a first station that should take the programming of Ràdio 4 as its model, and a second station more geared at culture and education. The idea that Jordi Costa ultimately outlined to the Parliament in October of 1982 was similar: a first station with conventional programming and a second one with music, similar to what he had done at Ràdio Reus. 'One of the two stations will try to attract a broad, diverse audience, with a structure similar to what the mediumwave broadcasters have today. The other one will be more specialised and mainly air music to attract the young people's attention' (Parliament of Catalonia, 1982).

3.2.3 A broad presence throughout Catalonia

The Generalitat's radio station was envisioned as having a broad presence throughout Catalonia. The initial Directorate

General of Media project proposed that the first station air 80% of the same programming for all of Catalonia and 20% of local programming for the main provincial and/or county capitals. Specifically, it planned on having production centres in Barcelona, Olot, Girona, Tarragona, Lleida, Tortosa, Manresa, Vic, La Seu d'Urgell and Vielha.

When Costa and Francino designed the network of broadcast centres, they revived the idea of regional decentralisation: 'Broadcasting studios will be installed in some Catalan capitals and other towns that will allow us to make programmes with local audiences, and allow those centres to participate in the overall programming. From the beginning it should be clear that this is not a Barcelona radio station' (Delclòs, 1983, May 18). However, this decentralising project never materialised, and the only broadcasting centres that were actually launched were in Girona, Tarragona and Lleida, and much later in Vielha.

3.2.4 Piggybacking on the RTVE network

Jordi Costa wanted the two FM stations to be aired via the Radiotelevisión Española repeaters, following the proposals in the study by the Directorate General of Media. In Parliament, Jaume Casajoana announced that in order to start broadcasting quickly and without excessive expenditures, he would seek an agreement with RTVE to use its broadcasting centres. Even though Casajoana and Costa mentioned that, no document has been found, nor did the newspapers report on contact between the CCRTV and RTVE to make this happen. Instead, the launch of the radio and especially of the TV station unleashed a campaign against the Catalan project from the Spanish public radio and TV organisation (Guimerà, 2014; Gutiérrez, 2021).

3.2.5 A radio 'with no stars' and 'with no political clientelism'

The director of the station, Jordi Costa, had two very clear ideas of what the new broadcaster would be like. First, it would avoid programmes hosted by major radio stars, a concept that he called radio 'with no stars'. «There will be no star programmes nor star hosts; we're going to avoid "vedettisms"» (Delclòs, 1983, May 18). It should be noted that hiring well-known professionals would have also entailed salaries that the station did not have at that time. Furthermore, famous radio hosts would have had to overcome the resistance to leaving a successful station to work in a project that nobody knew about.

The second concept that Jordi Costa had in mind was that the broadcaster would seek 'professionalism beyond any political clientelism' (Delclòs, 1983, May 18). As he said, his goal was to battle any interference from the powers-that-be over the Government of Catalonia's radio project. In fact, when asked in *Avui* newspaper why Catalunya Ràdio was being created, the first director said that it was with the idea that Catalonia 'as a people and as a nation' could have their own media under the principle of independence from any 'political sway' (Riera & Lloveras, 1983, July 5).

3.3 Stumbling blocks and priorities of the political powers-that-be (1983-1984)

The Government of Catalonia's radio and TV projects were launched simultaneously, but they immediately embarked upon different paths. Back when planning the project, the company CAST was hired to develop the construction and engineering of the new TV station. However, the radio had no such planning. Neither the testimonies collected, nor the documents located nor the news in the press report on any such initiative, and we can conclude that the launch of Catalunya Ràdio was somewhat ad-hoc. These are the three main issues that were resolved as they went:

3.3.1 A radio station without frequencies

One of the first signs that the Directorate General of the Legal Regime had no clear plan about how to launch the radio station was when Costa and Francino mentioned that they had not planned on what FM frequencies it would broadcast. Frequencies could not officially be requested from the Spanish Government until the CCRTV was established, and that was still a few months away. And so, the broadcast frequencies were improvised. Josep Maria Francino and the engineer Fernando Pardo, who later set up a Galician radio-TV station, travelled around different places in Catalonia –Collsuspina, Rocacorba, Alpícat, Tibidabo and Sant Jeroni– looking for free frequencies on the dial that would not interfere with the other stations. The antenna in Alpícat in the Lleida region was never installed, and the solution was negotiated with the town hall of Miralcamp, where there was a somewhat elevated water tower where a repeater could be installed in exchange for setting up a municipal station. As Josep Maria Francino recalls, 'that was not legal, it was simply unregulated'.

3.3.2 Makeshift studios

On 28 April 1983, the Government of Catalonia purchased the ground floor of the building that was supposed to house the headquarters of Catalunya Ràdio at 614 Avinguda Diagonal in Barcelona from the publicist Víctor Sagi, whose company had gone bankrupt. However, those ground floor premises were not set up for the installation of a radio station –as the interviewees for this research recalled– such that the first studios were set up in offices that were not soundproofed and did not have any separation between the technical area and the studio. This is why –according to the testimonies gathered– recordings were prioritised over live broadcasts in the first months. The station's employees called their headquarters 'Beirut' (Sarsanedas, 1993) because of the makeshift facilities that were gradually improved on the fly, ironically reminiscent of the civil war in the capital of Lebanon. Construction to refurbish the building did not begin until late 1983, when the broadcaster had already been on the air for six months. First the construction project had to be drawn up, and the work continued until well into 1984, a period when the station's entire team had to be moved to a nearby building, which was not set up for a radio station either.

3.3.3 A project without an economic plan

Another point showing the ad-hoc way Catalunya Ràdio was launched is its lack of an economic plan, as the interviewees confirmed for this study. The first reason for this was that the company that was supposed to give the economic activity legal coverage was not created with a public deed before a notary until 7 October 1983, five months after the first broadcast. Without a legal personality, Catalunya Ràdio could not access the budgetary allocations that the Parliament was beginning to approve, nor could it hire staff, procure goods or take out debt.

In fact, the technical equipment needed for the first broadcasts (sound tables, microphones, radio links, etc.) were often acquired through Jordi Costa and Josep Maria Francino's friendship –since their time at SER– with the supply company, as Francino recalled for this research. The company ITAME, run by Jesús Pardeiro, agreed to advance all the supplies.

In that context, the interviewees for this study recall that they did not earn a salary for four months. Many of them could not work without a salary and had to leave their jobs until the funding came in. They also mention that the director general of the Legal System, Jaume Casajoana, paid for the installation of the antenna on Montserrat mountain in the summer of 1983 out of his own pocket.

The Sindicatura de Comptes (Audit Office), in its inspection report of Catalunya Ràdio in financial year 1983 to 1984 (Sindicatura de Comptes de Catalunya, 1987) reports that it took 233 days for the invoices to be paid the first year.

3.4 The radio crisis: Political powers prioritise TV

All of these circumstances led to the postponement of the definitive launch of Catalunya Ràdio, which had been announced before the summer for 5 September 1983. Regular programming did not begin that day, but a young economist, Carles Vilarrubí, with close connections to president Pujol, had just joined the station as the 'secretary-general', as he reported for this study. His goal was to officially set up the company and get its finances in order. Vilarrubí's more political profile clashed with Jordi Costa, a radio announcer with few ties to the government, according to Francino's story and other testimonies gathered.

'Jordi Costa was a person with a sweeping vision of what a radio station should be. His career had taken off at Cadena SER, and this is why he was recruited for the Government of Catalonia's radio project. But afterwards they realised that he was too independent for what the politicians wanted.' (Interview with Cristina Ferrer)

In the midst of this economic hardship and internal clashes, on 21 September 1983 Jordi Costa appeared for the first time before the Board of Directors of the CCRTV, and the meeting did not go well. There are no verbatim quotes in the minutes of that meeting, but it does say that the board members ordered different reports on 'the frequencies, advertising, programming philosophy, Ràdio Associació and Radio Cadena, launch calendar, staff and hires and presence of significant political

and social groups' (Minutes no. 10 of the Board of Directors of CCRTV). The fact that the Board would order a report on the launch calendar is significant, because Jordi Costa could not provide a specific date. Likewise, issues like frequencies and the staff were still pending. The board members had more doubts than certainties about the launch of the new station.

One week after this appearance, Jordi Costa resigned as director and the press revealed some of the arguments in the meeting on 21 September. The 29 September 1983 issue of newspaper *El Noticiero Universal* mentions the radio project's subordination to the TV. One article (Espada, 1983, September 29) talks about the 'profound discontent' that the 'subordination [to TV3] in means, materials, financing and public image' prompted in the promoters of the radio station. The text mentions 'surprise' and 'dismay' over Costa's decision and claimed that 'the people in charge of Catalunya Ràdio [...] charged that the radio budget had been postponed compared to TV3 and condemned the fact that 'the execution of the technical project of the [radio] studios (with their state-of-the-art technology and conception) had been delayed due to the budget injection given to Televisió de Catalunya for its experimental broadcast on 10 September of this year'.

A few days later, an article in the weekly *El Món* (Badia, 1983, October 7) directly accused the TV3 director, Alfons Quintà, of slowing down the development of the radio project in favour of the TV through his influence over Pere Cuxart, the director general of CCRTV: 'Pere Cuxart was first the director general of the public TV corporation, a job under the orders of the TV director, Alfons Quintà, and he was later appointed director general of the Corporació Catalana de Ràdio i Televisió. The dependency between Cuxart and Quintà, with the latter holding sway over the former, led to the belief that the directorate general prioritised the launch of TV3, while the full normalisation of the radio broadcaster was delayed to the extent possible.'

Therefore, the main reason why Jordi Costa resigned, according to the available evidence, was that money was not coming in and the CCRTV –and president Pujol's circle– was prioritising resources for TV3 and stalling the executives of Catalunya Ràdio.

'Getting started required a colossal effort. People had been working for three or four months and nobody had a contract. We had no money, and none was coming in. And we kept bugging them. Jordi Costa resigned because he could not deal with Lluís Prenafeta [secretary-general of the Presidency of the Government of Catalonia] anymore, who kept stalling him by saying "don't worry, don't worry".' (Interview with Josep Maria Francino)

The government's sights were set on the new TV station, which was more famous than the radio even before it launched, if only for breaking RTVE's monopoly.

'The TV was the "fetish", and nobody was thinking much about the radio. The radio had an issue, which

was that there was kind of already radio in Catalan. There was Ràdio 4, which had launched in 1976, but there were also many regional radio stations that aired in Catalan.' (Interview with Jordi Pujol)

With Jordi Costa's resignation, his number two, Josep Maria Francino, was appointed station director. Two weeks later, on 24 October 1983, the regular programming that he had Costa had designed finally began to air regularly. It was what they had called the 'modular formula', which combined news programmes with thematic and music programmes. The modular formula stood out for its originality and innovation, with the goals of both retaining FM listeners –who were used to listening to music– and attracting people who until then had listened to talk radio. The goal was to encourage a change of habits and accelerate listeners' shift to FM, which was already underway.

'Jordi Costa was a visionary who had extraordinarily clear ideas. He invented a kind of programming that rotated every half-hour from scratch. It was very innovative. He was a dynamic person who had seen other radio models, as if he had studied them, and had experience setting up other stations, and all of that could be clearly seen.' (Interview with Àngels Bronsoms)

Josep Maria Francino guided the radio project between late 1983 and early 1984 while trying to resolve the major unresolved issues, especially construction to set up the Catalunya Ràdio headquarters. The pressure was so strong that Francino fell ill in the spring of 1984 and left the directorship vacant.

3.5 Shift in direction: From innovative radio to traditional radio (1984-1985)

The secretary-general, Carles Vilarrubí, was put in charge of Catalunya Ràdio while it was between directors. His vision of what that radio station should be like was radically different to the vision Costa and Francino had had. According to Vilarrubí, with the modular formula the station 'did not have a defined competitive direction, it did not have a story' (interview with Carles Vilarrubí for the Catalunya Ràdio programme *Dies de ràdio*: <https://bit.ly/3ylyYwZ>) and a change was needed.

These changes came after the Parliament elections on 29 April 1984, when Jordi Pujol retained the presidency of the Government of Catalonia with an absolute majority, which gave his government a new impetus and led to changes in the CCRTV leadership to ensure political control over it. Thus, on 25 June 1984, Joan Granados, who had close ties with president Pujol's circle, became the general director and confirmed Carles Vilarrubí as his right-hand man at the radio. He was never appointed station director, but they both began to work closely together and agreed that the radio needed a reformulation. A few weeks later, the newspaper *Avui* reported that Catalunya Ràdio's 'modular programming' had 'underperformed'. 'This

programming may be very interesting on paper, but given the competition from other broadcasters in Catalan, it's not very convincing because their programming is more traditional' (Riera & Lloveras, 1984, July 28).

Carles Vilarrubí himself says that the leadership of the CCRTV had suggested the name of Josep Cuní, an emerging professional at Cadena SER at the time, to spearhead the change. Vilarrubí contacted him and Cuní agreed to take on the challenge of going to a station that audiences did not yet know about. Cuní's hire was announced at the first meeting of the CCRTV's new Board of Directors –which had been changed with the new legislature– on 25 July 1984, and he joined the station on 3 September 1984 with the title of head of Programming. The 27 July 1984 issue of the newspaper *Avui* reported that he was a 'well-known radio man' who had led 'highly successful' programmes at Radio Barcelona, and it noted the idea of launching a 'new era' with its sights set on 'commercially competitive programming'.

'Between the alternative approach and the existing programming, I find a kind of amateurism at Catalunya Ràdio which I had not experienced at Ràdio Barcelona. In fact, when I saw how Catalunya Ràdio began, I predicted that it didn't have a bright future and would be hard-pressed to find an audience. And I wasn't the only one saying it; so was everyone else in commercial radio.' (Interview with Josep Cuní)

The question of the vacant director position at the station dragged on, and it was not until 17 October 1984 that the Board of Directors of CCRTV was notified about the appointment of Agustí Farré as the director of Catalunya Ràdio. Farré already appeared before the Board, and –according to the minutes consulted for this research– he highlighted the 'outstanding technical means and professional experience' he had found at the station, as well as the 'great professionals that have recently been hired', in reference to Cuní. However, Carles Vilarrubí held onto an important share of power and was appointed deputy director to finish off the changes that had been underway for months.

The hires for the new programming continued with the name of the radio announcer Adelina Castillejo, which the press published on 1 November 1984. With a long-standing career on radio and coming directly from Radio Barcelona, Castillejo was put in charge of the afternoon magazine, while the morning magazine would be hosted by none other than Josep Cuní. On 21 November 1984, the CCRTV Board of Directors unanimously approved the programming proposal of Catalunya Ràdio for the first half of 1985. Catalunya Ràdio chose a typical mediumwave programming with large content programmes to 'compete not only with other Catalan stations but also the major Spanish stations, like Radio Nacional and Cadena Ser' (Riera & Lloveras, 1984, 24 November). Catalunya Ràdio's new programming, which was definitively launched on 7 January 1985 with the addition of the morning magazine

Sense cadenes presented by Josep Cuní, was radically different to what had been done in 1983.

The new proposal was successful, and the audience grew exponentially. According to the General Media Study (EGM) found in the CCMA's archives, between October/November 1984 –with the modular formula– and October/November 1985, the number of listeners rose 154%, going from 74,000 to 188,000. Catalunya Ràdio's leadership on FM was achieved in October/November 1987 with 264,000 listeners, outstripping other FM competitors like Radio Barcelona and Antena 3.

4. Conclusions

The fact that Catalunya Ràdio achieved audience leadership in 1987 as a broadcaster airing wholly in Catalan and on FM entailed a paradigm shift on the burgeoning Catalan radio scene and a huge step forward in reviving the language. In fact, it was a milestone for which different social and professional organisations had fought since the late Franco regime, and which had taken its first steps with Ràdio 4. There was no longer any need to ponder what a radio station in Catalan would be like, nor any need to collect signatures to make it happen or question whether listeners or advertisers would understand it. Simply put, radio in Catalan had carved a niche for itself on the dial and become the radio consumed by the most listeners. It had been a winning bet.

The political powers had taken up the demands to make a radio station in Catalan with the restoration of democracy, and they had done so viewing the creation of Catalonia's own media as yet another piece in the overarching construction that aimed to bring substance and solidity to the concept of the 'Catalan nation' (Guimerà, 2014). The Government of Catalonia threw itself headlong into the venture of having its own radio and TV stations, like the other European states' public corporations, from France to Germany and from the United Kingdom to Italy, just to cite a few.

And that is the story of how just as Jordi Pujol laid the cornerstone in the construction of the Catalan educational model and regional police, he also created the Corporació Catalana de Ràdio i Televisió, a huge step towards a Catalan media space that all the political parties in the Parliament enthusiastically applauded and approved almost unanimously.

Nonetheless, the radio had to overcome a clear favouritism that the Government of Catalonia –and consequently the CCRTV itself– had towards the TV project in the early years of operation. That was the *fetish* –in Jordi Pujol's words– while the radio was considered a second-class medium. This meant that the energy was poured into the TV station, which sought to break RTVE's monopoly and become the centre of gravity of the new Catalan media space. The TV consumed most of the resources, while the radio was barely scraping by. And the lack of planning did the rest. This prioritisation of TV meant that the first director of Catalunya Ràdio, Jordi Costa, left his

job because he was tired of the project he was leading always being pushed to the background. The vehement, authoritarian personality of the TV3 director, Alfons Quintà, further magnified this sense of grievance (Amat, 2020).

The instability and crises that marked the start of Catalunya Ràdio delayed the launch of the station's regular programming by almost two months. Once it was launched, the modular formula stood out for its originality and innovation, with the goals of both retaining FM listeners –who were used to listening to music– and attracting people who until then had listened to talk radio. The goal was to encourage a change of habits and accelerate listeners' shift to FM, which was already underway.

That first formula did not work in terms of fame and audience. And Costa's resignation and Francino's leave of absence for illness, that is, the loss of its two driving forces, meant that six months after it was launched, that entire approach was reformulated. In a radio broadcasting project, six months is not nearly enough time to allow new programming to take hold, but there was no going back once the shift in direction began. And this is how the idea of the modular formula was abandoned and conventional radio was chosen, with two large content programmes in the morning and afternoon.

However, we can conclude that the station's early years were not wasted time. First of all, the new radio, with its focus on innovation and young voices, managed to carve a niche for itself on the dial with the image of modern radio that could be an alternative to the dominant broadcasters in 1983. In the majority of interviews for this research, it is clear that the station's first human team had the talent and enthusiasm needed to launch a project whose only precedent was Ràdio 4. Many recall it as one of their best professional experiences, working with the conviction that the radio station that was being born was their country's station.

Likewise, the design of the radio links –set up broadly across Catalonia– and the structure of studios, central control and newsrooms which the station's Barcelona headquarters was given were the keys to Catalunya Ràdio's success when the station shifted directions after the autumn of 1984. Without the determination of the first management team to reach all of Catalonia and the drive to have an outstanding human team and equipment, the station's subsequent consolidation would not have been possible. The founding team of Costa and Francino even had an accurate view of the power that the new radio station should have; in fact, until quite recently, Catalunya Ràdio has survived in part from the legacy of the first infrastructure design by the original directors. They also contributed their own grain of sand –which has never been acknowledged– to the subsequent success of Catalunya Ràdio.

A success that deserves further research in the future. Indeed, Catalunya Ràdio established a radio model in Catalonia that served as a lesson to others, a model that other private stations replicated, some with professionals actually trained at the public radio station, that have gone on to be extremely successful (Espinosa, 2021). Therefore, the features of this model, which

has led radio in Catalan to be consumed at levels never before seen until now, is worth studying, along with the process of reviving radio in Catalan, which had disappeared from the dial from the arrival of the Franco regime in 1939 until the advent of Ràdio 4 (1976) and Catalunya Ràdio (1983). These are stories that have yet to be written.

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Presence and influence of Grupo Godó on Spanish national radio (1982-2022)

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Abstract

Although EAJ-1 Radio Barcelona obtained the first-ever broadcasting licence following the regulation of Spanish broadcasting in 1924, Catalan companies did not have a significant nationwide presence in the sector until six decades later. This was finally achieved by Grupo Godó through a radio station —Antena 3 Radio— that first emerged during the FM boom and which within just ten years (1982-1992) had risen to be an audience leader. A lesser-known fact is that the controversial disappearance of this station did not mark the end of the Group's influence, as together with Grupo PRISA it continued as a stakeholder in the Unión Radio company until 2022. At this point —quietly and almost without impact— it put paid to a business relationship that had lasted three decades. In order to trace its historical trajectory, qualitative research was carried out via in-depth interviews with prominent executives of both the radio station and the Group. The results pinpoint the different phases and scope of relevance of the Group —publisher of La Vanguardia newspaper— in the radio sector from 1982 to 2022.

Keywords

Antena 3 Radio, Catalonia, Spain, Grupo Godó, Grupo PRISA, broadcasting, Unión Radio.

Resum

Tot i que Radio Barcelona va obtenir el 1924 la primera concessió per emetre, una vegada regulada la radiodifusió a Espanya (EAJ-1), l'empresariat català no hi va tenir una presència efectiva a escala estatal fins a sis dècades després. El Grupo Godó ho va aconseguir amb una emissora sorgida al boom de l'FM, Antena 3 Radio, que, en només deu anys (1982-1992), va assolir el lideratge d'audiència. És menys conegut que la polèmica desaparició d'aquesta cadena no va suposar el final de la seva influència, ja que va compartir, juntament amb el Grupo PRISA, el capital de la societat Unión Radio fins al 2022, moment en què va acabar —discretament i gairebé sense repercussió— una relació empresarial que havia durat tres dècades. Per tal de traçar el recorregut històric, s'ha dut a terme una investigació qualitativa mitjançant entrevistes en profunditat a directius rellevants de l'emissora i el Grup. Els resultats assenyalen les etapes i l'abast de la rellevància al sector radiofònic de l'editora de La Vanguardia entre el 1982 i el 2022.

Paraules clau

Antena 3 Radio, Catalunya, Espanya, Grupo Godó, Grupo PRISA, radiodifusió, Unión Radio.

1. Introduction

The landscape of Spanish radio has enjoyed great stability for over two decades now. Aside from the state-owned public-service broadcaster —Radio Nacional de España— and the various stations owned by the regional authorities, private operators are mainly distributed among PRISA Radio, the owner of Cadena SER and its music-themed stations; Ábside Media,

owned by Conferencia Episcopal Española, a major shareholder of the COPE group and its music brands; and Atresmedia Radio, which falls under the ownership of Grupo Planeta, that manages the Onda Cero station along with its music stations. There have been other publishing groups with a prominent presence in this sector, one of which is Vocento, although its project, Punto Radio (2004-2013) never quite found its feet. Grupo Godó, publisher of *La Vanguardia* newspaper, however,

did rise to play a significant role in the recent history of Spanish radio. Specifically, from 1982-1992, it was a major driving force in the market that transformed the landscape of FM radio. However, it barely managed to forge an identity of its own during this long period in the sector, which ended in 2022 with a minority presence in PRISA Radio, that it had helped to establish in 1994 under the name of Unión Radio.

This has not been addressed in its own right until now, having only been dealt with in research projects focussing either generally on the history of broadcasting or specifically on Antena 3 Radio. Neither is there extensive literature on the subject, except for certain notable contributions such as the doctoral theses by Dobón-Roux (2017) and Wert-Moreno (2023), along with other studies that focus specifically on *La Vanguardia* and its publishing group, such as that of Nogué and Barrera (2006). Relevant information can also be found in other sources, such as the biographies and autobiographies of key players in the Group's historical trajectory: Mario Conde (Cacho, 1994), Antonio Herrero (Herrero-Tejedor, 2008), José María García (Ferrer, 2016), Concha García Campoy (Dalmau, 2018), Manuel Jiménez de Parga (2008), Jesús de Polanco (Cabrera, 2015; Cruz, 2021), among others.

2. Aim and methodology

This research aims to define the role that Grupo Godó —mainly known for its significant influence in Catalonia for almost a century and a half— played throughout Spain as a whole during its four decades (1982-2022) of activity in the radio market. It should be noted that this presence is divided into two very distinct periods: in the first (1982-1994), the Group played a leading role as a majority shareholder of Antena 3 Radio, which it managed until Grupo PRISA acquired a stake in the company. In the second (1994-2022), the Group only played a subsidiary role in the management of the Cadena SER network and its music stations, as a minority partner in the service company Unión Radio, later renamed PRISA Radio.

As mentioned, this research is mainly qualitative in nature, since —in order to trace the trajectory of Grupo Godó in the Spanish radio market— it is based on an in-depth review of the literature and articles published in the main national newspapers, and above all, on the information gathered orally from primary sources (specifically, the testimonies of key informants, gathered through in-depth personal interviews using a semi-structured closed questionnaire, carried out between February 2019 and October 2021).

The specific cohort of key informants, identified and selected based on each of their roles, is as follows: Eduardo Alcalde, director-general of Antena 3 Radio (1993-1994) (18/03/2019); Alfonso Cavallé, deputy director-general of Antena 3 Radio (1988-1994) (11/05/2021); Juan Luis Cebrián, president and CEO of Grupo PRISA (1988-2018) (27/07/2021); Augusto Delkáder, CEO of Cadena SER and Unión Radio (1991-2021)

(13/02/2019); Juan María Sainz, director-general and CEO of Antena 3 Radio (1992-1993) (08/02/2019); Joan Tapia, director of *La Vanguardia* (1987-2000) (21/10/2021); and Luis Ángel de la Viuda, development director at Antena 3 Radio (1984-1990) (29/12/2020). All of these interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to avail of significant primary sources such as Jesús de Polanco and Manuel Martín Ferrand, who have since passed away, or the testimony of Javier de Godó —president of Grupo Godó— who declined to be interviewed. However, their testimonies have been gathered from secondary sources and, in the case of Jesús de Polanco (president of Grupo PRISA) from his personal archives held by Grupo Timón.

3. Results

Eager to enter the television sector, Grupo Godó formed part of the media consortium that created the Antena 3 brand. The interest of the group and its flagship brand, *La Vanguardia* newspaper, in extending its influence beyond the scope of Catalonia and through to the rest of Spain, had become apparent in the late Franco period when it successfully maintained a very high circulation —similar to or even greater than those of the newspapers published in Madrid (Davara, 2005, p. 139) — through a very moderate editorial stance concerning the regime (so much so that some writers describe it as a “non-ideology” (Alfárez, 1986, p. 74)). Therefore, just seven years after Franco died, in 1982 the promoters of Antena 3 decided to set their sights on radio due to pending changes in legislation for the commercialisation of television channels being postponed by the shift in government from the Central Democratic Union (UCD) to the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), of all the publishers that had set up Antena 3 Radio, it was Grupo Godó that stepped in to assume a leading role in its ownership and management.

During its first decade of operation (1982-1992), the station was a commercial success that marked a milestone in the history of the media in post-Franco Spain. In 1990, however, the move into television with the launch of Antena 3 TV soon gave way to abject financial disaster for its shareholders — of which Grupo Godó possessed the majority hold— resulting in a crisis for the radio station that culminated in a bitter confrontation between the management and proprietor. The latter, Javier de Godó, eventually sought the assistance of his main competitor, Grupo PRISA, which took over the station for two seasons, before eventually taking it off-air in June 1994, in an operation that Federico Jiménez Losantos (1992, p. 28) referred to as “*antenicidio*” (“*antenicide*”, in a play on words on the station).

By this point, the Unión Radio service company was now fully operational and absorbed the radio assets of both groups in a partnership that lasted until mid-2022. Meanwhile,

independent of its partners and through its generalist Catalan radio station RAC1 (and its sister music station RAC105), Grupo Godó regained its presence in the radio market, while limiting itself to Catalan territory.

3.1 Godó invests in radio with its sights set on television (1980-1982)

Antena 3 SA —filed with the Spanish trade register on 9 October 1980— was initially created as a private venture by Manuel Martín Ferrand and the brothers Manuel and Rafael Jiménez de Parga (Faus, 1991, p. 21), who managed to bring print media companies such as Europa Press, Prensa Española, Grupo Zeta and, most significantly, Grupo Godó on board with their project (Dobón-Roux, 2017, p. 44).

According to Manuel Jiménez de Parga (2008, p. 320), despite being the two most prominent press editors in Catalonia and direct competitors, Godó and the owner of Grupo Zeta, Antonio Asensio, had never actually met until he approached them to back Antena 3 Radio. This latter company, which unlike the initial venture Antena 3 SA, focused specifically on radio, was established on 1 February 1982 and first went on air on 4 May (Balsebre, 2002, p. 484). The initial share capital was 200 million pesetas (1,202,024 euros), divided among 20,000 registered shares each worth 10,000 pesetas (60 euros) (Wert-Moreno, 2023, p. 46). It should be noted that the first shift in its ownership occurred at the end of 1983 when Zeta bowed out of the venture and its shares were acquired by other companies, mainly Grupo Godó. Further down the line, the project was joined by groups such as *La Voz de Galicia*, *Diario de Navarra*, Correo and Serra.

The radio's first Board of Directors was helmed by Rafael Jiménez de Parga as president, and Antonio Asensio, Javier de Godó, José Manuel Seco, Guillermo Luca de Tena and Francisco Palazón as vice presidents. In the winter of 1986 the board was restructured, maintaining the same president but with the vice presidents whittled down to just Luca de Tena and Godó, with the latter taking on the executive role. In February 1988 things took yet another turn, with Godó becoming president and Jiménez de Parga now executive vice president.

At the end of autumn 1982, Antena 3 Radio was also inaugurated in Barcelona, Catalonia, which was significant not only due to being Spain's second city but also because it was where the majority shareholder's newspaper companies were based. A few months later, in February 1983, a launch party was attended by almost a thousand guests. Martín Ferrand believes that this new launch marked the end of the "running in" stage of Antena 3 Radio. The Barcelona station, which offered eleven hours of full-format programming per day, quickly became the network's leading broadcaster in terms of revenue. Following this success, and parallel to Antena 3 SA, another company, Antena 3 de Cataluña SA, was created, to launch a private television channel in Catalonia, and in a venture that was backed by businessmen such as Javier de la Rosa and Joan Gaspart (Nogué and Barrera, 2006, p. 320).

It should be noted at this point that the initial aim of creating Antena 3 SA was to tender for the concession of TV channels once the television market was deregulated. Radio was only the starting point for a venture that would eventually culminate in 1990 with Antena 3 TV. The new radio station was launched under the direction of Martín Ferrand. As the former deputy director-general of Antena 3 Radio, Alfonso Cavallé (2021) explains it: "Martín Ferrand supported the project and he was the one who brought all the backers together, starting with *ABC* right across to *La Voz de Galicia* in the extreme northwest of the country, and, of course, the most significant shareholder, the Count of Godó and *La Vanguardia*". Cavallé also expounds on the phenomenal success of the venture, despite the initial struggles that come hand in hand with starting a radio station from scratch:

He (Martín Ferrand) was clear about what had to be done. The shareholders were also clear that he was in charge, and that they had to let him get on with it. He also knew what people to surround himself with (...) I've never seen people with such enthusiasm, such a vocation to make everything run like clockwork. Time and effort were of no consequence... There existed nothing else other than to make it a success. That was the great strength of Antena 3 Radio: its people.

Among the staff's most notable members was the established sports journalist José María García, whose success at Cadena SER during the previous decade had made him a national emblem. García joined Antena 3 Radio in March 1982, where he presented its main sports shows (Ferrer, 2016, p. 104). However, hot on his heels was another new figure who would also rise to great fame: Antonio Herrero. Adopting the critical and challenging attitude of a sports journalist, he brought his peculiar style of broadcasting to general news (Herrero-Tejedor, 2008, p. 313). And this is exactly what he did with the programme *El primero de la mañana*. Luis Ángel de la Viuda (2020), who was the development director of the station, points out that Antena 3 Radio succeeded in becoming the public's go-to radio station at the time because of "its very well-defined programs and its broadcasters, including García, who was the broadcaster par excellence of the day. He brought in more money than Luis del Olmo (for COPE)".

3.2 Antena 3 Radio, a decade of expansion, business and influence (1982-1992)

While its growth was in full swing in 1984, Antena 3 Radio absorbed Radio 80, another generalist station that had been trying to make its way on FM since 1982, but had failed to find its niche. The station was backed by the television operator EDICA and five banks, and in Catalonia was partnered with the company Editorial Catalana de Televisión y Radio SA — a concessionaire of Catalunya 80, which joined Radio 80. This acquisition allowed Antena 3 Radio to expand its reach and grow from 68 to 79 stations. In 1990, its network had

expanded to 89 stations and in 1992 there were only five more provincial capitals it had yet to reach: Girona, Guadalajara, Jaén, Huelva and Logroño. Since the radio station was allocated two frequencies in some of its areas, it was also decided to launch a music station, Radio 80 Serie Oro, which was created on 28 January 1985 (Wert-Moreno and Legorburu, 2021, pp. 218-219). To complete these transactions, at the end of this period and with just a single initial frequency in Madrid, Antena 3 Radio launched Radiolé, which first aired on 18 February 1991.

It should be noted that the audience ratings of this latter station and Radio 80 Serie Oro were highly substantial, as were the financial results of Antena 3 Radio: the financial year of 1984—two years after its launch—was the first to show a profit. By 1985, this profit amounted to 200 million pesetas (1,202,000 euros). In 1987, the figure exceeded 500 million (3 million euros); in 1988 it reached 362 million (2,175,664 euros); in 1989, 975 million (5,859,868 euros); in 1990, 1,425 billion (8,564,422 euros); in 1991, 1,489 billion (8,949,075 euros); in 1992, 582 million (3,497,820 euros); and in 1993, 615 million (3,696,150 euros) (see chart 1). By 1991, Antena 3 Radio stations offered the most advertising spots and broadcast the most minutes of advertising, capturing 21.5% of the total advertising investments in the sector, trailing only Cadena SER and its associated stations.

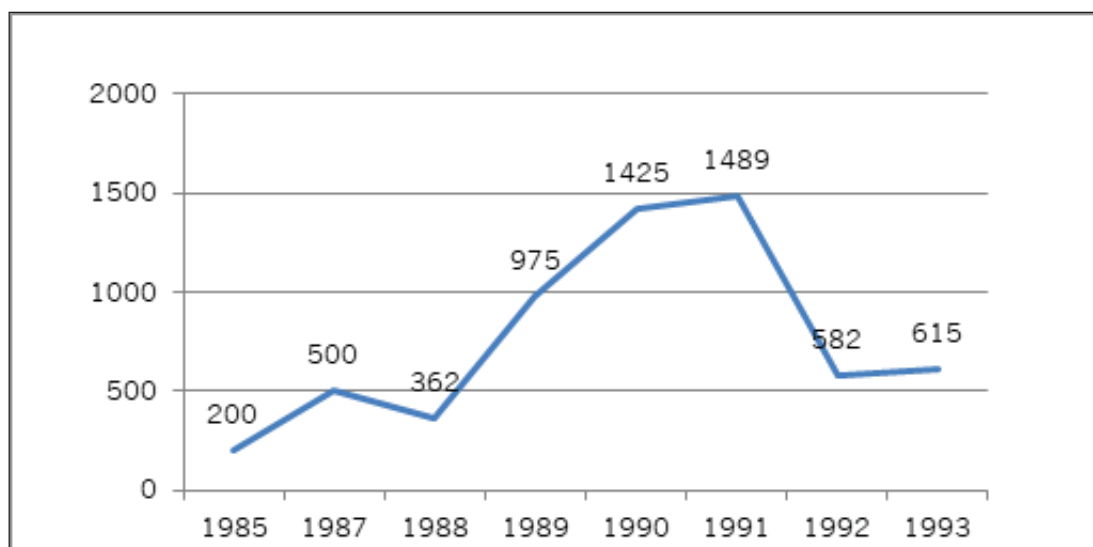
Finally, in the winter of 1989, Antena 3 Radio became the first Spanish communications company launched on the stock exchange. To this end, it approved a capital increase through the issue of 287,500 shares, to be listed on the market at an initial price of 1,000 pesetas (6 euros) each. These shares comprised 25% of the company's overall share capital. Its debut on the Barcelona Stock Exchange took place on 23 January, followed by the Madrid Stock Exchange on 6 July.

However, commercial and financial success did not necessarily mean all was well between the network's management and its main stakeholder. In fact, De la Viuda (2020) tells of two different worlds: one that revolved around the owners ("the world of Juan Tapia, etc.") and another that revolved around the director Martín Ferrand: "Manolo (Manuel) had many enemies among Godó's circle". Cavallé (2021) expands further on this notion of division, pointing out that, when it first began broadcasting, Antena 3 Radio was not a highly significant part of Grupo Godó's landscape. However, as the company went from strength to strength, jealousy and envy became inevitable until the management teams of *La Vanguardia* and Antena 3 Radio eventually came to blows: "The gentlemen from *La Vanguardia* were asking Godó what was going on, with this media outlet doing its own thing, giving out its opinions and not sharing the editorial line of the group".

Meanwhile, in 1989, the government decided to regulate the private television sector in Spain, and awarded Antena 3 SA's proposal with one of the three licenses granted on 25 August. Specifically to compete for this tender, a company—Antena 3 de Televisión SA—had been created, chaired by Javier Godó and established with a capital of 10 billion pesetas (60 million euros). Its holders were Antena 3 Radio (7%), Grupo Godó (20%), several other communication groups that accounted for a 10% share, and other companies that constituted some 35%. Banks made up 20% and the rest was held by employees and managers of Antena 3 Radio and Grupo Godó. After a month of testing, the station aired finally on 25 January 1990.

It was against this backdrop in 1992 that Antena 3 Radio celebrated its tenth anniversary, while at the same time, also becoming the audience leader in generalist radio, according to the first General Media Study (EGM) report of the year. This

Figure 1. Antena 3 Radio Profits (in millions of pesetas)



Source: own work.

good news, however, did not help to alleviate the tensions between the managers of Antena 3 Radio and those of *La Vanguardia*. In April 1992, Martín Ferrand gave a lecture at the Club Siglo XXI entitled “The Messenger’s Armor”, in which he stated that “graveyards are full of walls,” in what was possibly a veiled reference to the director of *La Vanguardia*, Joan Tapia (with this surname also meaning “wall” in Spanish).

3.3 Television weighs down Grupo Godó and creates a crisis for Antena 3 Radio (1992)

1992 turned out to be a very turbulent year for Grupo Godó in general and Antena 3 Radio in particular, due to both the poor financial state of Antena 3 TV—which in its first two years, had not succeeded in turning a profit and required a huge amount of financial resources—and the ambition of the then president of the Banco Español de Crédito (Banesto), Mario Conde, to make his presence felt in the media sector. About the first issue, Ekaizer (1994, p. 218) reports the following:

“[Antena 3 TV] had filed increasing losses since its creation in 1989, which in turn resulted in the company losing capital [...] In fact, the forecasts as of 31 December 1991 estimated that the total bank debt could reach 9.2 billion pesetas and cash flow would be negative by 3.3 billion. Shareholders would have to face new capital increases if they wanted to ensure the continuity of Antena 3 TV, and Godó had run out of steam to hold out”.

Tapia (2021) believes that the main source of contention was that “the poor financial results of Antena 3 TV’s first years did not align with Martín Ferrand’s initial forecast, as he had been confident that the channel would be viable without any aid other than that of its shareholders”. For his part, Cavallé (2021) widens the net to the financial state of the *La Vanguardia* newspaper itself, with its recovery plan and large-scale investments, such as a “huge” printing press.

Initial discussions between Banesto and Grupo Godó began in June 1991 and began to gather pace in the autumn. On 21 November, a letter of intent was signed—to be executed within three months—for the constitution of a holding company in which Godó would own a 70% stake and the bank 30%. Grupo Godó would contribute a 52% stake of Antena 3 Radio, 30% of the TISA publishing company and 90% of the *Mundo Deportivo* newspaper. In addition, Banesto would also take control of Serec, which owned 10% of the capital of Antena 3 TV. Therefore, on 20 February 1992, Inversiones Godó SA was born, and Conde assumed he would have decision-making capacities over managerial positions (Ekaizer, 1994, pp. 209-221).

It was precisely the notion that the banker might have a degree of power over *La Vanguardia* that caused Godó to have “a lot of doubts” about the venture (Cabrera, 2015, p. 295), a fact also confirmed by Tapia (2021):

“Initially, Grupo Godó had no issues other than Conde was already a controversial figure, as was later

confirmed. But a partnership that would have so much influence over *La Vanguardia* ended up putting paid to any potential agreement”.

While the government reproached Banesto for its delay in fulfilling its legal obligation to declare its status as a stakeholder of Antena 3 TV through Serec, months passed without any progress in the agreement. During this time, the government and Banesto engaged in tactics that only heightened Godó’s distrust (Cacho, 1994). In the end, Banesto failed to obtain an extension for the execution of the preliminary agreements, which expired on 21 May. Grupo Godó fulfilled the clause that obliged it to repurchase Serec from Banesto with the help of a 6 billion peseta (approximately 36,060,726 euros) loan from La Caixa.

Meanwhile, Conde continued his efforts to control Antena 3 TV. After the Godó option failed, he partnered up with media magnates Antonio Asensio and Rupert Murdoch, who had been left out of the running for the private television tender. Between the Renvir company—owned by Asensio and Murdoch—and the Banesto bank, they managed to acquire 40% of the company’s capital. Although Godó decided to retain his 25% stake in the company, he resigned as president and Asensio took his place. Although on the face of it, this operation should only have affected television, it turned out to be a key driver behind the Antena 3 Radio crisis, due to both the exacerbation of the differences between the management and owners, and the subsequent joining forces of the Godó and PRISA groups.

Along with Conde, both Ekaizer (1994) and Cacho (1994) name Martín Ferrand and Rafael Jiménez de Parga as the instigators behind making *La Vanguardia* part of the agreement, while for Tapia (2021), it was the failure of the deal with Banesto that caused the breakdown between the station’s management and Godó. Everything seems to suggest the assumption that, once Godó’s majority share in Antena 3 TV had been lost, he would consider divesting himself of his shares in the channel, and Conde and Asensio would facilitate this in exchange for 57.9% of the capital of Antena 3 Radio. Godó, however, had no intention of selling his shares in television or radio.

This tug-of-war finally ended in a meeting of the Board of Directors of Antena 3 Radio on 14 July, which, according to *La Vanguardia* (1992, p. 1) Godó had to adjourn “as threats were made against the representatives of the majority shareholders of the company”. According to Antena 3 Radio, however, the meeting was adjourned for a different reason, as according to its press release, most of the board members were demanding answers from Godó as to the state of negotiations into the sale of his shares. When Godó responded that he intended to sell them but refused to disclose the identity of the potential buyers, the *La Vanguardia* directors walked out of the meeting, at which point the Board proceeded to dismiss Godó and appoint Rafael Jiménez de Parga as president. Godó (Cruz, 2021, p. 265) describes what happened as follows: “The last one (board meeting) was getting so tough that I said ‘the session

is adjourned!', although I didn't consider it to be over, they took advantage of the situation to make a series of decisions, the first of which was precisely to dismiss me". Tapia (2021) remembers the episode as "an attack on ownership that could not be tolerated".

As for the reporting of the situation in the media, *El País* newspaper (16 July 1992) referred to the board as "conflictive" and cited sources that aligned with Godó's take on the matter, while *ABC* preferred to base its reports on Martín Ferrand's assessment of what happened, while *Diario 16* (1992, p. 60) and *El Mundo* (Bardají and De la Serna, 1992, p. 3) brought up other figures such as the financier Javier de la Rosa, the president of the ONCE organisation Miguel Durán, and the Italian media mogul Silvio Berlusconi — all of whom would be waiting for events to unfold to take advantage of the upheaval to benefit their projects.

Meanwhile, according to Ekaizer (1994, p. 220), in October 1991, in the lead-up to this crisis and while the distrust mentioned before between Banesto and Grupo Godó was rising, a preliminary lunch took place between the president of Grupo PRISA, Jesús de Polanco, and Godó, in which the former tells the latter that "an agreement between publishers is always better than a pact with bankers". According to Cebrián (2021), the reason for Godó approaching de Polanco was due to the "unease" that Conde created. In the summer of 1992, Cebrián and Tapia also decided to play a more active role in nurturing the relationship, in what Cebrián (2021) describes as "a kind of small conspiracy". Tapia recalls that the two publishers, "without any input from either him (Cebrián) or me, swiftly came to an agreement".

And so it was that the Godó and PRISA groups sealed their alliance on 22 July. The agreement constituted the incorporation of Grupo PRISA into Inversiones Godó SA, which managed the majority stake of Antena 3 Radio. The operation came at a cost of 4 billion pesetas (around 24 million euros) and involved Grupo PRISA acquiring a 30% share in *La Vanguardia*, and Grupo Godó a 10% share in *El País*. As Godó (Cruz, 2021, p. 265) recalls it:

"The two radio stations were making a lot of money at the time, so joining forces was beneficial for both of us, so Jesús and I ended up saying "Let's unite!" The truth is that I was in a fix after the whole storm blew up, so I didn't need much convincing (...) I've never known anyone treats me so well as Jesús de Polanco did then, and always... We worked out the deal based on what the two stations were earning, and actually, they were both worth the same. As can happen in business, I thought that as I was facing difficulties after recent events, Jesús would tell me that the company I represented, Antena 3 Radio, was worth less. But that wasn't the case at all (...) The agreement was sealed immediately and he was the one who called Martín Ferrand and the rest of the Board".

As Godó describes it, without wasting any time, Polanco restored him as president of Antena 3 Radio, in a move supported by Rafael Jiménez de Parga who was appointed vice president. Martín Ferrand resigned from the Board of Directors. He also settled matters with *Prensa Española*, which had been highly critical of the operation and had even threatened legal action, managing to get the company to sell its stake, although without being able to swerve an op-ed signed by its president, Guillermo Luca de Tena, published in *ABC* newspaper, that was highly critical of Javier de Godó (1992, p. 3):

"The last of the Godós seems to have lost every last shred of common sense, otherwise he would know that newspapers, radio stations and all other media do not belong only to their shareholders. There is a moral bond between news companies and their readers, between companies and professionals (...) Not only the listeners of Antena 3 Radio, but also the readers of Catalonia have been sold out, ignored and betrayed".

Grupo PRISA also increased its stake in the company by acquiring 4.7% of the shares of Paltrivia SA, another member of Grupo Godó. In February 1993, it decided to carry out a voluntary public tender offer for acquiring shares to redeem them and reduce its share capital.

The position of the main broadcasters at Antena 3 Radio was very different, with seventeen of them, including García and Herrero, signing a joint statement in which they expressed their satisfaction at the dismissal of Godó as president, whom they described as "negligent". Finally, after the operation was finalised in a way that was unfavourable to their interests, García and Herrero abandoned the network for COPE, joined by Luis Herrero and Federico Jiménez Losantos, while the others remained working at the company for a time.

It was precisely at this point that the aforementioned and long-lingering term "*antenicide*" was coined, in reference to the notion, felt by some, that the move was not so much a business transaction as the harassment of some of its broadcasters by those in power. This insinuation would cause notable damage to Grupo Godó's reputation (Ramírez, 1994, p. 28) which would reverberate for years since the matter would be dragged up time and time again during the entire subsequent legal process. Furthermore, from that point onwards, the subject was also repeatedly brought up as a case in point by the professionals affected, whenever they considered there to have been an attack on freedom of expression.

3.4 The Godó-PRISA alliance and Antena 3 Radio's struggle for survival (1992-1994)

In its edition of 28 July 1992 (p. 21), *La Vanguardia* stressed that in the first meeting of Antena 3 Radio's new Board of Directors, it was made clear that the majority shareholder, Grupo Godó, continued to be committed to a "conventional radio formula in clear competition with all other Spanish broadcasters" and that all staff would be counted on to provide

this. However, the Catalan group left this task in the hands of PRISA, since the Board of Directors was made up of fully trusted members: Juan María Sainz (CEO), Manuel Castellón (Company Secretary), Francisco Vela (Director-General) and Ventura García Estruch (Manager).

Following the instructions of its shareholders, the new team focused on keeping the Antena 3 Radio brand in the market. Sainz (2019) argues that its coexistence with Cadena SER to this effect was entirely possible: “All of us who were there at the time thought so. And I think Godó did too”. Cavallé (2021) confirms this statement: “Sainz and I thought that it might be good for Grupo PRISA to have another station with a different message to that of Cadena SER.” Sainz (2019) recalls that the instruction given to the station’s directors was that the brand should remain “attractive and modern”. They were assured that the company would survive; based on the premise that it would maintain its audience.

It was to this effect that, on 21 September 1992, Antena 3 Radio launched its new schedule under the slogan “We will never change”, and with a line-up that sought to convey an image of continuity (insofar as possible, since its two main stars, García and Herrero, were by now working for the competition). Shortly afterwards, on 24 November, the first EGM report was published with very poor results for the station, which had fallen from first to fifth position after losing more listeners (1,643,000) than it had managed to keep (1,462,000). This poor result would play a decisive role in the future of the station, as evidenced by the implication of various initiatives.

On the one hand, in the autumn of 1992, Grupo PRISA began work on the creation of a business structure that would bring all its radio business together under one umbrella but also contemplated the possibility of eradicating Antena 3 Radio. One of its first moves to this effect was the merger of Radio 80 Serie Oro and Cadena Minuto, which were now considered redundant. As a result of this, on 18 January 1993, M80 Radio was born (Wert-Moreno and Legorburu, 2021, p. 224). This merger had freed up frequencies in Barcelona, Madrid and Seville, which were now used to open new Cadena SER FM stations. Back then, Cebrián (2021) already saw the merger as the best option: “Honestly, I think that we wanted to manage and maintain the two projects separately, but the reality clearly showed that it was better to fight with one brand rather than two”. Shortly afterwards, Sainz agreed to stand down as CEO.

While at this complicated crossroads, Grupo Godó managed to uphold its commitment to continuity, placing one of its publishing professionals, Eduardo Alcalde, who had also acted as director of the Antena 3 Radio stations in Barcelona and Valencia, at the helm of the broadcaster. Alcalde knew about Grupo PRISA’s plan for a merger, as he confessed that Godó had shown it to him himself (2019). In response to the news, he prepared a project to avoid “the loss of a radio station that in recent years has made history”.

In what caused a media frenzy, the new season began with prominent signings, such as Concha García Campoy

—who took on the mantle for the morning slot (Dalmau, 2018)— Javier González Ferrari and Hilario Pino. Alcalde (2019) estimates that a 500 million peseta (approximately 3 million euros) investment was poured into Antena 3 Radio, to make it a “dynamic, aggressive chain, aimed at upper-middle class, urban, educated people with studies, liberal professionals aged between 25 and 50 from a broad political spectrum”. Alcalde (2019), however, also admits that the project was dead before it hit the ground since no sooner had it got underway than he received a call from Cebrián who told him: “Listen, Eduardo, this thing you’re doing isn’t going ahead”. Alcalde replied: “But that makes no sense, we’ve just presented the scheduling”. “It doesn’t matter,” — Cebrián replied— “this is something you guys have insisted on and it isn’t going ahead”. And so it was that, without any opposition from Grupo Godó (Wert-Moreno, 2023, p. 387), the project was over before even the first season was out.

3.5 Unión Radio, Grupo Godó’s link with national radio (1994-2022)

The Godó and PRISA groups decided to combine their assets in the radio market through the creation of the company Unión Radio, which revived the name of the first Spanish radio station founded in the 1920s, which was the predecessor of Cadena SER (Balsebre, 1999, p. 237). Delkádér justifies the implementation of the move as follows:

“The problem with radio is that it has very high fixed costs and a high operating leverage ratio. If you manage to distribute its structure among many products, you greatly reduce the profitability threshold of the schedules on offer. That was the business plan of Unión Radio and the PRISA and Godó groups”.

The creation of Unión Radio brought about the process of swiftly dismantling Antena 3 Radio, a move validated by the decision at the General Shareholders’ Meeting on 20 April 1994 to dissolve the Board of Directors, replacing it with one sole administrator. The station’s resources and territorial reach were hence quickly diminished, due to both the “cannibalisation” of frequencies to favour Grupo PRISA’s radio brands, and the breakdown of the agreements with the media groups that owned the stations in Galicia, the Balearic Islands, Navarra and the Basque Country— which was an issue that had been dragging on since the previous year. In tandem with this, schedules were also severely cut back, such as the elimination of sports coverage.

Antena 3 Radio’s fate, therefore, was not drawn out any longer than the time it took the powers that be to authorise the merger. Once done, the broadcaster was taken off-air, and a handful of its stations were used to launch Sinfo Radio-Antena 3, which specialised in classical music and began broadcasting on 19 June. Some employees were relocated to Cadena SER—with the signing of Javier Ares as one notable example— but many others saw their contracts terminated. Finally, a month later,

the Spanish Council of Ministers approved the notification of the merger, filed in December.

At the same time as this, a long legal process began, starting on 1 June with the claim filed by a group of journalists led by Martín Ferrand before the Competition Defence Service containing accusations of unfair competition and abuse of position of power. For its part, the Association of Independent Radio filed an appeal with the Supreme Court, considering that the precepts of the Law for the Defence of Competition were being violated, and the claim was admitted. Six years later, on 9 June 2000, the court ruled that the merger was inadmissible and ordered it to be dissolved. Unión Radio reacted by filing an appeal before the Constitutional Court, which was rejected. In November 2001, the government issued a two-month deadline for the ruling to be executed —an ultimatum that was not fulfilled and which a year later forced the Supreme Court to yet again urge the government to enforce the law (Iglesias, 2005, p. 97-100).

In February 2005, the matter was finally resolved when the PSOE government approved the Law of Urgent Measures to drive the deployment of DTT and cable, which incorporated a section on the radio market, in which the licencing limits for the same natural or legal person within the same territory were increased, as well as the maximum number of stations permitted per person. Once the Law had been modified, the Supreme Court revoked the ruling for the merger to be reversed and also annulled the 2004 ruling by the National Court that called on the Competition Defence Tribunal to impose sanctions on the PRISA and Godó groups. The Defence Tribunal, which ultimately ruled in favour of the journalists who had filed the suit at the time, issued a final ruling which forced Unión Radio to give up thirteen of its stations as a condition for the merger, an order that the government eventually reduced to just five frequencies.

The two groups had been extremely confident that the matter would end up being resolved in their favour, as shown by the fact that, in 2002, Godó and Polanco celebrated ten years of partnership in the radio market at the annual meeting of directors of Cadena SER's stations. Both assessed the situation favourably, emphasising that the audience ratings justified the merger.

On 18 August 2005 and once the dispute was settled, the two groups announced an agreement to concentrate their holdings in Sociedad Española de Radiodifusión SA and Antena 3 Radio SA, through the contribution of Sociedad de Servicios Radiofónicos Unión Radio SL (with 80% held by Grupo PRISA and 20% by Grupo Godó), 99.99% of Cadena SER, 100% of the companies that made up Inversiones Godó SA (51.05% held by Grupo Godó and 48.95% by PRISA), and Paltrivia SA (50.93% held by Grupo PRISA and 49.07% by Godó) —with the two latter companies controlling 99.42% of Antena 3 Radio SA. In June 2006, the two groups combined their shares to incorporate Grupo Latino de Radio, the multinational company that managed PRISA's radio stations —comprising several

hundred— on the American continent (Legorburu, 2008). The new Unión Radio was now chaired by Polanco, with Godó as vice president.

In 2017, PRISA proceeded with the merger by absorbing the final two companies associated with Antena 3 Radio: Antena 3 Radio SA itself and Antena 3 Radio de Melilla SA. In May 2022, the PRISA and Godó groups announced that the latter would sell its 20% stake in PRISA Radio —formerly Unión Radio— to PRISA. Grupo Godó claimed that this operation would allow it to divest itself of “an asset in whose operational management it had no involvement.” When reporting this news, *El País* (2022) refers in its headline to the percentage of Godó's stake in the company, and in its article highlights the passages from Grupo PRISA's statement in which it hails the “simplification” of the structure and “flexibility” that this exit allows the company. For its part, *La Vanguardia* (2022, p. 42), provides a somewhat inaccurate account by stating that it had been part of “PRISA Radio” (sic) “since its beginnings in 1992, following the merger of Antena 3 Radio, owned by Grupo Godó, and Cadena SER, owned by PRISA”, —a story which leaves out both the two years in which Antena 3 Radio survived as a generalist station under its new ownership and management, and the name “Unión Radio”, under which the service company that brought together the assets of both networks was created.

Be all this as it may, this sale, which had little impact financially and in terms of the media landscape, brought to a close nearly thirty years of partnership between the two groups in the national radio sector.

Grupo Godó, however, did try its luck once again in the radio sector, although this time independently from Unión Radio and only in Catalonia. On 1 May 2000, following a meticulous period of planning that had been underway since 1998, the Group aired RAC1, which revived the name of the historic Ràdio Associació de Catalunya. Broadcasting entirely in Catalan, RAC1 eventually came to comprise 24 stations across the territory's four provinces, as well as in the Principality of Andorra. From its initial 17,000 listeners, by 2009 it became the audience leader in Catalonia, a position it still holds to this day. Simultaneously with this generalist station, Godó also launched a music-based radio station, RAC105. Cebrián (2021) acknowledges that this project was carried out without Grupo PRISA ever being informed or consulted, which in certain measure was a violation of their partnership agreement, but it was decided “not to make a fuss of it”.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Grupo Godó's prominent position in the Spanish radio market changed drastically in the summer of 1992. From being an operator with aspirations of leadership —the EGM placed Antena 3 Radio as the most listened-to generalist station, while among the music stations, Radio 80 Serie Oro and Radiolé also had an excellent trajectory— the group went on to play an increasingly

subsidiary role. The reason for this was the acquisition of its shareholding by one of its main competitors, Grupo PRISA, owner of Cadena SER and its associated music brands.

It is not easy to determine the stance of the president of the Catalan publishing company, Javier de Godó, during the two years in which Grupo PRISA was in charge of the decision-making regarding Antena 3 Radio and its stations. It should not be forgotten that, in a short period, the new management took over the thriving Radiolé, turned Radio 80 Serie Oro into M80 Radio by merging it with Radio Minuto, and initiated a merger process between Antena 3 Radio and Cadena SER that culminated in the disappearance of the station that had managed to topple the latter as audience leader for the first time in decades (although it should be noted that this status was recovered and is still retained to this day).

The testimonies gathered suggest a certain resistance to PRISA's plans to establish the project then known as the "Corporación Radiofónica" (Radio Corporation). In fact, this resistance seems to be what most influenced the design and airing of a second scheduling project for Antena 3 Radio in September 1993 after its rapid decline in audience numbers. This project would not even complete its first season, since, at the beginning of 1994, Unión Radio was established and the dismantling of Antena 3 Radio began —this time, as Wert-Moreno (2023, p. 390) points out, without Godó putting up a fight.

This outcome ended up seeing Grupo Godó overshadowed in the media scene at a national level. Although it cannot be denied that Javier de Godó's business manoeuvres served to remedy the pressing economic problems that his Group —dragged down by Antena 3 TV— was facing, the loss of presence and influence was very substantial. As revealed by Wert-Moreno (2023, pp. 389-390), another thirty years would go by before, upon ending its partnership with Grupo PRISA in the radio sector, the company finally admitted that it "did not participate in its operational management".

It should be noted that the three decades of collaboration between the two publishing groups unfolded very differently from what they had imagined when they reached their agreement in July 1992. There was talk of future joint ventures in the media sector, which also failed to come to much beyond Unión Radio. In this sense, it is clear that this subsidiary presence of Spain's leading radio company did not fully live up to the aspirations of Grupo Godó —as evidenced by the subsequent launch, independent of its partners, of the RAC1 (and RAC105) project.

This confirms Barrera's (1995, p. 195) early thoughts on Javier de Godó's new role in the landscape of nationwide media: "From being one of the great communication entrepreneurs, he became a rather secondary and no longer instrumental figure". Wert-Moreno (2023, p. 390) concludes that the business operation left Grupo Godó's presence "fuzzy" in the national media landscape, arguing that the agreement signed with PRISA in 1992 suggested a scenario "on an equal footing" which never materialised. The bottom line is that the eventual

turn of events was not due to a business slip on behalf of this newspaper group's activity in the written press, but rather the decisive factor in both its rise and fall turned out to be the radio. An interesting future line of research may be to focus on Grupo Godó's renewed desire to further boost its influence through radio —in this case through the RAC1 radio station, which, as mentioned, has managed to remain the audience leader in Catalonia since 2009.

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Comparative analysis of music content legislation on radio and digital platforms: what is the future for quotas in the new scenario?

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Abstract

The article analyses the communication policies of several countries that regulate radio content and new digital sound platforms. It examines local content quotas in traditional radio and the way new regulations adapt to new technologies, such as smart speakers and car multimedia systems. The methodology includes a documentary and comparative analysis of countries such as France, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. It reviews the regulation of platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music, offering recommendations to avoid the excessive power of these new intermediaries. Finally, it provides different options to maintain a balance in the diversity of sound content.

Keywords

Radio, Quotas, Regulation, Streaming, France, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, Spain.

Resum

L'article analitza les polítiques de comunicació de diversos països que regulen el contingut de la ràdio i les noves plataformes digitals sonores. Estudia les quotes de contingut local a la ràdio tradicional i com les noves regulacions s'adapten a les noves tecnologies, com ara els altaveus intel·ligents i els sistemes multimèdia dels automòbils. La metodologia inclou una anàlisi documental i comparativa de països com França, Canadà, Regne Unit i Austràlia. Revisa la regulació de plataformes com Spotify i Apple Music, i ofereix recomanacions per evitar el poder excessiu per part d'aquests nous intermediaris. Finalment, planteja diferents opcions per mantenir un equilibri en la diversitat de contingut sonor.

Paraules clau

Ràdio, Quotes, Regulació, Streaming, França, Austràlia, Canadà, Regne Unit, Espanya.

Introduction

It is not at all strange that studies on the regulation of radio in Spain and Catalonia are less abundant than those dedicated to television given the lower economic, social and advertising importance of the radio sector. The advertising spend on radio in Spain in 2023 reached €461.3 million, which represents 7% of the media spend overall while television reached 29%, about €1.735 billion (InfoAdex, 2024). As a positive feature, its audience level has been maintained for years between 50 and 60%, which means it is a significant medium. The penetration of the radio medium in Spain and Catalonia is close to 54% in 2023, a figure only surpassed by television (81%) and the internet (79%). Two decades ago the percentage was 56%, a

drop of only two percentage points in 20 years (AIMC, 2024; Catalan Audiovisual Council, 2024).

In an analysis of the previous literature, we find that part of the studies focus on the challenge, as yet unmet, of regulating alternative or third-sector radio stations (Meda González, 2015; Lema Blanco, 2020; García, 2021; Pérez-Martínez & Reguero Jiménez, 2021). Studies on licencing policies and the associated issues of concentration and clientelism are also frequent (Fernández Alonso, 2003; Peñafiel et al., 2005; Arboledas, 2009; Arboledas & Bonet, 2013, 2014; Bonet & Guimerà, 2016). In other cases the perspective is purely legal (Chinchilla-Marín, 1999; Cousido, 2022; García Caba, 2023) or a comparative study is made looking at the granting of licences in other countries (Domènech-Costafreda, 2000).

More frequently, we see studies on musical diversity in the radio offering (Gallego, 2016; Bonet et al., 2011), and the role of the public service as a generator of diverse musical offerings (Costa Gálvez, 2017).

Methodology

This research study¹ makes a comparative study of the communication policies in several countries, firstly looking at the way they are aimed at regulating the content of the radio in the form of quotas (France, Canada and Australia) and, secondly, at how are they addressing the regulation of new digital sound platforms and new devices such as smart speakers or car multimedia systems that are becoming new intermediaries in the way people listen to sound content (France, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia). The methodology of this study uses documentary and comparative analysis and covers a selection of countries which are culturally and politically similar to Catalonia and Spain, which have been chosen because they present significant regulatory developments in this sector. The time interval has been set to cover the latest developments from 2020 to January 2024. There is an analysis of the system of quotas, where applicable, and how the countries approach the regulation of sound platforms such as Spotify, AppleMusic, etc. and the devices and gadgets that act as intermediaries in listening to sound content. Finally, some conclusions are offered, and certain options are proposed that could be used by the regulator to avoid situations of excessive control by these intermediaries or platforms in the current scenario for the sector.

The regulation of content quotas on the radio

Before the expansion of sound content distribution platforms, one of the main tools used by the regulator to ensure local content was to impose specific quotas on radio stations in favour of music produced locally or in the language of the country (as in the case of France, Catalonia, Australia, Canada or Poland) or local content quotas, as in the case of the United Kingdom. These rules were conceived in a less competitive framework and in a context where radio was the only way to discover new music and very often also the only way to consume it. Since then, the sector has undergone several changes and technological transformations that have had a major impact on production, distribution and consumption practices. The audience has switched to listening to podcasts, radio and music via streaming, calling the sector into question, especially that of music radio. The question is whether the old quota system should also apply to new streaming operators and gadgets like smart speakers or car multimedia systems.

Quotas in radio and television have traditionally been understood as one of the techniques used in communication policies to achieve cultural and/or economic objectives that the

market alone cannot provide in certain small markets or in those linguistically threatened by neighbours with a high production and distribution capacity. At a European level, we find them being applied to television or cinema to ensure the presence of local content, therefore the culture of a country, and to protect its industry.

In the case of radio, they can consist of quotas for a certain type of music or local news; in this analysis only the former type will be discussed. As far as musical quotas are concerned, they can be based on the national origin of the artists, the type or genre of music or the language used. These quotas can be prescribed by the state through law or imposed by the licence conditions. They can also be applied through a self-regulation mechanism or voluntary commitment, or they can be a mixture of both, a co-regulation system.

France: the prime exponent of quotas

France is the country where the regulation of musical quotas in radio broadcasting is most extensive and complex to protect its musical culture and the French language against the dominance of music in English. The quotas aim is to promote the *chanson française* while bearing in mind that this concept is something broader than simple translation; it is a French way of creating culture by making music; it is a genre in itself that has its roots in classics such as Edith Piaf, George Brassens, Georges Moustaki, Jacques Brel or Johnny Hallyday; it is an important part of France's cultural and popular heritage and needs to be defended.

At first, an attempt was made to promote French music on the radio based on the programming commitments agreed in the granting of the licences between the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA) and the broadcasters, but the degree of non-compliance was high enough for a system of quotas to be launched in the mid-1990s, which in principle were meant to be clearer and provide more legal security (Machill, 1996). Music quotas in France came into force in 1996, were partially reformed in 2016 and underwent several minor changes in 2021 (Franch Law no. 86-1067). They are extremely complex and detailed rules, which in turn hinders their application and control by the independent regulatory authority, currently Arcom, the French authority for the regulation of audiovisual and digital communication.

Different types of quotas depending on the type of radio

The 1996 quotas require private radio stations to broadcast a minimum of 40% of music in French or a regional language spoken in France, of which at least half must be dedicated to new French artists in a non-night schedule or number of hours of meaningful listening. On weekdays from 6 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., Saturdays from 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. and Sundays from 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Regarding the public broadcasting service, Radio France, Article 30 of the Decree of 13 November 1987 that regulates its missions and services specifies that the music quota in French will be 50%.

There are two exceptions to the general rule of 40% applied to private radio:

1. For radio stations specialising in promoting young talent, a quota of 35% is established for songs of French expression, of which 25% must be young talent (8.75% of the total).
2. For radios called “de patrimoine” (Nostalgie or ChérieFM): the quota rises to 60%, and of this, 10% must be new productions, with a minimum of one new title per hour. These two obligations must be given monthly and in several significant listening hours.

In July 2016, a reform was carried out where the quotas were made more flexible but at the same time complicated by three provisions that are very detailed, and which are also found in Article 28.2-bis of French Law no. 86-1067:

1. A third specific derogatory regime for radios specialising in “musical discovery” (those that broadcast at least 1,000 different titles each month, half of which are new productions and none of the titles is broadcast more than 100 times). The general share of 40% remains, but that of new talent drops from the general level of 20% to 15%.
2. Secondly, the 2016 reform establishes a penalty or *malus* to exclude the 10 most programmed French language titles if they represent more than 50% of the total French language broadcasts. This measure is explained because, before this provision, a study commissioned by the French Ministry of Culture confirmed that very few songs of French expression, between 2 and 3%, represented 75% of the broadcasts of the quota (Bordes, 2014). In other words, they always played the same songs in French and there was little variety. This *malus* has been highly criticised by the industry because it means that, by not being able to keep playing the French language hits, their audiences fall and because the measure has the unintended effect that although now French language titles are very present in the top 100, they lose their presence in the top 10. As a result, some radio stations have changed their editorial line or increased the number of non-music programmes to avoid this problem.
3. Finally, a potential reduction of 5% of the overall quota is implemented if several cumulative conditions of diversity and originality agreed between ARCOM and those stations with musical programmes as a significant proportion of their programming are met. Thus, a music radio that does not fall under the above exceptions can lower it from 40% to 35% and a radio station specialising in the promotion of young talent can lower it from 35% to 30% if it assumes a series of commitments: that the music being broadcast has 45% of new tracks each month and that the same title not be repeated more than 150 times a month, and that the number of songs and artists and the diversity of record labels be promoted. This second commitment is conveyed through an agreement between ARCOM and the stations that want this 5% reduction.

After a public consultation on music quotas (CSA, 2021) and following demand from the sector, in 2021 this second commitment to lower the quota by 5 percentage points with a rule was laid out (Decision no. 2021-103). It includes five indicators referring to the percentage of new productions, the number of repetitions, the number of different titles, the number of different artists and the diversity of record companies. In addition, it establishes the data collection procedure and the definitions of each concept, which are key for the monitoring of compliance with these provisions and for offering more legal certainty to operators and Arcom.

Are the quotas working? According to politicians and the music industry, they are

In the political sphere, it is considered that music quotas have been effective because it has supported the exposure of creation in music in French, as recognised by deputies of the French National Assembly in a document by the Culture and Education Commission of that legislative body (Provendier & Victory, 2019). The industry also considers their effectiveness evident. According to a study by Observatoire de la Musique (Véronique & Martiréné, 2018), radios broadcast less than 20% of French-language titles in 1994 before quotas were established, while in 2018 this figure reached almost 33%. In terms of their impact, according to the record industry, album sales by French artists in 2018 represented 80% of the Top 200 (SNEP, 2019). In terms of new talent, 20% of the Top 200 in sales were debut albums produced in France. The figures for the year 2022 show that this trend has been maintained, albeit with a slight downward trend: 77% of the top 200 best-selling albums are of French production and new artists occupy 13% (SNEP, 2023).

Canada: quotas to protect the industry and language

The peculiar linguistic situation of Canada (as a bilingual country) and geographical situation (neighbour of the USA) explain the existence of musical quotas on the radio in this country and its high complexity, similar to that of France. Thus, the Radio Regulations (SOR/86-982) of 1986 defined very precisely what amounts of Canadian music have to be broadcast on radio stations. Article 2.2 of the law states that 35% of the music broadcast between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays and 35% of all music broadcast each week on all AM and FM stations must be Canadian. Furthermore, in the case of French-language radio stations, 55% of vocal music broadcast between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., excluding weekends, and 65% of all the music broadcast each week must be in French. As for the public radio network, CBC-Radio Canada, it must ensure that at least 50% of its music is of Canadian origin.

Conditions for considering a musical work to be Canadian

Interestingly, unlike the French rules, Canadian legislation does not treat language as the sole criterion for defining local content. Section 2.2.2 of the 1986 Act defines local content referred to as 'Canadian selection' as:

"a musical selection that meets at least two of the following conditions, namely (i) the music or lyrics are primarily performed by a Canadian, (ii) the music is composed entirely by a Canadian, (iii) the lyrics are written entirely by a Canadian, (iv) the musical selection consists of a live performance that is recorded entirely in Canada or performed entirely and broadcast live in Canada, and (v) the musical selection was performed live or recorded after 1 September 1991 and a Canadian who has collaborated with a non-Canadian receives at least fifty per cent credit as a composer and lyricist according to the records of a recognised performing rights management company."

This emphasis on the origin of the song or artists and the language in which the song is performed is a direct consequence of the aims of Canadian legislation on quotas. The purpose of the rules is not only to protect the language, culture and music industry in the French-speaking part of Canada but also to protect it in the English-speaking part of the country. If French were the only language spoken in Canada, it would be sufficient to establish a quota favouring French musical content on the radio and this would automatically lower the English language musical presence. Because Canada is bilingual, the radio regulations had to add additional conditions to define exactly what is meant by the term 'Canadian music' and thus also protect the Canadian industry and culture.

Exceptions based on the type of licence

However, there are numerous exceptions and modifications to the quotas based on the type of licence the station has (commercial, university, community, ethnic, indigenous, public or third sector) and the type of music broadcast: popular, special interest (jazz, blues, classical), popular oldies. In general, they involve at most a 5% lower in the general quota or in the case of stations that broadcast music made before 1956, the quota can be lowered by between 2 and 10% (CRTC, 2024). The controlling and sanctioning body is the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

A slight loosening of quotas in 2022

Precisely, the regulator updated the Canadian content rules in 2022 in an attempt to protect the country's artists and at the same time offer more flexibility to the radio industry so it could be competitive in a very dynamic environment with competition from operators of sound content platforms (CRTC, 2022).

Specifically, to give more flexibility to the radio sector, both the criteria for considering a song as Canadian and the content categories have been expanded, thus allowing broadcasters more scope to comply with the quotas. As a counterweight, Canadian

and French vocal music has been more strictly defined so that they could not circumvent using montages of non-Canadian popular songs; also, a new quota was created of at least 5% for songs by emerging Canadian artists and a consultation process was launched on how to use the fund that broadcasters are required to pay for the development of Canadian content. In addition, work is underway on a digital monitoring and open database system that will reduce the workload of broadcasters.

Australia

As a country where English is the main language, the quota system applied to Australian radio is also aimed at protecting Australian artists, industry and music culture rather than the language, in the face of pressure from other countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States with a strong tradition and music industry. It should come as no surprise, then, that the quota system in Australia has a long history, going back even further than the French regulations. The first quotas were imposed in 1942 when 2.5% of music broadcasts were required to be Australian to prevent radio broadcasting from being dominated by American and British artists. This was gradually increased to 5% in 1956, 10% in 1973 and 20% in 1976 (Homan, 2013, p. 389).

The differentiating feature in Australia compared to the previous countries analysed is the self-regulation of the industry since 1992, when the "Commercial Radio Code of Practice" was agreed upon. This Code has been updated over the years and binds every commercial station. The latest version is from 2018 (Commercial Radio Australia, 2018). The quotas are established according to musical genre as can be seen in Table 1.

For example, stations playing commercial rock and pop had to ensure that 25% of the material was by Australian artists. In the October 1999 version of the "Code" it was agreed that at least 25% of Australian music played by mainstream rock and contemporary hits radio stations had to be productions from the preceding year. The aim was to ensure that new songs were included within the playlist of the most commercial stations of these genres. The period in which the quotas are applied is between 6 a.m. and 12 midnight. In public radio, the quota rises to a minimum of 50%. Compliance with these quotas is the task of the regulatory body, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

The Australian Parliament produced a report in 2019 on the Australian music industry, in which it asked the regulatory authority to work to simplify and amend the "Code" so that 25% applies to all broadcasters and that a quarter of that share was from new Australian music (The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2019). The flexibility would come because, in any case, it would be up to each station to demonstrate that there is not enough Australian music and then ask the regulator for a lower quota. However, these requests by MPs have had no further recourse in the legislative field.

Table 1. Australian music quotas by musical genre

Radio format	Quota
Mainstream Rock Album Oriented Rock Contemporary Hits Top 40 Alternative	Minimum 25%
Hot/Mainstream Adult Contemporary Country Classic Rock	Minimum 20%
Soft Adult Contemporary Hits & Memories Gold - encompassing Classic Hits Hip Hop	Minimum 15%
Oldies Easy Listening Easy Gold Country Gold	Minimum 10%
Nostalgia jazz NAC (smooth jazz)	Minimum 5%

Source: Commercial Radio Code of Practice, 2018.

The regulation of new digital sound platforms in Western countries

The quota system has been one of the main tools of the regulator to ensure local content, however, these rules were conceived in a less competitive framework and in a context where radio was the main way to discover and consume music. Since the massive expansion of smartphones with the appearance of the iPhone (2007), the radio sector, like so many others, has undergone a series of technological changes and transformations that have impacted production, distribution and consumption practices and led to the emergence of new actors, formats and products while also calling into question the quota system or at least its limited application to traditional broadcasting.

Although, as usual, regulation always lags behind technological and market developments, there is a fundamental movement in culturally similar countries to try to introduce content obligations on digital distribution sound platforms, especially those such as Spotify, Apple Music or Deezer where the user does not create or distribute content, unlike YouTube. There are also moves to regulate the new technological gadgets that act as intermediaries in listening to sound content, such as smart speakers (UK) or car communication and entertainment system managers (US).

This move to regulate the new actors is explained by three main factors. The first is because the concerns of political actors about preserving culture or language in a world technologically dominated by global companies are still present despite globalisation. In this regard, the sector also argues:

that if quotas are not applied to streaming music platforms, this could paradoxically weaken the regulated actors on whom the policy of both linguistic and cultural diversity depends (Joux, 2016, 2020). Secondly, the radio industry is asking for it by observing that, above all, Spotify competes not only for the audience but also for advertising. If you want a local sound content distribution industry that provides jobs and responds to local characteristics, it is essential to protect it or at least not harm it. Finally, the regulation is also driven by users who request that conventional radio stations be included in the catalogue of digital sound platforms' offerings and in a preferred place to access them from the mobile phone. Spotify users can request improvements to the application through a specific website. One of the requests with the most votes is the direct inclusion of FM and AM radio stations in the Spotify offering. The streaming company responds that it has no plans to incorporate this feature (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Petition and response on the inclusion of FM and AM radio on the Spotify app

Source: <https://scur.cat/FKD08F>

France: there is an ongoing debate, but no regulation yet

Concerning the regulation of music streaming in France, the complaints of radio operators against these competitors are frequent due to the discrimination caused by not imposing a similar quota system on them. The document by the French National Assembly mentioned above (Provendier & Victory, 2019) already considered the need to impose a system of quotas on these sound content digital services, yet it acknowledged that the quotas are unfeasible in streaming, because, being an on-demand model, consumers would remove them from their playlists or look for others. However, the MPs expressed that it was legitimate to pursue the goal of greater exposure of the *Chanson Française* on these new platforms. In this regard,

it suggested that in the future it could be regulated that the editorial proposals prepared by the platforms themselves - such as featured playlists or recommendations - include French-language music, a method that could achieve effects similar to the quotas imposed on radio operators. According to data from Aguiar & Waldfogel (2018), if a song was added to the "Today's Top Hits" list, with 18.5 million followers in 2018, it automatically added 20 million to its number of plays, entailing earnings of between \$116,000 and \$163,000. They claimed that including a song in the different national new music lists on Fridays, "Novetats Divendres Catalunya", for example, substantially increases the probability of success of the song, even in the case of new artists.

United Kingdom: keeping the radio on the new gadgets

Perhaps the most significant and advanced case is the British one. First, it is worth explaining that there are no music quotas in the UK, but there are content quotas. Each radio station, when obtaining its licence, undertakes to broadcast a very specific and defined type of musical or generalist programming, and to a certain quota of locally produced content. In its report *Up Next - The Government's vision for the broadcasting sector*, published in 2022, the UK government proposed updating the 1996 Audiovisual Act, reformulating or even removing these requirements (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2022). Currently, a change in the programming or the type of music a station broadcasts involves justifying it to the regulator Ofcom, which can even set up a public consultation before accepting the change. Relaxing these processes would allow the government to be more demanding with the release of more local information. These 2022 proposals have finally been included in the proposed law that the Conservative government presented in March 2023 and which has been going through Parliament since 8 November (Media Bill, 2023). It is estimated that it could enter into force in early summer 2024.²

Secondly, and perhaps the most interesting element of the British case, are the measures of this new law to regulate and favour the presence of radio services through the voice assistant platforms. According to official audience figures around a third of UK households have access to a smart speaker (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2023). But the most remarkable thing is that radio represents 70% of the consumption of audio services listened to on these devices (RAJAR, 2023a). This high following for traditional radio on these new devices means they contribute 14% of total radio listening in the UK (RAJAR, 2023b).

Faced with this situation, the Conservative government considers that there is a potential risk of an imbalance of forces in favour of the platforms and against the radio stations. To ensure that access to the radio through these gadgets is protected for years to come, it has been decided to regulate it. Currently, the operators of Alexa (Amazon), HomePod

(Apple) and Google Nest are interested in radio services being incorporated into their audio content offering because they are attractive services for users who make heavy use of them, but the moment when that might change and speakers could offer more services and traditional radio is not as significant as a killer app, speaker operators could start putting conditions on it like charging to be included in their offering, participating in the advertising revenue of the broadcasters or including their own advertising, thus violating the integrity of the radio broadcasts.

Therefore, measures have been proposed in the new law that aim to ensure a) that radio services are available on these gadgets and that they can be easily found by listeners; b) that they are received in their entirety, that is to say without added content such as advertising incorporated by the platforms and c) that broadcasters can specify the system or route through which they are delivered to the public (Media Bill, Article 362BI).

Specifically, the following measures are proposed:

1. Must facilitate: Ensuring the presence on these gadgets of those radio stations that ask Ofcom to be made available there.
2. No cost access: there should be no associated costs for this presence.
3. Findability: Ensuring listeners get the station they want when they make a verbal request to the smart speaker.
4. Integrity of service: Preventing platforms from inserting or superimposing their own content on broadcasters' content.
5. Default route: Ensuring the listeners can access the station they request through the station's preferred aggregator (e.g.: BBC Sounds), unless they want another way, or the requested way is very difficult to implement.

Ofcom would be in charge of monitoring compliance with these principles and drawing up specific and detailed rules and guidelines. These five principles are very favourable to the radio industry and are a model that could be applied to the entertainment systems in vehicles, to apps like Spotify or Apple Music or any IP transmission system and smart TVs.

Canada: streaming must offer Canadian content

Like many other countries, Canada has also embarked on a major regulatory reform of the audiovisual sphere to adapt it to the new dynamics and actors. The first step has been to include digital platforms in audiovisual regulation by transforming the old Broadcasting Act (1991) into the recently approved Online Streaming Act (2023), where, according to the government, the needs and interests of Canadians are prioritised and greater inclusion of diversity is sought in television and radio programming. The novelty, as its name indicates, is that it includes companies that perform "broadcasting" from the internet and, therefore, are now regulated by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). The regulator can now impose conditions on them to develop their

activities in the country, such as using local talent, obligations to invest in Canadian content and/or improve “discoverability”, i.e. the ability to find Canadian content on these platforms.

The CRTC admits that it cannot require streaming service operators to use specific algorithms to promote Canadian content. But argues that there are other, simpler systems such as including promotional campaigns or highlighting this content on their home pages. In any case, a discussion is being planned with the actors involved to determine what are the best tools to support Canadian music through a specific public consultation in the spring of 2025 that will deal with “all aspects of radio and streaming services of Canada... [and]... how to support the industry and Canadian music, how to define audio content and what legal obligations should be implemented” (CRTC, 2023).

Australia: regulation proposals

In 2019, the Australian Parliament's Communications and Arts Committee produced a report on the Australian music industry which, among other recommendations, demands that music streaming services work with the country's music industry to increase Australian content in playlists and ensure that citizens have access to local content (The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2019). It proposes the following tools to achieve this goal:

- Employing locals dedicated to curating or editing Australian content.
- Ensuring that Australian content is appropriately represented on locally curated playlists.
- Highlighting Australian artists in promotional material internally, to users, and externally, via marketing channels.

Apart from this report, the Australian Government is working to adapt content policies to the new era of streaming. Tony Burke, the Federal Minister for the Arts, suggested changes to the algorithms of streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music to ensure Australian artists and songs are more prominent, given that according to the same government data 67% of music consumed in the country during 2021 was through streaming (Quinn & Crowe, 2023). This initiative is part of the government's national cultural policy, called “Revive”, which, among other actions, seeks to help the Australian music industry through strategic initiatives, industry partnerships, research, skills development and promotion of exports (Office for the Arts, 2024). Music industry representatives have gone further and called for a 25% quota of Australian music to be imposed on streaming services (AGSC/APRA/AMCOS, 2022).

Other regulatory options to preserve radio

Beyond the initiatives of each country, legal formulas have

existed for years that can be useful for preserving the local radio sector in the face of digital sound platforms and their competition for the audience and the advertising market.

First, one option is the legal tool of the Digital Markets Act (DMA), which allows restrictions on the activities of technology companies considered crucial in the proportion of digital services. These companies called “gatekeepers”, cannot prioritise their services - including audio - in their platforms or impose unfair service conditions on companies or end users. In this regard, a rule adapted to the world of sound would be positive because it would allow an open and non-discriminatory environment for radio stations that want to use these digital platforms and gadgets.

A second concept that could be recovered is that of “must carry”, which required and still requires distribution platforms (such as cable or satellite operators) to include content from certain local or national broadcasters in their audiovisual offerings. This concept is similar to the “must facilitate” concept used by the United Kingdom in its Media Bill or the “must offer” concept in the US. The main difference is that the concept of “must carry” is mandatory and not conditional on the request of the operator, while the “must facilitate” or “must offer” needs to be requested by the broadcaster to be effective.

An example of “must carry” in Spanish legislation can be found in the Telecommunications Law of 2003, which has been replicated in the Telecommunications Law of 2022, currently in force, in its additional 7th provision:

“By order of the person in charge of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation, reasonable requirements for the transmission of certain television and radio audiovisual communication service channels may be imposed, as well as requirements for the transmission of complementary services to enable adequate access for users with disabilities, to operators that operate electronic communication networks used for the distribution of audiovisual communication services to the public, if a significant number of end users of said networks use them as the main means of receiving audiovisual communication service programmes, when is necessary to achieve objectives of general interest that are clearly defined and in a proportionate, transparent and periodically reviewable manner”.

A third legal formula that could be used is to apply to the music industry the obligation to incorporate and highlight local content imposed on large audiovisual streaming companies. The EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive (2018) specifies in Article 13 that on-demand audiovisual service providers must have a minimum of 30% of their offering made up of European works in their catalogues and they must ensure its preeminence. Therefore, in Europe, it is allowed to restrict the freedom of enterprise by imposing editorial decisions to achieve a cultural and industrial goal. The preeminence, as described in

Recital No. 35, can be ensured through a specific section for European works, the possibility to search for European works in the search engine of the service, or through the promotion of the platform itself. Unfortunately, the Directive only covers television and on-demand broadcasting services and does not include radio services, but this principle is no longer alien to EU law and could be applied to the radio industry if there is sufficient political will to do so.

Conclusions

As in so many other economic sectors, radio content regulation has been upended by the emergence of digital distribution platforms. In an older world of scarcity, the private radio sector accepted the establishment of quotas for local content, especially music, in exchange for protection against excessive competition. From the analysis presented so far, it can be seen that quotas are common in culturally similar countries and are applied flexibly according to the type of broadcaster, although over the years they have become more complex.

However, the emergence of digital sound platforms has introduced new and powerful actors shaking up this *quid pro quo*. Faced with this new scenario, the regulators have to ask themselves whether the quotas are suffocating local music stations. It is necessary to define the objectives when regulating and how they are combined: protect the local language, culture or industry. Because let us recall, that radio is local: investments, workers, owners, advertising, etc. and it is an industry where, for example, Catalonia has all the necessary competencies. In addition, in the case of Catalonia, it is the communication medium with the most consumption in its own language with 72% and, therefore, it would be logical that special care should be taken (Departament de Cultura, 2024).

Most of the countries analysed are studying the introduction of measures so as not to lose this local content in the new sound operators, but the United Kingdom has gone one step further by enabling the introduction of radio stations at no cost to smart speakers; this system avoids losing what has been gained with the content quotas imposed on private radio stations. In addition, local content curation and promotion systems can also be imposed on digital sound platforms, as is done in the audiovisual sphere. The legal tools are there, all that is needed is the political will. Falling into the trap of only making policies to promote or finance local content is a mistake. It must be very clear that they are only successful if a system is built that allows them to be incorporated into the distribution networks most commonly used by users. The case of policies supporting dubbing and subtitles for cinema in Catalan is a prime example: mandatory or voluntary inclusion within the OTT offerings is key to their effectiveness and the achievement of cultural and linguistic objectives.

Notes

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Half a century of independent radio stations in Catalonia. The sustainability of the sector in the present day

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Abstract

The emergence of independent radio stations in Catalonia was facilitated by the strong political and cultural mobilisation at the beginning of the democratic transition. Driven by not-for-profit groups and associations, they spread the issues and points of view of a wide variety of collectives and social movements. Half a century later, the independent radio stations are still there, although from the forty stations that existed in Catalonia at the end of the 1980s it has fallen to the current figure of nine. The aim of this article is to contribute to understanding the current situation of Catalan independent radio stations through a historical and regulatory contextualisation, a census and two case studies. Starting from the theories of alternative and community communication, we apply a qualitative methodology to find out the situation of these radio stations and the factors that affect their sustainability.

Keywords

Independent radio stations, sustainability, communication policies, Catalonia.

Resum

El sorgiment de les ràdios lliures a Catalunya fou propiciat per la forta mobilització política i cultural als inicis de la Transició democràtica. Impulsades per agrupacions i associacions sense ànim de lucre, difongueren els assumptes i punts de vista d'una gran varietat de col·lectius i moviments socials. Mig segle després, les ràdios lliures perduren, si bé de la quarantena d'emissores existents al país a finals dels vuitanta s'ha passat a les nou actuals. L'objectiu d'aquest article és contribuir a conèixer la situació actual de les ràdios lliures catalanes a través d'una contextualització històrica i normativa, un cens i dos estudis de cas. Partint de les teories de la comunicació alternativa i comunitària, apliquem una metodologia qualitativa per conèixer la situació d'aquestes ràdios i els factors que incideixen en la seva sostenibilitat.

Paraules clau

Ràdios lliures, sostenibilitat, polítiques de comunicació, Catalunya.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of independent radio stations began in the 1970s with the promotion of radio stations in France and Italy by social movements and citizens. Their existence and claims would call into question the radio and television monopolies of these countries and place them in a position of counter-hegemony. In Spain, the beginning of independent radio is located with the Catalan Ona Lliure (1978), which would have as antecedents Ràdio Maduixa in Granollers (1977) and Radio La Voz del Pobre in Madrid (1976) (Pérez and Reguero, 2021). The

democratic transition would channel the need to enjoy freedom of expression at a time when private broadcasters, created in the 1920s, had been restricted and strongly controlled by the Franco regime (SER, regional and local channels), or were an arm of religious power (COPE). Stations such as Contra Radio, La Campana de Gràcia, El Avispero or l'Estel would be the mouthpieces of social movements and would gain prominence in the 80s, at the same time that commercial radio was also gaining momentum. The independent radio stations, however, would be subjected to persecution and to regulations that stigmatised them, in a context of control and domestication of

radio participation by the Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD) government (Prado, 1980).

In 1983, during a national meeting in Villaverde (Madrid), the principles and characteristics of independent radio stations were defined. The absence of profit and a self-managed operation were established as differentiating elements, along with social participation, the non-professional nature and autonomy from political or economic pressure groups, which is why they reject advertising. Also, the *Villaverde Manifesto* (Coordinadora de Radios Libres, 1983) stated that the mission of independent radio stations is to serve the community where they are integrated, to promote the unification of the sender and the receiver and to oppose the centralisation of communication. Along with independent radio stations, another model of participatory communication would gain popularity, community radio stations. These prioritised service to their neighbours, leisure and culture over political demands, so that they received proposals for action from different institutions and from the public Administration. This would produce a separation—with particularities depending on the territories—of the independent radio stations, bound by the *Villaverde Manifesto* (Pérez and Reguero, 2021). Today, both models are still present in Catalonia and Spain, and some stations collaborate in the Red de Medios Comunitarios (REMC).

Focusing on independent radio stations, this article addresses their current situation in Catalonia and proposes a methodological tool to analyse their sustainability. A qualitative methodology is adopted, which complements the documentary analysis with a census and two case studies.

2. Theoretical framework

The study of independent radio stations is a practically non-existent field and linked to other minority areas of research such as alternative communication, the media of social movements and counterculture (Senecal, 1986; Downing, 2001 [1984]; Atton, 2001). In Catalonia, Bassets (1981) investigated the militant side of independent radio stations, and Prado (1980, 1981) analysed their operation and the political and commercial environment, in addition to criticising the regulatory frameworks that affected them. These studies show that the decision-making of independent radio stations takes place in assemblies that define the general lines of the programming. From the beginning, advertising and economic benefits have been rejected, and production has been collective, without social division of labour, with access and bidirectionality as milestones (Prado, 1980).

Looking for a broad view that includes the diversity of not-for-profit initiatives, some authors have conceptualised citizen communication (Rodríguez, 2001; Camps, 2019) or the Third Sector (Mayugo, 2006; Sáez, 2008). The taxonomies are useful to grasp the differences between the principles and the ways of functioning of experiences such as the radio stations at schools, universities, prisons, NGOs, foundations

or churches. Visualising the political and cultural value of local communication, Moragas (1988) distinguishes three types of broadcasters apart from commercial ones: 1) the broadcasters of the municipal administration, 2) those of cultural institutions, driven by civil society groups that, without renouncing the resources of the market and the administration, seek to be independent (we can consider them the equivalent of community radio stations and other Third Sector initiatives), and 3) independent radio stations, of a political-alternative nature. Moragas, would affirm that “the spontaneity and proactive nature of the sender were insufficient for the consolidation of these experiences” (*Ibid*: 72-73).

Studies regarding the community radio model contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon of independent radio stations as part of wider media processes driven by social groups. Experts of reference in this area (Jankowski, Prehn and Stappers, 1992; Jankowski and Prehn, 2002) attribute the bidirectionality between community and media dynamics as a defining feature of community radio stations. However, unlike independent radio stations, ownership and control are often shared by community residents, local government and other organisations. The overall budget includes corporate sponsorship, advertising and government subsidies (Jankowski & Prehn, 2002). Authors who investigate community experiences claim that financial fragility should not be inherent to them, just as it would not be negative to have abundant resources (Fisher, 2019).

UNESCO and the Council of Europe have studied and promoted the different forms of community communication, including independent radio stations, especially in early studies. This is probably explained by the influence of some personalities linked or close to the movement. For example, the president of UNESCO's Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, Séan MacBride, was a member of the board of trustees of the defunct European Federation of Independent Radio Stations (FERL), which, moreover, referred to the MacBride Report in its statement of principles (Reguero, 2017, 2023). In the same way, the study entitled *Media Communautaires?* (Beaud, 1980), commissioned by the Council of Europe, applies a taxonomy of local media outlets according to the way they are launched: 1) following the decentralisation of the public service; 2) media outlets that are not part of the public service but depend on the public Administration, and 3) self-managed media outlets, created independently, considered the “authentic” community radio stations [*sic*]. The study notes that, after the provision of public aid, certain media outlets continued their work of militant counter-information while others opted for the underground. Currently, the European Parliament recommends the promotion and protection of Third Sector media outlets for their contribution to the progress towards more participatory, plural, inclusive and digitally literate societies (European Parliament, 2008).

Based on the references presented and on the *Villaverde*

Manifesto (1983), we understand *independent radio station* to mean a station that broadcasts on FM and/or the internet, which is not-for-profit and managed by civil society groups (without organic ties to the Administration or political organisations), offering content that reflects social diversity.

2.1. The sustainability of independent radio stations

In Catalonia and Spain, the tradition of independent radio stations and the connection with the academic world have led to a certain amount of studies, many of them action research. The first works that would address the sustainability of independent radio stations in Catalonia and Spain as a whole would be those of Prado (1980 and 1981) and Dolç *et al.* (1985). More recent studies address the sustainability of independent and community radio stations as a whole (Fleischman, Reguero and Sáez, 2010; Barranquero and Candón-Mena, 2021). All of them, and those that focus on communication policies (Bergés, 2012; García, Reguero and Sáez, 2012; Meda, 2015), report a hostile legal context, with mutual support networks being one response (Ramos, Morais and Barranquero, 2018; Reguero and Pérez, in the press). We also have comparisons between Spain and other countries, including self-managed television (Sáez, 2008, Reguero, 2017), as well as the use of free software and Creative Commons licences (Reguero, 2017; Reguero *et al.*, 2022).

On an international scale, comparative studies such as Lewis and Booth (1992), Gumucio (2001) or Pulleiro (2011) stand out. Unesco (2017) has also investigated the sustainability of community media outlets. This research shows that a purely economic evaluation would not include aspects which are essential for the viability of independent and community radio stations, such as the socio-political and economic environment, the social mission or participation.

Gumucio (2005) compares the sustainability of community media outlets with the art of tightrope walkers and proposes to get to know the different models in depth, going beyond the definitions to understand community communication in a global way. The analysis framework proposed by this specialist in the sustainability of community media outlets is what we have used to approach independent radio stations. The approach consists of three dimensions of analysis: social, institutional and economic sustainability (Gumucio, *ibid.*).

Social sustainability refers to the participation of social actors, both in terms of frequency and quality of engagement. Involvement in media management is a key aspect, alongside content production; this participation and the link with the environment should be reflected in the programming. Gumucio includes a sense of cultural and linguistic belonging, especially in contexts of assimilation, and reminds us that radio is the media form that has allowed the greatest level of linguistic and cultural democracy.

Institutional sustainability is deployed internally and externally. The internal dimension is shaped by the ownership model, the organisation and working relationships, participation and transparency. Their ownership is the most important

factor. Gumucio (*ibid.*) notes that very few media outlets really belong to the community, and that behind some that present themselves as community-based are in fact NGOs, the Church or the Administration. Participation analysis includes management and programming. External sustainability is shaped by Spanish national policies and collaboration networks with other media outlets. On this, Gumucio points out the paradox that some governments have given them legal support, since they represent a confrontation or alternative to order.

Thirdly, economic sustainability includes expenses (equipment, basic supplies, performance of activities or wages, if applicable) and income, which can be direct community contributions (work, money and in kind) or indirect (collection of services, such as local ads). Gumucio is a supporter of the appropriate use of advertising.

Other authors have taken more of an in-depth look and added more detail to these dimensions. Villamayor (2010) adds comprehensive sustainability, which includes political-cultural, communicational, organisational and economic aspects. Barranquero and Candón-Mena, (2021) highlight five aspects: economic (the origin and diversification of earnings), political/legal (legal frameworks and legal form), organisational (channels and forms of coordination), economic/social (support community, evaluation of social milestones) and infotechnological (use of digital tools for participation and free software, technological innovations).

3. Methodology

Research on the sustainability of independent and community media in Catalonia has mainly focused on political/legal and activist aspects (Fleischman, Reguero and Sáez, 2010; Bassets, 1981; Dolç, Deó and Sanchis, 1985; Moragas, 1988; Prado, 1980 and 1981; Sáez, 2008). To complement and update it, this article also takes an in-depth look at the social bond and the economy. A historical perspective and a qualitative methodology are adopted to grasp the different forms of the phenomenon (Lindlof, 1995), combining the descriptive approach, in order to define and detail it, with explanations, to identify causal factors (Eiroa and Barranquero, 2017). The global view obtained with the traditional bibliographic review is enhanced by two case studies, Ràdio RSK and Ràdio La Floresta, to which the analysis tool developed in this section is applied.

The cases are selected using non-probability convenience sampling (Taherdoost, 2016), a common selection method in case studies, through which cases are chosen from the range available to the researcher, who sets representativeness criteria to justify the choice. In this research, the selection is based on history, the current reality and the diversity of the independent radio stations around the country. In Catalonia, 125 socially-based media outlets were registered in 2016 out of a total of 345 across Spain (Lema-Blanco and Barranquero, 2015). With

Table 1. Census of independent radio stations in Catalonia (2024)

Radio station	Founded	Location	Broadcasting on
1. Ràdio PICA	1981	Barcelona (Gràcia)	96.6 FM / online
2. Ràdio RSK	1985	Barcelona (Nou Barris)	107.1 FM / online
3. Ràdio Bronka	1987	Barcelona (Nou Barris)	104.5 FM / online
4. Radio Line IV	1988	Barcelona (Nou Barris)	Online*
5. Ràdio 90	1990	Olot	Online / 101.4 FM until 2022
6. Contrabanda FM	1991	Barcelona (Ciutat Vella)	91.4 FM / online
7. Ràdio La Floresta	2012	Sant Cugat del Vallès (La Floresta)	Online / 90.0 FM until 2023
8. Radio Pájaros	2017	Barcelona (Sants)	Online
9. La Otra Orilla	2023	Barcelona (Ciutat Vella)	Online

Source: own work.

* The station was asked if it is currently broadcasting on FM and no answer was obtained. Its last recorded frequency is FM 103.9.

regard specifically to radio stations, the most recent census in Spain indicates that there are 47 Third Sector stations in Spain.¹ To these we need to add 54 additional radio projects by the TSC (XRCB, n.d.). Applying the operational criteria to define an independent radio station (see section 2), the research universe is, as of September 2024, a total of nine active stations,² as shown in table 1. The case study does not establish an ideal number of experiences to be analysed (Eisenhardt, 1989), on the other hand, given the small size of the universe, the two broadcasters with a chosen profile, chosen for convenience, and their contextualisation allow us to grasp the current state of the phenomenon.

Given the historic demand for frequencies, the aim has been for the selected cases to be broadcast on FM. Ràdio RSK broadcasts on FM, in addition to the internet, and Ràdio La Floresta was broadcast on FM until the beginning of 2023 (when the interview took place), and at present is only on the internet.

Ràdio RSK is one of Catalonia's oldest independent radio stations, founded in 1985 in the Nou Barris district (Barcelona), while Ràdio La Floresta, which started in 2012 in the neighbourhood of the same name in Sant Cugat del Vallès, represents the new radio stations. RSK defines itself as a media outlet which is "neither institutional nor commercial, with an internal operation of an associative, assembly and self-managed nature, without any desire for profit or advertising, nor political parties, non-municipal and essentially based on cultural and social content" (Ràdio RSK, online). La Floresta presents itself as a "self-managed cultural project by residents of La Floresta Pearson" (Ràdio La Floresta, online).

To create the radio sustainability indicators, the variables have been adapted from the pilot test process of the R&D project "Sustainability of the Third Sector of Communication" (SOS-COM, 2021-2004), in which the authors of this article took part. The variables are based on the dimensions of analysis

established by Gumucio (2005), supplemented by recent contributions (see section 2.1). Table 2 lists the indicators for each analysis dimension.

The data for the case studies are obtained from a representative of each of the broadcasters, collected through a questionnaire of 60 closed questions, answered face-to-face at the respective headquarters in interviews of approximately one hour (Ràdio RSK, *Pitu*, 28 November 2022; Ràdio La Floresta, Dionisio Giménez, 20 February 2023). The questionnaire makes it possible to collect information in a systematic way around the concepts on which the research pivots (Eiroa and Barranquero, 2017). These data are completed with the programming schedules, the content on the broadcasters' websites and the analysis of the applicable legislation. These primary sources are reinforced with secondary sources, such as studies and media surveys.

4. Results

4.1 Social sustainability

Historically, Catalan independent radio stations have been based on the interest and need of a wide range of individuals, groups and collectives to communicate their vision of reality (Dolç, Deó and Sanchis, 1985). For example, women immediately became involved in production. At stations such as Ona Lliure, Ràdio Venus or La Campana, women found a place to produce specific programmes and talk about issues such as abortion. Expressing oneself in Catalan in a normal way was another incentive (Camps-Durban, 2022). At the beginning of the 20th century, programmes from migrant communities were added, some made in their languages of origin, or from groups diagnosed with mental health problems, highlighting Ràdio Nikosia, under the umbrella of Contrabanda FM, which was 20 years old in 2023.

Table 2. Sustainability of independent radio stations in Catalonia. Dimensions and indicators

Dimension	Indicators				
Social sustainability	Legal form				
	Broadcasting channels				
	Mission and values				
	Public information about the media outlet				
	External communication	Website			
		Electronic newsletter			
		Social networks	Presence		
			Frequency of updating		
			Purposes of use		
		Other communication actions			
		Contents			
		Monitoring			
	Mechanisms of interaction with the audience				
Link with the environment	Content related to the local community				
	Content that promotes socio-cultural diversity				
	Membership or participation in other organisations or networks				
Institutional sustainability	Internal	Organisational structure	Management bodies and positions		
			Assembly		
		Members	Number of regular members		
			Frequency of participation		
			Ways of participation		
			Gender parity		
			Diversity of collaborators	Retired or over 65 years old	
				People with disabilities	
				Members of ethnic minorities	
				LGBTQI+ people	
			Incorporation routes for new members		
			Promotion of inclusion		
		Training for members			
		Causes of abandonment			
		Community property			
		Contracted workers			
		Internal organisation and labour relations	Transparency		
			Freedom (no impositions)		
	Decent contracts				
	Decision-making about the technology used				
	Measures to promote coexistence at the media outlet				
	Headquarters				
	Internal communication				
	External	Normative and regulatory frameworks			
		Legal advice			
		Licence			
Media outlet declared to be a public utility					
Legal or political actions linked to the broadcaster or the sector					
Fines for radio activity					
Pressure due to radio activity					
Participation in media networks		International			
		State			
		Regional			
	Local				
Agreements with public or private institutions					
Economic sustainability	Member contributions	Voluntary work			
		Money			
		In kind			
	Budget				
	Income				
Expenses					

Source: adaptation of the indicators of the R&D project "Sustainability of the Third Sector of Communication" (SOS-COM, 2021-2024). Own work.

Ràdio RSK presents itself as “a means of denunciation and struggle” to promote “the democratisation of communication” (RSK, n.d.), and Ràdio La Floresta “is made and directed by citizens who try to give an objective and [sic] independent vision explaining the tangible reality in the first person and from all areas with music, current events, culture and sports programmes” (Ràdio La Floresta, n.d.). Both define themselves as independent radio stations and orient their mission towards cultural animation and leisure, with political and vindictive content. They have moved between the informal grouping and the formal constitution. RSK operated for years under the umbrella of Taller Jove d'Informació Urbana, the association that gave it legal cover (now defunct), while La Floresta was formalised by constituting the Associació Altaveu Floresta in 2021.

Ràdio RSK is located in Nou Barris, a district of Barcelona where 170,000 inhabitants live.³ It is a fertile place for independent broadcasting experiences: the now-defunct Farigola and Àgora were also founded there and Bronka and Línea IV are currently broadcast there, in addition to other TSC stations (XRCB, n.d.). The proliferation of these radio stations is explained by the strong implementation of the neighbourhood and labour movement in Nou Barris (Huertas and Andreu, 1996), which currently has 335 associations, according to the General Database of Citizen Entities of Barcelona City Council. RSK participates in associative life, either as a broadcaster or through specific programmes. Having the studio in the Can Basté Civic Centre helps it to be in contact and coexist with the associative and neighbourhood fabric (on its website it offers a directory of independent entities and media in the district), in addition to joining and participating in local mobilisations. The most notable events organised by the radio station are the emerging performing arts cycle “El Generador”, the Turó Rock festival and the radio's anniversary party. In addition, the film programme *La Cinemoteca* promotes a cycle of short films directed by women. Regarding the link established between programming and the environment, RSK broadcasts programmes about racism and repression of social movements (*Anarkústika*), the trans collective (*Red Trans Ràdio*) and people with mental health problems (*Radio Nossal*). Also, programmes from other independent radio stations in Spain are broadcast.

Radio La Floresta operates in a very different context; the neighbourhood of the same name in Sant Cugat del Vallès has 5,000 residents,⁴ with a certain increase in the summer. The origin of the neighbourhood, in the Collserola mountain range, is found in the holiday homes built by the upper middle class; it would be in the 1970s, when it would become a countercultural nucleus (Marcén, 2004). Today there are sixty-one registered entities, according to the Directory of Entities of Sant Cugat del Vallès City Council. The station was created from the combination of a group's desire to use the radio and the humanitarian work of a journalist from the area, Dionisio Giménez, who had been active in the free station Contra Radio (Barcelona) and still had the issuer. Later, upon receiving

compensation, Giménez would bring in a new team and help organise and consolidate the project. The intention of the radio station is to be an “instrument for local residents to have their say”, a space for the expression of ideas based on respect and “non-offensive” discourse (Dionisio Giménez, personal interview, 20 February 2023). It broadcasts programmes about local news (*Punt i a part*), commentary and interviews on local issues (*El Bastón de Merino*) and political current affairs (*The Republic*). With a historical perspective, *Visca la terra* collects and comments episodes and cultural activities relating to Catalonia throughout the centuries. In praise of humanitarian acts, *Esta es tu vida* analyses the biography of anonymous people considered an example of dedication to work and cooperation. *Las alas de Hermes* collects the voice of different cultures and worldviews about the human condition and self-knowledge. Music is also present in the programme *Vinilos ye ye*. One of the main values of the radio station is anti-racism, which is guaranteed in all programmes (Giménez, *ibid.*). The radio station is part of the Neighbourhood Council, participates in festivals and organises public events, meetings and concerts. It also belongs to a neighbourhood exchange space for local news, the “Vivir en La Floresta” group, on Facebook.

Regarding external communication, both radio stations have their own website, which they update occasionally. RSK does not publish any digital newsletters and Ràdio La Floresta has done so occasionally. Both use the networks to disseminate content from the media and similar actors, as well as consult content and look for sources of news. RSK has profiles on Facebook and Instagram, which it updates weekly, in addition to publishing content on YouTube. Ràdio La Floresta, which currently only broadcasts online, has a profile on Facebook, updated occasionally, and some programmes can be found on YouTube.

Neither of the two broadcasters has audience measurement mechanisms, so quantitative knowledge about the audience is very limited. RSK has access to the data of downloads and playbacks of the programmes and podcasts, as well as of the users of the streaming of the programmes, although it does not systematically track them. At Ràdio La Floresta, they are not concerned with audience data, but with radio being “an element of reciprocity between people” and being part of “the future of the neighbourhood and the entities” (Giménez, *ibid.*). The main feedback is received in the activities they organise.

4.2 Institutional sustainability

4.2.1 Internal institutional sustainability

The radio stations RSK and La Floresta define themselves as horizontal organisations and have not established governing bodies. At RSK, currently without legal status, the assembly takes decisions relating to management and administration, as well as certain daily tasks. At La Floresta they emphasise the daily tasks and explain that the assembly proposes and coordinates the programmes but does not get involved in the

content, as long as respect is encouraged (neither racism nor male chauvinism is allowed); they were set up as an association to have a legal umbrella, although in practice there are no governing bodies, but an assembly.

Stable collaborators are key to the constancy of the broadcast activity of both initiatives. At RSK they range between 5 and 10, and at La Floresta, between 11 and 15. Men are in the majority at both radio stations, and the Vallès-based station includes people over 65 and from ethnic minorities; one highlight is the group of young people from a Moroccan cultural background who make the programme *Música del Mundo*. The headquarters has been made accessible for people with disabilities and functional diversity. From RSK the aim is to actively promote “the participation of people with functional, ethnic, sexual, bodily diversity, etc.” (RSK, n.d.). Personal contacts and the organisation of cultural, training and leisure activities are the main ways of incorporating collaborators. This is an informal exchange; none of the broadcasters has formalised the figure of these collaborators although they are provided with training when they join.

Both broadcasters have public and accessible information about the organisation’s goals and values. RSK does not use any specific channel for communication with collaborators, while La Floresta uses instant messaging (WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.) and an occasional e-newsletter. Contributors can send opinions, complaints or suggestions by email (RSK) or instant messaging (La Floresta). At RSK they add that they have adopted several measures to promote coexistence at the media outlet: optimisation of the distribution of tasks, improvement in participation and the incorporation of new members. As for the reasons for abandoning the project, both broadcasters indicate that they came down to fatigue or a lack of motivation, as well as lack of time.

4.2.2 External institutional sustainability

The legal recognition of independent radio stations, under the denomination of “cultural and educational not-for-profit organisations” (BOE, 1978) came very early in the piece, with a decree promoted by the UCD government. The high expectations, however, would be frustrated. The sector was forced to undertake at least a minimum level of programming and the production of its own general news items, which made production excessively expensive (Prado, 1981). As a result, it was considered that the decree was “tailor-made to abort the movement of independent radio stations” (Prado, 1980: 163). The commercial stations would obtain licences in the 1981 and 1982 competitions. Out of 300 FM concessions, none were for independent and community radio stations, while the independent radio stations were closed –cases like that of Ràdio Pica, in 1987, would force a public response. The new technical plan of 1989 forced them to cease broadcasting in order to participate in the competitions, a fact that, added to the previous situation, would lead many initiatives to disappear. Some, such as Contra Radio, would do so immediately after the closures, while others

would persist in working in a semi-clandestine fashion despite the spark provided by the concession in Valencia granted to Ràdio Klara (1989) and the recognition of the “educational and cultural stations of local area” by the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia). Decree 80/1989 indicated that the Generalitat would grant FM concessions in Catalonia. The educational and cultural broadcasters were to be not-for-profit and were not permitted to broadcast advertising, except for institutional publicity or programme sponsorship by local entities and external subsidies. They had to broadcast a minimum of thirty hours a week, and 50% of the broadcast time would correspond to programmes of their own production (Parliament of Catalonia, 1989).

In the 1990s, other radio stations would emerge, many of which would cease to broadcast. In the early 21st century, the mobilisation of a hundred collectives brought together in the Assembly for Social Communication (ACS) led to the inclusion of not-for-profit audiovisual communication services in Law 22/2005, of 29 December, of audiovisual communication in Catalonia, allowing the advertising of the social economy and the Third Sector and establishing a reserve of public communication space. However, the Generalitat (Government of Catalonia) and the Spanish Government attributed to each other the responsibility for the reservation of frequencies (García, Reguero and Sáez, 2012). As of 2024, no licences have been granted and the regulatory developments are still pending approval, the project of which would once again be labelled a *suffocation* at the “Not-for-profit audiovisual media” conference, organised by the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Catalan Audiovisual Council (10 December 2009). In 2023, the Spanish State secretariat for telecommunications and Digital Infrastructure initiated a special procedure for community licences,⁵ with ten applications from Catalonia out of a total of one hundred and fifteen in Spain as a whole. The figure at state level exceeded the number of community broadcasters prior to the call, and it is suspected that media outlets that are neither independent nor community-based took part (García, González and Barranquero, 2024).

Also in 2023, the preliminary report on the draft law amending Law 22/2005 was approved, a process in which historical activist claims were recalled: granting broadcast licences, securing radio spectrum and having public spaces for antennas and transmitters. In addition, free licences were demanded as a historical debt and the stoppage of processing files, sanctions or fines, given that the situation is due to administrative inaction (Contrabanda FM, 2020). Historic radio stations such as Bronka, PICA and Contrabanda have received complaints and fines of thousands of euros, they have had to move on the dial because they were trampled on by public or private broadcasters and they have had to dismantle part of their technical teams (Contrabanda FM, 2020; Ràdio Bronka, 2013).

The beginnings of Ràdio RSK, in 1985, were marked by the closure ordered by the Spanish Ministry of Telecommunications. In response, it would merge with Ràdio Canal 8 until 1987.

In the late 1990s, RSK would receive a complaint from the Mossos d'Esquadra Catalan police corps for allegedly interfering with the Barcelona Airport frequencies. From the early 2000s until 2007, RSK would lose momentum as a high-powered pirate radio station crowded onto the point on the dial on which they were broadcasting, 107.0, so they had to move to 107.1. The beginning of Ràdio La Floresta was simpler, partly because the spectrum in that area does not have the same saturation as the city of Barcelona.

At the time of conducting the interviews, neither of the two stations had a broadcasting licence nor had been declared a public utility. Ràdio La Floresta considered that it did not need the licence, but soon afterwards it would abandon the dial due to the impediments that this entailed and the high costs: "Broadcasting through airwaves is the most genuine—and romantic—thing about radio, but the location of the antenna and the cost of the broadcasting equipment is a pain. Band concessions are unattainable, only economic groups and monopolies can afford them" (Dionisio Giménez, consultation on 19 September 2024). RSK has fought for decades to achieve its licence: it submitted proposals and arguments to the laws and established political contacts for this purpose. Neither radio station has been fined. Neither of them has filed complaints to defend their activity and they do not have legal advice.

An essential dimension in external institutional sustainability are the collaboration networks, which arose due to the repression during the Transition. From the national meeting of independent radio stations held in June 1979 in Barcelona, the exchange of information, programmes, technical assistance and joint legal defence would begin (Prado, 1980). Between 1982 and 1983, the Coordinator of Independent Broadcasters of Catalonia (Coordinadora d'Emissores Independents de Catalunya, CEIC) was formed, with twenty radio stations from Barcelona and the Metropolitan Area. In the 1990s, a group of Catalan independent radio stations came together to request legalisation, and in 2010 the collaboration resumed under the so-called Coordinator of Independent Radio Stations (Coordinadora de Ràdios Lliures), to present allegations to the draft regulations of Law 22/2005. It currently brings together Bronka, Contrabanda, PICA, Línea IV, Bala (inactive) and RSK. The latter is also part of Radios Libres, the national coordinator in Spain, through which it has participated in broadcast days in the form of a marathon and in a chain between initiatives from inside and outside of Spain. RSK is also involved with the network of Independent Radio Stations of the Valencian Community (Ràdios Lliures del País Valencià). Ràdio La Floresta does not maintain contact with any network, although it has expressed an interest in doing so.

4.3 Economic sustainability

From the beginning, the independent radio stations in Catalonia and in the rest of Spain decided to reject "economic benefits" and all kinds of advertising (Prado, 1980: 162). Funding

came from the contributions by the radio station's members, producers and listeners (membership fees in the case of associations), donations and profits from the organisation of events and the sale of merchandise. The main expenses are usually the technical equipment, the studio and the supplies. Some radio stations have shared expenses and equipment, such as PICA and Bronka between 2009 and 2010 (Ràdio Bronka, 2013). In 2018, a survey by the Community Media Network (Red de Medios Comunitarios) showed that twenty of the forty initiatives consulted, including independent and community initiatives, had less than €5,000 per year. The informants made it clear that they had difficulties in increasing resources, despite enjoying economic stability. Recently, some independent radio stations are accepting certain types of advertising and exploring crowdfunding.

The annual budget of the two radio stations studied is less than €1,000 and they reject any type of advertising. RSK's funding channels are the sale of merchandise and the organisation of events. Unlike RSK, Ràdio La Floresta has membership fees, a way that accounts for more than 80% of the income, complemented by the sale of books and the organisation of cultural events. The main expense of both broadcasters is the purchase or rental and maintenance of technical equipment. The other important expense for RSK is the organisation of activities—mainly concerts—while for La Floresta it is the payment of copyrights and software licences. Decisions about the production and circulation of content and the use of paid or free software are political. RSK has decided not to pay copyright royalties, uses Creative Commons licenced content and only uses free software.

The economic viability of both projects can be explained by the selfless work and the transfer of spaces, which includes the supplies: RSK has had its studio in a leased space since 1997, in the Can Basté civic centre, in the Turó de la Peira neighbourhood, and La Floresta in a premises leased by the Sant Cugat del Vallès City Council. The Vallès-based station maintains a friendly relationship with the City Council that allows them to use the space but prefers not to identify with the government's discourse so that it can follow its own course. Neither of the two radio stations has paid staff: all their management and production tasks are entirely voluntary. Nor do they have collaboration agreements with educational centres, although in La Floresta some students have collaborated in programmes.

5. Discussion

The thirty-nine years of broadcasts by Ràdio RSK, which were interrupted, and the recent abandonment of FM by Ràdio La Floresta illustrate that the evolution of independent radio stations in Catalonia has been held back by external conditions derived from the regulatory frameworks, such as interference, closures and fines. This situation shows that the desire of the

groups is not enough to make these broadcasters sustainable (Moragas, 1988), in addition to the paradox of legal recognition (Gumucio, 2005). The adversity of this external institutional context (Barranquero and Candón-Mena, 2021; Bergés, 2012; Dolç, Deó and Sanchis, 1985; Prado, 1980) is compensated by internal strengths, such as the organisational and productive capacity of social groups. Thus, despite the driving forces being few in number, they achieve strong social ties and maintain regular radio schedules.

RSK's content prioritises transformative social movements and less institutionalised culture, while La Floresta's radio station puts the spotlight on current events and reflection in a local and political context, as well as cultural and social history. The programming of these radio stations reflects the associative and socio-political dynamism of their environment (Gumucio, 2005) as well as the diversity of cultures, ethnicities, origins and genders, contributing to pluralism and media literacy (European Parliament, 2008).

The scarce financial resources are explained by the fact that they seek financial independence and prioritise action over the economy (Coordinadora de Radios Libres, 1983; Villamayor, 2019; Fisher, 2019). Voluntary work and collaboration, including the practices of free culture, are a key contribution to its sustainability (Reguero, 2017; Reguero *et al.*, 2022). The dynamics of self-management, the participation of non-professionals and the rejection of advertising show that, in addition to adapting and innovating, Catalan independent radio stations maintain their founding principles (Camps, 2019).

6. Conclusions

To understand the sustainability of Catalan independent radio stations, it is necessary to attend to the social dimension. Grassroots participation is the driving force, while also explaining the thirty-nine years of Ràdio RSK and the emergence of initiatives in the midst of the digital age, such as Ràdio La Floresta (inaugurated in 2012 on FM) or La Otra Orilla, launched online in 2023. The bidirectionality between radio and the environment is reflected in different aspects that include radio programming and equipment donations to the transfer of premises, through the involvement of broadcasters in the activities of the territory. This fabric and the various forms of collaboration allow a certain economic balance despite the lack of monetary income. The number and diversity of programmes on Ràdio RSK and Ràdio La Floresta contrasts with their budgets, around €1,000 per year, in an economic scheme that rejects advertising.

Now, there are nine active stations, four of which can be tuned to the Catalan dial. The figure is small compared to the totality of local stations, but it is significant if we take into account that even after the not-for-profit stations have been legally recognised, independent radio stations have remained in a hostile legal environment, debating between legalisation or remaining underground. Despite the complaints, no licence

has been granted in Catalonia. Pessimism and fatigue have caused many broadcasters to disappear or flee to the internet. Ràdio RSK broadcasts on FM with the aim of promoting the democratisation of communication, while Ràdio La Floresta has recently been forced to leave the dial due to the impediments of not having licences and the high technological costs. The generational component also explains the interest in FM despite the impossibility of obtaining licences; in both stations there are members with long experience in independent radio stations. The social self-management of radio is also significant as a countercultural practice in a context in which cultural consumption, mediated by commercial social networks and large platforms, is increasingly individualised and segmented.

The sum of these factors makes it possible to understand the persistence of independent radio stations. They maintain a communication space (Moragas, 1988) started in the 1970s with the desire to democratise radio. Women were present from the beginning, although in the cases studied men are the majority. It will also be necessary to follow the generational shift and the appropriation of independent radio stations by digital natives.

Notes

1. Disaggregated data from the study by Lema-Blanco and Barranquero (2015), provided by the authors.
2. In May 2024, fourteen independent radio stations had been identified. However, in September 2024 it was found that five radio stations identified as independent in the directory of the Barcelona Community Radio Network (Xarxa de Ràdios Comunitàries de Barcelona) are no longer broadcasting.
3. Data consulted in [Idescat](#) (2023).
4. Data consulted in [Idescat](#) (2023).
5. At Spain level, the General Audiovisual Law (BOE, 2010) was promulgated, which includes the concept of *community media*, and would be replaced in 2022 by the General Audiovisual Communication Act. The third transitional provision establishes a special procedure for requesting licences for community services. The list of requests from Catalonia could not be accessed.

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Ten theses to (re)think Latin American community radio stations in the 21st century

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Abstract

More than 60 years after the first community radio stations began operating in Latin America, and under the sociotechnical transformations that characterise the present time, it is both relevant and urgent to question these alternative communication phenomena in order to demonstrate how relevant they are for this region of the world.

This report aims to offer a set of theses that can both clarify and strengthen the interest of the academy in these counterhegemonic communication projects that are born from subalternity. The focus here draws on the interdisciplinary perspective that characterises alternative communication as a theoretical framework to understand and situate Latin American community radio stations as communicative phenomena. They not only articulate processes to democratise communication and information; these initiatives also embody a vision (which is uncomfortable to the existing order) of how to understand and operate the media.

Keywords

Latin America, community media, technological appropriation, social development, dialogue of knowledge, communicative citizenship, freedom of expression, sustainability.

Resum

A més de seixanta anys que les primeres ràdios comunitàries comencessin a emetre a l'Amèrica Llatina, i sota les transformacions socials i tècniques que caracteritzen el temps present, resulta pertinent i urgent problematitzar aquests fenòmens de comunicació alternativa, amb la finalitat d'evidenciar-ne la vigència per a aquesta regió del món.

Per això, aquest treball busca oferir un conjunt de tesis que puguin esclarir i enfortir alhora l'interès de l'acadèmia sobre aquests projectes de comunicació contrahegemònica que neixen des de la subalternitat. Els plantejaments fets aquí beuen de la perspectiva interdisciplinària que caracteritza la comunicació alternativa com a marc teòric per entendre i situar les ràdios comunitàries llatinoamericanes com a fenòmens comunicatius que expressen no només processos per democratitzar la comunicació i la informació, sinó que alhora aquestes iniciatives encarnen una visió (incòmoda en l'ordre existent) de com entendre i tractar els mitjans de comunicació.

Paraules clau

Amèrica Llatina, mitjans comunitaris, apropiació tecnològica, desenvolupament social, intercanvi de coneixements, ciutadania comunicativa, llibertat d'expressió, sostenibilitat.

Introduction

The relevance of the media grew during the 20th century to the point of becoming the pillars of society, of its governance systems and its ways of seeing and acting in the contemporary world (Silverstone, 2004; Wolf, 1985). However, along with their technological development, operating models were developing that differed from each other due to their type of ownership, their function within society and the way in which

they understood communication/information (Olmedo Neri, 2023).

Historically, three major operating models can be found: the public type,¹ characterised by media under the tutelage of governments and States. The purpose of this model is to maintain a close relationship between rulers and the governed, so communication and information operate as a tool for transparency and accountability. For this reason they are

assumed to be features of contemporary democracy (Rodríguez Ortiz and Rodríguez Pallares, 2022).

The second is the private model. This operating scheme stands out for promoting private ownership of the media. Furthermore, this model appeals to the commercial function that these techno-communicative innovations have in society, so the media are seen as a vertical and unidirectional sector of a key ideological nature to stimulate (im)material consumption and thereby legitimise the capitalist mode of production. In this sense, this model understands information and communication as commodities through which a profit is obtained (Mattelart, 1973).

The third model is the social one. This differs from the public and private model because the media are operated and managed by civil organisations or social groups to take advantage of media infrastructures and carry out the transformation of reality through communication, its dynamics and its supports. In this operating scheme, communication is understood as a dialogic-dialectical space where social emancipation can be imagined, while information is seen as a mechanism that allows local development to be vitalised by focusing interest on the upcoming events for audiences, in other words, information has a utility for those who consume it.

In short, the social model of the media is not based on asymmetrical power relations, as those who promote these initiatives are at the same time the audiences that benefit from communication focused on dialogue (Calleja and Solís, 2005; Gumucio Dagron, 2011).

Currently, the three models coexist in inter/subnational media ecosystems and in the different media. However, the private model has progressively imposed itself, because its vision of how to understand and operate the media is structurally and ideologically coupled with the current capitalist economic model (Olmedo Neri, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to identify this disparate context. Only in this way is it possible to enunciate (and expose) the mechanisms used by said model – and those who promote it – to discredit the public model and dismiss the social model, in order to legitimise/guarantee its privileged position within the current global order.

In this sense, there is a dispute between the operating models of the media, since these operating schemes simultaneously embody opposing world visions. Therefore, the way in which each model thinks about communication and information places them at extreme and, sometimes, antagonistic poles. These tensions are observed through the (sub)national histories of each media outlet –including the recent technological innovations represented by the Internet and socio-digital platforms– so paying attention to what happens on the radio contributes to its critical and situated analysis.

When the history of radio is constructed and analysed, there is a tendency to establish a historical panorama that operates under the metaphor of the pendulum. In other words, the history of how the radio –and the media in general– is sedimented in societies shows, most of the time, an irremediable transition

from the public to the private model and vice versa, denying –intentionally or not– the empirical and legal existence of those radio stations operated under a social model.²

In other words, the pendulum movement that is applied within the analysis of the history of radio contributes to the omission of alternative communication exercises.³ Therefore, talking about community radio allows us to state the particularities of its operating model, and simultaneously denounce the (in)direct attack it receives from companies and governments that see these exercises in autonomous and democratic communication as threats to the status quo.

Consequently, situating the analysis of community radio within the long inter/subnational history of radio and media requires a detailing of the particularities of the context in which they emerge. In the Latin American case, it is possible to indicate that the long tradition of community radio stations places it as a genuine empirical contribution from the region to the world on how to understand and use the media in society. The overview constructed by Ballesteros López and García Gago (2020) helps show its validity in Latin America since of the 25,433 radio stations identified by type of model in 19 Latin American countries, 26.2% correspond to community radio stations.

Consequently, recognising the role of alternative communication in Latin America implies granting it its own space within the interdisciplinary field of communication and enunciating (and exposing) the obstacles it faces in a region like this. From there, and derived from the practice developed in the last eight years of research on community radio in Mexico, ten theses are proposed to consider/question in the field of Latin American community radio stations. The proposed theses do not aim to omit the complex and heterogeneous media ecosystems that occur in the region, nor do they aim to dismiss the singularities that occur in each Latin American country when talking about social media or alternative communication. Rather, these approaches seek to stimulate its analysis in the various Latin American contexts in order to encourage research on community radio and demonstrate the relevance of addressing these phenomena from a perspective located on the margins of resistance and subalternity. These theses are presented below.

1. Community radio stations are counterhegemonic and subaltern projects

To talk about *counterhegemony* and *subalternity*, their respective antagonistic categories must also be stated: hegemony and dominance. These categories were developed by Gramsci with the purpose of situating political and cultural conflicts in relation to the State, as well as (re)defining the dialectical logic between infra and superstructure (Alvarez Gómez, 2016; Modonesi, 2010). Hegemony therefore refers to the capacity that the dominant classes have at certain historical moments to impose their vision of the world on others – through subtle or violent consensus – and thereby strengthen their privileged position

in society through the political direction that derives from said action (Hartley, 1997).

By building hegemony, the dominant classes not only legitimise their ideology and the social structure that benefits them, but they become the protagonists of that world vision, which relegates the worldviews, aspirations and realities of those groups that are seduced by the narratives born from power. Then, from ideological hegemony, mechanisms of domination are exercised that seek to produce the necessary conditions for the reproduction of the status quo (Althusser, 2007). In this sense, the mechanisms of domination are key since they reinforce the ideological bases and productive structures of hegemony, while at the same time disciplining the dominated and punishing those who contravene this imposed social order.

Under hegemony, the media operate as amplifiers and legitimisers of the dominant ideology. This is because their rhetoric dilutes the class struggle in the face of the dream of a national/global community that it creates by building a common arbitrary and authoritarian superstructure, which conceals systemic inequalities and its contradictions (Mattelart, 1973).

For these reasons, community radio stations are counterhegemonic and subaltern. They are counterhegemonic initiatives because their mode of operation and the way in which they understand communication and information empirically questions the dominant private model in the media ecosystem. By operating under other postulates, community radio stations erode the dominant ideological bases and erode the legitimacy of communication as a commodity and fetish.

For this reason, the private industry tries to discredit them by referring to them as *unfair competition* or as *pirate radio stations*. From another side, governments attack community radio stations through regulatory mechanisms that limit their spread and restrict their sustainability methods. From the official vision of the public media, community radio stations are subversive because they question the official discourse, denounce the abuses committed by those in power, appeal to forms of autonomous social-based organisation and echo the inability of governments to comply with their obligations defined in the law. Given this, governments see these initiatives as destabilising public order, so they monitor them permanently to look for any pretext to censor/close them.

Now, if community radio stations are expressions located on the borders of hegemony, those who promote them are, in a strict sense, people who embody subalternity.⁴ Subalternity is a concept that refers to those social groups that are subject to domination by elites. Subalternity not only shows the unfavourable position of a group or institution in society, but these subjects have a historicity, so in addition to the unfavourable position, they have a political and social condition that questions the imposed order and its promoters (Modonesi, 2010).

Thus, the dispossessed of society join forces (consciously or unconsciously) to obtain their media and thereby undertake the symbolic and ideological struggle to legitimise their vision of the

world in adverse contexts. In this way, community radio stations present themselves as spaces of counterpower that facilitate the production, distribution and consumption of counterhegemonic narratives that arise from the periphery to counteract alienation. Therefore, it is not only community radios, due to their mode of operation, that are subaltern; it is also their operators and the audiences that support them. They are marginalised groups made invisible from a world vision that attempts to homogenise global daily life.

How can we make the counterhegemony and subalternity of community radio stations operational? One way to do this is through its content, its territorial location, its property regime and the reasons that led to its creation. Another way to make these categories operational is from their location within the categorical dichotomies such as urbanity-rurality, centre-periphery, global-local, control-emancipation and dominance-subalternity (MacBride, 1993; Mattelart, 2007; Olmedo Neri, 2022).

Essentially, community radio stations present themselves as key initiatives that break into the media ecosystem and both enunciate and expose the systemic inequalities in which they operate, creating an uncomfortable situation for the de facto and official powers within the territories where they have coverage.

2. They operate under a source-type communication model

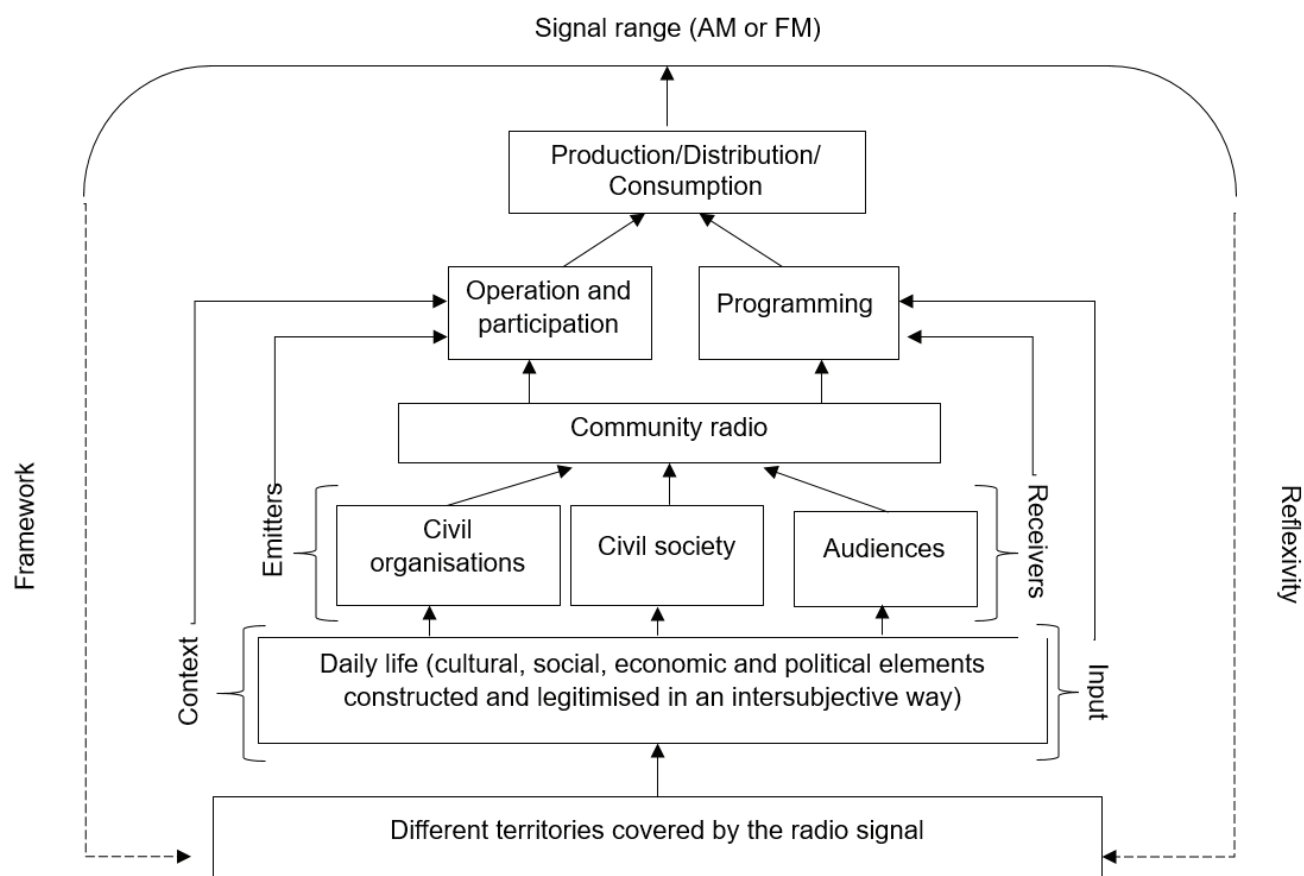
Being subaltern and counterhegemonic, community radio operates under a communication model that is disruptive to the centralised, unidirectional and vertical scheme that characterises private media (Wolf, 1987). Paying attention to the communication model is crucial as it allows us to see the horizontality and at the same time the reflexivity between the participants, the circularity in the communication process and the exposing of a place of expression supported by the otherness constituted in the 'we' discourse (Martín-Barbero and Corona Berkin, 2017).

Specifically, it has been proposed to name its communication dynamics as a source-type communication model (Olmedo Neri 2023). Figure 1 proposes a diagram of this process.

This model emphasises that its participants play a permanent transition between sender and receiver, that is, those who operate a community radio station are both senders and receivers since they themselves benefit from the content produced/distributed by the radio, prioritising the local above the global.

Another element to highlight is that, by its nature, this model is limited to the coverage of its signal, so its programming and efforts are concentrated on providing useful elements close to the reality of its audiences (Calleja and Solís, 2007; Olmedo Neri, 2019). Recognising the prevalence of the territory in these types of initiatives is key because it shows, on the one hand, the prevalence of the local over the global in its programming, and the ability to imagine creative ways to adopt and adapt

Figure 1. Source type communication model



Source: Author's own work.

the new technological innovations of recent years when these are presented or incorporated into its infrastructure (Gumucio Dagron, 2001).

In general terms, community radio stations operate mostly in rural areas, since the social inequalities based on the territory mean that these projects can partially reduce the digital gaps that they suffer under the urban-global order that is imposed on contemporary social development (Olmedo Neri, 2022).

Finally, the metaphor of the source is used because only in this way is it possible to recognise its bases, its scope, as well as the circulation of its contents and resources to guarantee the durability of these types of projects. The source metaphor allows us to schematise a structure with a broad socio-territorial base whose transformative power is concentrated in community radio, which, through programming and constant citizen participation, allows us to challenge the audience and offer them new ways of thinking/exercising communication and information in their common environments (Gumucio Dagron, 2011).

3. Community radio stations are/make the community

As spaces of counterpower, those who come together on community radio stations strengthen ties for the common good that they collectively pursue. Community radio therefore becomes a space to be and make community among its members. Simultaneously, audiences build a sense of community because said medium is close to their problems. Furthermore, by becoming a citizen initiative it allows people to make the radio their own and from there undertake a process of significance and appropriation of a historically, territorially and communicatively situated medium (Calleja and Solís, 2007; Gumucio Dagron, 2001).

Therefore, being and creating a community through social radio implies that the facilities of said medium are open to the population so that activities can be developed that reinforce the social fabric. At the same time, creating this sense of community among the population occurs through the reputation that community radio acquires over time for being sensitive

to social needs, denouncing media injustices, stimulating the sociocultural matrices that give them historicity and seeking social transformation through communication (Calleja and Solís, 2007; Paiz Malespín, 2016).

In other words, given that their function is not only informative, community radio stations are integrated into cultural circuits to (re)produce these structures and strengthen social cohesion through situated practices that maintain the sense of community, that is, the capacity to build and live in a 'we' endowed with identity and history. Therefore, community radio stations promote dialogue of knowledge, as their infrastructure allows them to mobilise local knowledge and strengthen the world vision of their representatives (Martín-Barbero and Corona Berkin, 2017; Mata, 1993).

4. Community radio stations (re)order the articulated world

Radio, whether community or not, as with any other medium operates under the double articulation proposed by Cultural Studies (Silverstone, 2004; Williams, 2011). This means that the radio is based on its technological dimension as a machine that makes its space in the home and daily life, while its second component is symbolic and refers to those uses and meanings that are configured around its everyday use. (Olmedo Neri, 2022).

As a machine, the radio has undergone significant changes in its presence in daily life as technological innovations have reconfigured the media ecosystem, increasingly specialising the use of radio in daily life. However, what has not changed, or changed very little, are the sociocultural practices that originate around this type of media. This is because, due to its orality, radio becomes a medium that democratises knowledge through the spoken word (Calleja and Solís, 2007). The dynamics of the radio do not imply a literacy process that is required, for example, to decode newspaper messages. That is why for many Latin American countries, such as Mexico, radio is presented as the first mass medium of communication because its reach, the cost of acquisition and the impact on society brings information closer to large sectors of the population that are the object of systemic inequalities in the educational field.

On the other hand, the orality of radio grants a certain freedom to receivers to carry out various activities while consuming its programming, granting the subject a freedom that is not present in other media. Therefore, community radio, by producing content from the local to the global, is settling into the daily lives of radio listeners with greater robustness, as the transmitted programming strengthens the usefulness and relevance of communication in daily life. Community radio then accompanies its audiences on a daily basis and simultaneously stimulates the social fabric eroded in contexts marked by adversity (AMARC MX, 2014; Gumucio Dagron, 2011).

Finally, community radio stations reorder the hierarchies

implemented by power on how to contemplate/participate in the world as their communication model prioritises local events and not global events. This does not mean that community radio stations distance themselves from the global communication network that is being developed in contemporary societies. They do however recognise that there is no better way to transform reality than through content that can help recipients transform their daily lives.

In this way, community radio reverses in its programming the urban-global order driven by dominant forces and relies on situated ways of seeing and participating in the world. It is positioned from the objective material and contextual conditions that the radio and its audiences have to build a nearby reality where radio listeners have greater agency.

5. Radio stations articulate with other social movements

Community radio stations can be studied as a long-term social movement in Latin America (Calleja and Solís, 2007; Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Tornay Márquez, 2021). This social movement has three major waves or key moments to think about in Latin American contexts: the first wave ranges from its first initiatives as educational/popular radio stations to its legal recognition within the respective States. Here its advance is shown – initially clandestine – and the attack received by private industry and governments to discourage its proliferation.

The second wave includes its legal enunciation, up to the convergence process of its infrastructure. Here, the progressive process of sedimentation of the radio in community life and in its process of (re)construction of the social fabric stands out. Finally, the third wave is in development and is characterised by the process of renewal of the radial infrastructure, on the one hand, and the integration of new innovations in the interstices of communication, culture and technology. Due to its historical proximity, this third stage resonates more strongly, as the new context puts the durability of community radio under tension, at least as was demonstrated in the previous waves.

In addition to the above, community radio can be considered a social movement, as it has a collective and collaborative agenda of a political, social and cultural nature that it promotes in public space and opinion. As a social movement, it seeks to transform reality and thereby recalibrate power relations within the *status quo*, which is why it makes enemies as it advances in society, as has already been mentioned.

As it is a social movement, community radio stations have the innate ability to relate to other movements that seek to resist the onslaught of capital. An example of this is that the majority of community radio stations are located in rural areas that have been subject to privatisation processes and dispossession of their natural resources (Castellanos Rodríguez, 2020; Gasparello, 2012; Olmedo Neri, 2017). These attempts at dispossession have generated multi-sited resistance processes to defend life and territory, which resonate in public opinion through the

techno-communicative infrastructure of said media.⁵

In this way, community radio stations cannot be alien to these unfavourable contexts, so their subaltern position allows them to empathise with these movements. They offer their radio spaces to cover social struggles, give voice to the subaltern classes and propagate the narratives created from resistance to share the challenges and problems that arise in the spaces close to radio listeners.

6. Radio provides communication for local development

Community radio, by having the capacity to intervene directly and permanently in the public sphere and opinion of its listeners, becomes a space and at the same time a tool for social change (Calleja and Solís, 2007; Gumucio Dagron, 2001). These factors turn community radio stations into staunch enemies of the de facto powers embedded in the political, economic and social structures of the places where they operate (De la Noval Bautista, 2018; Ramos, 2007).

In this way, the chieftains, the families that perpetuate themselves in the political structures or the media that minimise or omit the processes of dispossession in the region are exposed for the arbitrariness of their actions and the consequences they generate at the local level.

Hence, community radio destabilises power and stimulates the empowerment of society through this community medium. When this happens, the radio becomes a mechanism that contributes to recalibrating systemic inequalities and allows communication and information to obtain this emancipatory character (Mattelart, 1973). How does radio contribute to local development? In formal terms, it can be said that it does so in various ways, all of them based on the operating spaces and techno-communicative infrastructure. Developing cultural activities to bring the population closer to the radio; making shared problems visible such as services, security, health, education; encouraging accountability by local authorities; fostering collective memory through the reproduction of culture; as well as highlighting the historical-cultural elements that give them identity, are some examples (Castellanos Rodríguez, 2022; Martínez-Roa and Ortega-Erazo, 2018; Olmedo Neri, 2019).

In essence, the local development that community radio boosts occurs by making visible the local actions that the population develops to face their adversities in a collective and collaborative manner.

7. Community radio requires four pillars for its sustainability

In being counterhegemonic, community radio stations develop in unfavourable contexts that restrict their financing mechanisms and frequently compromise their sustainability (Gumucio Dagron, 2005). The permanence of community radio stations

over time and the strategies they develop/employ to survive in the media ecosystem is a topic of great analytical importance in Latin America, and yet it is a field that has been given little time by the region's academia.

The few investigations in this regard insist that the particularities of community radio intervene directly in its sustainability, so the economic dimension is understood as a key factor, but it is not the only nor the most important one (Gumucio Dagron, 2005; Lemus Pool and Bárcenas Curtis, 2024; Téllez Garzón, 2022; Villagra and Traversaro, 2019). Those who address the sustainability of community media highlight three focal points: the economic one (which emphasises the possibilities and formal/legal procedures to obtain an economic income from the communicative function they perform), the social one (referring to the reputation that it acquires within society and that encourages people to support said initiative through donations or volunteering), and a third, of a political nature (related to the defence of its movement and agenda before the political and factual powers).

Based on the experience acquired in research on community radio in Mexico, it is important to envision a fourth axis, since the increasingly palpable challenge of technological renewal forces us to dimension the relevance and validity of community radio as a project based on a specific medium: the radio. The mutation of the radio into a digital one forces us to reflect on the relevance, not of the project that takes shape in a community medium, but on the technological support through which the voice of the subaltern classes resonates.

Identifying the components of the sustainability of community media is key, since their uniqueness helps explain that attempts to strangle them by limiting their financing repertoires and their disqualification from political power do not have severe effects on this social movement. The social dimension turns them into current projects endowed with history, while the technological dimension gives them a role (marginal or leading) in the media ecosystem at its different spatial scales.

8. Community radio is an exercise in communicative citizenship

It is important to delimit the term *communicative citizenship*, as it is a recently emerging concept that seeks to recognise that the contemporary exercise of communication can no longer be thought of or operationalized only in its political aspect. This is because the communication structures and mediation/mediatisation processes that accompany them cross governance systems and individual actions on a daily basis (Collado Campaña, 2008; Olmedo Neri, 2023; Tamayo Gómez, 2012). In other words, current discussions about citizenship cannot ignore the technological and communicative character that societies acquire, their modes of political participation and their sociocultural structures.

For this reason, communicative citizenship seeks to recognise

the preponderance of the individual practice of communicating as a feature of contemporary urban-global citizenship. The exacerbated individual nature of this concept derives from the personalisation of technology, that is, the increasingly refined production of technological devices that operate within the framework of the subjectivity and individuality of people, as well as the architecture of the Internet itself and its techno-operational logic.

So, if communicative citizenship refers to the ability of the subject to exercise their right to communicate, based on the resources at their disposal, community radios can be thought of as collective and collaborative exercises of communicative citizenship (Cerbino and Belotti, 2016; Martínez-Roa and Ortega-Erazo, 2018; Olmedo Neri, 2023). The articulation of communicative citizenship with community radio rests on the emancipatory potential that these initiatives transmit through their programming and their form of organisation/operation. It is important not to forget that community media, when operating in adverse political-legal contexts, use non-hegemonic forms of organisation and operation such as volunteering and donations they receive from radio listeners.

Regarding donations, this mechanism allows the diversification of the sources of income that community radio stations receive when carrying out their activity, which do not arise from the payment of a service, but from the interpellation that the radio makes to its listeners and the importance that it represents for those who benefit from its operation. In the field of voluntary work, this form of solidarity participation not only allows the link between the subject and the community environment to be strengthened, but at the same time contributes to the circulation of knowledge in the operation of the radio, making it a permanent process of innovation and renewal on its objectives, programming and essence.

Overall, community radio stations establish themselves as exercises of communicative citizenship, but whose position in the current world order places them on the borders of what is desired since their predominantly rural-local articulation opposes the hegemony of the urban-global assembly that has been established since the construction of the New World Information and Communication Order, known as NWICO (MacBride, 1993; Mattelart, 2007).

9. Community radio is a collection of experiences of technological appropriation

The prominence of the Internet and its accelerated integration into daily life has led some authors to erroneously assume that it is in the digital space where the social appropriation of technology formally begins. These approaches, and the consequent emancipation they promote, are based on the hegemonic vision that legitimises the urban-global assembly of contemporary society and that discredits, through omission, those previous and purely media experiences that made the

idea of placing the media at the service of society possible.

There are therefore precedents of success on how to reverse the oppressive function of the capitalist media. However, the unfavourable position that has already been described contributes to these media going “unnoticed” in public opinion and the agendas of social sciences. For this reason, it can be said that community radio stations are the initiatives where the social appropriation of technology effectively begins.⁶

The appropriation of technology is, by definition, a porous concept, as it depends on the discipline from which it is based to delimit its epistemological cores and the form of its operationalisation. For example, in Cultural Studies, the appropriation of technology refers to the process in which a medium/device that is on the market is integrated into the subject’s domestic space (Silverstone and Haddon, 1996). A process of resignification accompanies the transition that the machine makes from the public space to the private-family space, since this foreign and external technology ends up being domesticated to the point of becoming a personal and close place from where the subject develops varied processes around its socialisation.

The other conception, with a greater Latin American essence, states an intermittent, iterative, heterogeneous process crossed by different contexts and circumstances, through which a person incorporates technology in the practices developed within the broad framework of daily life (Crovi, 2020; Sandoval, 2019). This process advances or regresses both due to the material conditions of the subject and the needs, realities and possibilities that drive him to appropriate a medium of communication or a technological device; a particular feature in the Latin American region is the decreasing presence of digital divides. The relevance of digital divides lies in the fact that they operate like a domino effect that reduces and complicates a person’s ability to use technology to achieve a fairer horizon of possibility. In general terms, there are four large gaps: two have a material and economic order (the coverage gap and the access gap); the other two have a cultural and subjective essence (the use gap and the appropriation gap). These techno-operational inequalities make the appropriation process more complex and allow us to understand that its expressions show a multiplicity of conditions, realities and possibilities (Olmedo Neri, 2022).

Articulating the notion of *technological appropriation* with community radio stations implies recognising the permanent learning acquired through trial and error that is generated between those who operate a radio station and those who benefit from it through its programming. The learning experiences that occur *with*, *in* and *through* community radio allow it to be integrated into a dialogue of knowledge that is based on the experience of the radio in its daily social work. That is why the best way to operationalise the appropriation of technology in community radio is through work on the ground, that is, through immersion exercises in the reality studied in order to rescue the place of enunciation of those who support these types of projects.

In other words, community radio stations are not theoretical problematisations that require expression in reality. On the contrary, they are empirical expressions that are based on the experience of those who assume this medium as a strategic channel to materialise their horizon of possibility. Therefore, community radio stations can be approached from a theoretical framework oriented towards alternative communication, but they require highlighting the situated singularities of their operation.

In this sense, community media, through their disruptive communication model, democratise and popularise knowledge/information with their daily activity to incite social transformation. All of this within the framework of the apprehension and appropriation of technology by both senders and receivers in the dialogic-dialectical process of contemporary and situated communication (Martín-Barbero and Corona Berkin, 2017).

10. Community radio is a resilient medium

From a historical perspective, community radio can be thought of as a resilient medium, because although the disturbances caused by the capitalist system have made the creation, development and durability of these initiatives difficult, this has not meant the death of the so-called *third sector*. In contrast, by not seeking a profit from their operation, community radio stations have known how to adopt survival mechanisms and adapt their own techno-operational essence to carve out a place for themselves in the media ecosystem under a restructuring process.

The most important adaptation that stimulates the problematisation of the future of community radio does not lie in its durability in society or in the validity of its political-cultural-communicative agenda, but in the technological mutation present in the media. Faced with the techno-info-communicative innovations that arise with the Internet and socio-digital platforms, new ways of producing/transmitting/consuming information are opening up, monetisation mechanisms are expanding and the spatial scales of action of these projects are mixed.

Under these changing conditions, it is worth reflecting on the following: is it possible to continue talking about community radio when these projects no longer operate under the same media support that characterised them during the 20th century? And if this were to happen, would it lose its essence as a sociotechnical phenomenon or, conversely, would it be renewed? What would be the theoretical and epistemological implications on its modernisation or technological stagnation? These concerns arise to the extent that community radio stations are integrating digital innovations into their operational logic in order to endorse their social objectives. They are taking on the search for a receiver that is increasingly immersed in a noise that hinders their way of seeing and participating in the world.

If the future of community radio is in the digital environment,

then what will be its epistemological and ontological singularities as projects that are founded on the relationship of subject-technology? Thinking about the future of radio as a resilient medium implies recognising that its technological convergence is only possible and feasible for at least three reasons: the first is the massification of technological devices in society because of the lowering of their cost in the market. The second reason is that the digital gaps that during the 20th century conditioned the success or decline of these and other initiatives, today show clear reductions. In the near future, they will therefore no longer be considered an obstacle in the Latin American context (Olmedo Neri, 2022). The third reason has to do with the increasingly global nature of rural citizenship. Given that rural areas are in a process of commercial, cultural and productive integration in the communicative fabric of globalisation, those residents who had to migrate to other states or countries can now maintain a connection with their places of origin. This is because community radio stations serve as mediators between contemporary communities that are distanced and at the same time connected.

In any case, community radio is inserted in a media crossroads that allows it to stimulate its forms of empirical expression on the one hand, and that forces the theoretical frameworks used to be stressed, so that they are readjusted epistemologically and can continue to be capable of explaining reality. What is clear is that community radio has a long way to go in the 21st century, but it will clearly have major transformations that must be questioned.

Conclusions

Community radio, even with the adverse context in which it develops, has managed to maintain/position itself within the Latin American media ecosystem. The ways in which these counterhegemonic projects manifest, operate and endure in the region make them a genuine sociotechnical phenomenon that embodies the ontological peculiarities of Latin America in the current world order of information and communication.

For this reason, the theses presented have the aim of exhibiting their validity within the agenda of the Latin American research in communication of the 21st century. Addressing community radio from an academic perspective is an implicit sign of the political and social commitment of Latin American academia regarding its problems and the ways to address them. The fact that community radio stations continue to persist is an unrestricted sign of the validity of non-hegemonic thought that imagines and enunciates forms of counterpower through the use of the media.

Radio as a medium will find its place within the media ecosystem, but community radio is in an extremely interesting process that, as mentioned in these ten theses, will undoubtedly mark its present and future in the region. Contexts may change, but this does not imply that their structures of domination and

oppression will also change, which is why Latin American critical thinking that supports an alternative way of thinking/using the media in society is still relevant.

Furthermore, if inequalities, oppression and violence against the subaltern classes continue in Latin America, there is nothing left but to make it resonate ever louder and in all directions: Long live the radio! But even more so: long live the community radio!

Notes

1. In other regions of the world, the notion of *public media* integrates those initiatives born from civil society. This action, from a broader perspective, can conceal the operational singularities of said exercises under the characteristics presented by those media under the auspices of the different governments and States. Research in Latin America, given its long tradition of citizen exercises that appropriate the media, has been insistent on differentiating public media from social media since there are substantial peculiarities regarding their operation and purpose in society.
2. The importance of naming the social model of the media lies in the fact that its recognition highlights the need to offer regulatory frameworks that define its recognition before the State and to articulate its powers, for example. In Latin America, the invisibility of social media during the 20th century had a negative impact on their legal recognition since they operated under clandestine frameworks, being the subject of persecution and repression. This situation changed as each country in the region began a legislation process around its presence within the media ecosystem and the forms of operation within each nation.
3. An enunciative way that demeans the work of radio stations with social purposes is to reduce these projects as amateur radio exercises. This term depoliticises community radio and strips it of any counterhegemonic meaning, since the intellectual, economic and social effort to conceive, organise, create, operate and maintain a project of this nature is dismissed. It equates it as a mere interest (temporary or not), which can be interpreted as an intermittent or partial duration amateur exercise. For this reason, it is strategic to evaluate the epistemological load of the terms to be used to name the sociotechnical phenomena anchored in this field.
4. The epistemological position that emanates from this concept has decanted into a prolific trend of thought that has been called "Subaltern Studies". The impetus from England and India in this field has highlighted that it is not only enough to recognise those who are on the "wrong" side of the equation, but that in principle it is necessary to encourage these people to begin to occupy the place from which they are recognised (Herrera Montero, 2009). In this sense, making the subaltern speak, but simultaneously listening to them, allows the establishment of a dialogic-dialectical process that

enriches the production of scientific knowledge and uncovers the historical omissions that go unnoticed from the colonial history of the world and its protagonists (Chakravorty Spivak, and Giraldo, 2003).

5. The incorporation of community radio stations into the repertoires of defence against extractivism and the new urban-global culture can be observed more strongly within contexts where those who manage and listen to the radio belong to indigenous peoples. In these cases, the radio operates as a form of resistance against the cultural homogenisation promoted from urban and Western areas, as well as against the processes of dispossession that seek to disrupt their relationship with their territory.
6. Although in Latin America the press played a relevant role, its origin, distribution and consumption focused on emerging cities, on the one hand, and the level of literacy that it implied for its decoding, on the other hand, made this medium incapable of democratising the information it stored. On the contrary, the orality of the radio, its wide coverage, the low cost of its access – since people only needed to buy a device once compared to the newspaper that has a business model based on a permanent purchase – and the popular practices that were built around it made this medium become strategic for distributing information through the spoken and heard word. Therefore, radio can be seen as the medium that could effectively democratise communication and information in the emerging Latin American mass societies during the 20th century.

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Positioning of Brazilian university radio stations towards the public: tensions between the public, institutional and educational dimensions

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Abstract

This article analyses the documentation and websites of AM and FM university radio stations of Brazilian federal educational institutions. Through the documentary analysis of regulations and editorial policies and a categorical content analysis of the "About us" and "Programming" sections of the websites of 26 broadcasters, we seek to understand how these entities align with the principles of the Brazilian Public Broadcasting Service (SRP). The results highlight the predominance of self-identification as an educational service, with a high value on local and regional culture and a dearth of mechanisms for social participation.

Keywords

University radio, educational radio, communication policies, plurality, Brazil, categorical content analysis, documentary analysis.

Resum

Aquest article analitza els documents i els llocs web de ràdios universitàries brasileres d'AM i FM d'institucions d'educació federals. Mitjançant una anàlisi documental de reglaments i polítiques editorials i una de categorial de contingut de les seccions "Qui som" i "Programació" dels llocs web de 26 emissores, busquem entendre com s'alineen amb els principis del Servei de Radiodifusió Pública brasiler. Entre els resultats, destaquem el predomini d'una autoidentificació com a educativa, amb valorització de la cultura local i regional, i la manca de mecanismes de participació social.

Paraules clau

Ràdio universitària, ràdio educativa, polítiques de comunicació, pluralitat, Brasil, anàlisi categorial de contingut, anàlisi documental.

Introduction

University radio stations emerged in the Brazilian media ecosystem in the second half of the 20th century. The first radio station, Radio da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, first aired in 1957 (Mustafá et al., 2017), under a licence that, to legal effects, was commercial. It was not until Decree-Law 236/1967 was implemented that this licence type was redefined as educational. This new category encompasses non-profit-making AM and FM stations overseen by public

and private universities, state and municipal governments, and private foundations whose sole purpose must be for the dissemination of educational and cultural content aimed at reinforcing compulsory and higher education. There are currently 730 educational AM and FM stations in operation, which represent 11% of the country's broadcasters (Ministério das Comunicações, 2022). Informational mapping conducted by Kischinhevsky et al. (2022), shows the presence of 128 university radio stations, affiliated with a total of 118 Higher Education Institutions (IESs).

University broadcasting in Brazil is broad in scope, ranging from stations managed directly by the university Rectorate or entities affiliated with the educational institutions—which are either operated by privately contracted professionals or civil servants—to stations run by university foundations—which may form part of academic divisions, generally faculties of social communication—or even a combination of these models (Kischinhevsky et al., 2019).

Legally, broadcasters under the control of federal public universities (Federal Institutions of Higher Education, IFES) form part of Brazil's Public Broadcasting Service (SRP) (Law 11,652/2008) and are governed by principles that revolve around management (autonomy, independence and social participation) and content production (plurality, diversity, the promotion of national and regional culture and a commitment to education). In addition, since 2009 a public policy has been underway to integrate these stations onto the public stage through their affiliation with the National Public Communication Network (RNCP), managed by the Empresa Brasil de Comunicação (EBC).

This study aims to analyse—from the perspective of communication policies¹ and UNESCO's principles (2002)² for public service broadcasting, how broadcasters under the control of Brazilian federal public universities define themselves to the public. The research is based on a documentary analysis (Moreira, 2008) of regulations and editorial policy, and a categorical content analysis (Sampaio and Lycarião, 2021) of the "about us" and "programming" sections of the institutional websites and social media of 26 AM and FM university radio stations under the control of federal IESs. The objective is to identify: *a*) the extent to which these entities conform to the principles of the Brazilian Public Broadcasting Service in terms of determining their image and programming objectives vis-à-vis the public; and *b*) whether, from an institutional perspective, there is evidence of editorial, financial and administrative autonomy, as well as public participation and social control.

The main conjecture of this research is that Brazilian radio broadcasters form part of the public sphere and are subject to tensions arising from a three-fold identity that encompasses: a cultural/educational dimension inherited from their beginnings; the necessity of providing institutional communication to disseminate the scientific output of its associated educational entities, and of serving as a teaching laboratory; and the principles of the Public Broadcasting Service.

The concept of university radio

The concept of university radio is multi-faceted and varies depending on the authors of the discussion and the national backdrop against which the debate takes place. Differences, for example, may rest in legislation and the funding of broadcasters, which affect the way human resources and content are organised and managed (Vázquez Guerrero, 2021). There is, however, a

degree of common ground, which mainly resides in the aims of the stations. In her study of Ibero-American broadcasters, the above-cited author observed a rise in exchanges between Portugal, Spain and Latin American countries, due to the effervescence and diversity of university broadcasting on the South American continent.

Vázquez Guerrero (2012) argues that these stations have emerged on the media ecosystem as alternatives that seek fair and democratic communication, and it is to this effect that they engage with citizens, producing content that relates directly to their everyday lives, thus affirming their social commitment and fulfilling their function as a public service (Casajús, 2012). In this sense, university radio forms part of a movement to democratise communication (De Deus, 2006; Martín-Pena and Giorgi, 2019)—bringing the public closer to the microphone and pluralism to the world of audio media.

This pluralism is also nurtured by the educational nature of university broadcasters, who train—to name a few professions—journalists, broadcasters, publicity agents and managers. With these diverse job profiles come different ways of integrating communication students into the day-to-day workings of the station, organising activities and funding the stations. For Lopez (2019), training professionals is one of the main challenges and functions of university broadcasters, and a feat achieved by combining theory, practice and the day-to-day lives of both audiences and students (Martín-Pena, Lopez and Freire, 2023). University radio "in essence, combines the formative, experimental and knowledge-transmitting roles inherent to universities and brings to the fore their spirit of reaching society" (Casajús, 2018:98). In doing so, it also reiterates its commitment to society and the personal and professional training of broadcasters.

One of the challenges of managing university radio stations, however, resides precisely with this diversity of features and different sources of origin. However—and particularly as regards the sample analysed in this article—, these are public broadcasters and, most especially, broadcasters of a public nature. Paulo Fernando Lopes and Roberto Sousa (2020) advocate for a better synthesis between professional training, programming and the public interest, which could be achieved through independence, transparency and administrative and financial autonomy.

But what is the reality of Brazilian university radio? As regards management, data from a study by Marcelo Kischinhevsky and Izani Mustafá (2018) shows that half of these Brazilian radio stations are managed institutionally, 18.2% by volunteers and 31.8% through the use of hybrid models. In the latter two categories, the efforts of the students are essential to the day-to-day running of the station. In terms of organisational hierarchy, the authors found broadcasters to be predominantly subordinate to university Rectorates, communications departments and foundations. In addition, only a few stations were observed to have a position within the organisational structure of the University, or be linked to academic departments (especially

communications divisions). Although the authors do point out that most stations are supervised by university professors.

Staffing and funding are sensitive issues for Brazilian university radio stations: in general, there is insufficient staff for them to be able to produce their content. In addition, average wages are low and the allocation of budgeting is unclear. Kischinhevsky and Mustafá (2018) report challenges regarding the human, financial and infrastructural resources of the broadcasters. This results in low production capacity, lower innovative potential and a prevalence of management lacking strategic planning, although the efforts of the broadcasters to keep the stations running and fulfil their community relations, cultural and citizenship commitments are notable.

The educational legacy of Brazilian university radio

Understanding the current operational context and contemporary challenges of Brazilian university radio stations necessitates a reflection on the context in which they initially emerged. To this effect, there is an educational legacy that has conditioned the creation and development of university broadcasters, comprised of three dimensions: the historical, the cultural and the normative/regulatory. These dimensions are not mutually exclusive and have not had a linear effect on the constitution process of radio stations linked to higher education institutions, but yet in some way, they are still the source of tensions as regards how they continue to operate.

Regarding the historical dimension, there are two significant variables that stand out: the first regards the influence of Edgar Roquette-Pinto upon founding the Rádio Sociedade do Rio de Janeiro in 1923, in the interests of education and science and with the goal of “valorising elitist/erudite educational and cultural content of a formative and instructive nature” and “reinforcing scientific dissemination with a view to sociocultural development”, while also diffusing the “nationalist ideals” (Pinheiro, 2019:59), advocated by the governments of the time. The second variable lies in the fact that these interests were embraced by the Brazilian government, which received Rádio Sociedade do Rio de Janeiro as a donation in 1936 —which it then renamed Rádio MEC (Ministry of Education and Culture Radio) —in a clear manifestation of how Roquette-Pinto also “contributed to the establishment of the state broadcasting system.” From 1930 to 1970, the government looked beyond the scope of educational media as a mere means of reducing illiteracy rates, to also see it as a means for “economic growth, strengthening communications, reducing temporospatial distances, disseminating ideologies (such as that of the military dictatorship in place at the time) and reinforcing the construction of a national identity.” (Bianco and Pinheiro, 2017:15).

As Zuculoto (2012:198) points out, “from the roots laid down by Roquette-Pinto”, various “radio schools” then began to spread through Brazil. Some examples of the stations, services and projects aimed “exclusively at instruction by way

of the radio waves” included: the programmes and stations of the MEB (Compulsory Education Movement), Universidade no Ar, SAR (Serviço de Assistência Rural), SIRENA (Sistema Rádio Educativo Nacional) and the Minerva Project —the latter of which was underpinned by “the military dictatorship’s policy guidelines for developing communications and distance education by radio as a means of national integration and the dissemination of its ideology” (Zuculoto, 2012:234). Minerva, therefore, was a project “in line with the dictatorship’s response to the popular education activity that preceded it, such as the MEB, the Compulsory Education Movement of the Catholic Church.” (Pinheiro, 2019:106).

This synthesis of the historical dimension hitherto discussed allows for a more contextualised understanding of the influence of this educational legacy on the second dimension of Brazilian university radio stations —the cultural. Broadly speaking, this dimension rests on two aspects: a) a unique organisational culture that transitioned from altruism and volunteering to the establishment of public service stability —which reached its crux during the period when Rádio Sociedade do Rio de Janeiro was in operation and the formative years of Rádio MEC respectively; and b) a series of tendencies in production processes, notable among which were the creation and transmission of non-dialogical content and the dissemination of programmes of a predominantly elitist/erudite nature, such as talks, lectures, classes, concerts etc.

As Bianco and Pinheiro (2017:17) point out, this cultural dimension can also be observed in five other aspects: a) the idealistic aspect, which relates to the aspirations of figures such as Edgar Roquette-Pinto and Enrique Morize for radio to in fact be a school for the poorest members of society; b) the developmentalist aspect, as reflected by the desire for economic growth and the recovery of a national (ideological) identity, as touted by the rulers of the Brazilian federal government who witnessed the institutional inception of radio broadcasting; c) the *amateur* aspect, exemplified not only through improvisation, the adaptation of content and professional training, but also by the nascent technological issues, with equipment, working and transmission conditions that were often inadequate; d) the organisational aspect, whereby we can appreciate the reverberations of the different organisational and structural approaches of these educational broadcasters —firstly as “societies” or “clubs” in which there was a prevalence of a certain degree of altruism in management practices, and even financial sustainability, and then with the focus shifted to the stability of the public service —which historically is a space often permeated by political proselytism, partisan mandates and interventions of special interest to the ruling governments; e) the negotiating aspect, evidenced by the subordinate status assigned by different governments to the educational broadcasting sector, in favour of the commercial sector.

These aspects pave the way for now addressing the normative/regulatory dimension, especially as concerns the regulatory framework (1937-2015) that decentralised the shaping of the

Educational Broadcasting Service in Brazil, “with subsidies managed by the Ministry of Education at the federal level, and at state—and eventually municipal—level, by state governments, mayors and public universities.” (Bianco and Pinheiro, 2017:20). It is important to note that, except for broadcasters run by private foundations, a significant proportion of stations in this sector depend mainly on state funding, which in most cases is deemed to be inadequate.

Furthermore, although this framework was mainly concerned with defining the purpose of the Educational Broadcasting Service for the transmission of educational and cultural programmes, it was repeatedly subjected to the rationale of patrimonialism and clientelism, for example, with the handing over of countless educational stations to private foundations affiliated with politicians. These “bequests” ended up creating discord between the different approaches of the educational and state/governmental service, as regards the diverse objectives and principles that each of them should comply with.

A significant step towards overhauling this scenario was made with the publication of Decree No. 256 from the Ministry of Communications, dated July 6, 2011 (now repealed). This law established criteria for guiding the analysis of grant requests for operating educational broadcasting services, which in article 4, gave preference “first, to federal universities; second, to the states; third, to state universities; fourth, to municipalities, and fifth, to municipal universities.” (Brazil, 2011).

Decree No. 4335/2015/SEI-MC, dated September 17, 2015, which “provides for permission and licensing procedures for the execution of FM sound broadcasting services and of sounds and images, for exclusively educational purposes” (Brazil, 2015) constituted a further, more significant development, by revising the concepts of educational and cultural programmes, listing their principles and objectives, and redefining the priorities for granting public licences for the Educational Broadcasting Service.

Brazilian university broadcasters and the public sphere

Having conducted an analytical reflection of the three dimensions (historical, cultural and normative/regulatory) that have influenced the educational heritage of university radio stations in the country, we must now reflect on what constitutes the public sphere, and how this dimension impacts and challenges the work of university stations. Article 223 of the 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution designates the public sector as complementary to the private and state broadcasting systems. Although this article remains unregulated, it was clarified to a certain extent with the approval of Law No. 11.652, which “establishes the principles and objectives of public broadcasting services operated by the Executive Power or granted to entities under its indirect administration” and which “authorizes the Executive Power to create Empresa Brasil de Comunicação – EBC” (Brazil, 2008). According to the legislation, the public

sphere includes non-commercial, educational, cultural and university-state broadcasters.

Furthermore, incorporation into this sphere has been encouraged through the policy of integrating these stations into the National Communication Network, which is provided for in Article 8 of the aforementioned law and which is precisely one of the EBC’s functions: “Art. 8 – The EBC is responsible for (...) III – establishing cooperation and collaboration with public or private entities that operate communication or public broadcasting services, using agreements or other arrangements, to form the National Public Communication Network” (Brazil, 2008). The third paragraph of the same article establishes that in order to be part of the network, the programming of public and private entities must comply with the principles and objectives of the SRP, for example, by acting as a complement to the private and state systems; promoting a plurality of sources for the production and distribution of content, a diversity of topics and formats, national culture, and respect for ethical and social values; fostering the construction of citizenship and the consolidation of democracy and participation in society, guaranteeing the right to information, free expression of thought, creation and communication (Brazil, 2008).

Although they must be guided by these principles and objectives, university radio stations have their particular traits that stem from their affiliation with institutional management bodies, the internal and external community and, of course, the students and researchers for whom radio is a space for developing skills and competencies in the vast domain of communication and its related areas. To these particularities, we must also add the challenges of meeting the responsibilities imposed by the National Standard of the Public Communication/Radio Network – NOR 402 (EBC, 2021, p. 2), such as broadcasting four hours of programming produced by affiliates.

President Lula’s government (2023-2026) has promoted the growth of this network by signing cooperation agreements between the EBC and public universities, hoping to operate radio and television channels. This is a two-way partnership: universities must broadcast local content and retransmit some of the EBC’s productions (from TV Brasil, Rádio Nacional and Rádio MEC). In return, the EBC offers assistance in license-granting procedures, technical support and training, and greater visibility to regional content through national broadcasting. In 2023, the RNCP had enlisted 39 radio stations operated by universities, 12 of which were identified as being affiliated with federal universities. 35 new agreements were signed with IFESs in 2023-2024, with network managers aiming to have 109 FM stations in operation by next year (EBC, 2024b).

Methodology

This article is based on the premise that institutional communication reveals the identity and image of university

radio stations, as well as reflecting their activities, values, standards and the image they wish to project to the public. The research was carried out with a documentary analysis (Moreira, 2008) of regulations and editorial policy, and a categorical content analysis (Sampaio and Lycarião, 2021) of the “about us”, “programming” and “social engagement” sections of the institutional websites and social networks (Facebook, Instagram and YouTube) of Brazilian federal university broadcasters.

For this research, “institutional communication” is understood as a form of virtual public expression that reveals the identity and image of broadcasters, as well as reflects their actions, values, standards and public positioning. It is a form of strategic expression (Kunsch, 2009) that aims to construct, maintain and improve the organisation’s image and reputation in line with its objectives and values, and which encompasses both internal communication —aimed at employees and collaborators— and external communication, aimed at the general public. The term refers to how the organisation presents itself and how it is perceived by the public.

Two methods of analysis were carried out to understand how the broadcasters analysed are represented in institutional spaces, and how this representation is connected to the principles of the Brazilian Public Broadcasting Service: one documentary and one of categorical content.

The categorical content analysis was conducted using conventional methodology. The first stage involved reading the texts to identify potential emerging themes. Sections of the texts considered relevant to the research aims were then identified, coded, and labelled. Drawing from Sampaio and Lycarião (2021), two coding approaches were used: *a)* deductive coding (a priori categories) based on the principles of UNESCO and the Public Broadcasting System, who define the features of public broadcasters; and *b)* inductive coding (emerging categories identified during the process of reading and analysing the data). The a priori categories observed based on the review of literature on public radio and television were: educational, cultural, public, plurality, diversity, differentiation and citizenship. The categories that emerged when reading the texts were: reach, institutional, information, journalism, scientific dissemination, alternative, quality, pedagogical laboratory, regional culture, and local culture.

The codes were identified in two stages. Firstly, manual categorisation is achieved by observing significant extracts of the texts. Secondly, with the help of the qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti, codes in the text were identified and their meaning ascertained from the perspective of the social and cultural backdrops of the public university and Brazilian media ecosystem. The codes were grouped into two dimensions: *a)* how radio stations define themselves; and *b)* how radio stations define their programming based on the three-dimensional triad of music, news and journalism. Similar codes can be observed in both dimensions, although they are used with different meanings.

The corpus for analysis was compiled by cross-referencing information mapped by Kischinhevsky et al. (2022), the study on public radio by Nísio Teixeira and Rafael Medeiros (2019), and the interactive map provided by the National Public Communication Network (EBC, 2024a). We identified 26 AM and FM stations operated by federal public universities, 12 of which are members of the National Public Communication Network (Table 1).

From this analysis, we acknowledged the predominance of precarious websites that lacked complete information, were outdated and without a shared vision. This created a challenge for the study, which aimed to analyse the place of institutional communication in the construction of the broadcasters’ identities. A significant observation is that 73% of these broadcasters have their own website, which creates an informative space for listeners to view the programming and interact with the station. The rest of the broadcasters exist as pages within the university or foundation that sponsors the station, that offer institutional information and are not designed as a space for interacting with the audience. The same poor quality is also reflected in social networks, with five of the broadcasters having no social media profile. Among those that do, we observed that only half frequently update it and the rest only sporadically and without a regular pattern (Table 2).

Regarding the documentary analysis, documents such as editorial policy guidelines and internal regulations were examined, in order to identify the station’s profile and programming ethos. A literature search for these documents resulted in a small sample of materials for analysis sourced from broadcasters’ websites. These documents offered, for example, further details on their editorial policy, public positioning and commitment to the principles of public communication. During the search, only six broadcasters published their editorial policies on their website: Rádio Universidade 800 AM, Rádio Universitária FM 107.9, Rádio Universitária UFG 870 AM, Rádio Paulo Freire 820 AM, UniFM 107.9 and Universidade FM 106.9.

To identify evidence of mechanisms for audience participation in the management of the broadcasters, a search was conducted for documents that formalise this practice, for example, by way of a board of directors or editorial and programming committee. UNESCO (2001) recommends participation mechanisms of this type as a means of ensuring that the community in which the broadcasters are located can have a say in the programming.

No documents or indications were identified to suggest that the corpus of stations researched engages in social participation through these traditional mechanisms. Instead, the stations analysed use public calls for proposals as a means of approaching society. This action allows for the inclusion of productions by individuals, associations, student groups and community radio stations, with or without the support of incentives. Three stations were found to provide guidance documents for creating public calls: Rádio Federal FM de Pelotas, Rádio Paulo Freire and Rádio UFSCar.

Table 1. Broadcasters included in the research corpus

Radio	University	Province	Membership RNCP
1. Rádio Universitária 107.9 FM	Universidade Federal do Ceará	Ceará	Yes
2. Rádio Universitária 96.9 FM UNIFAP	Universidade Federal do Amapá	Amapá	Yes
3. Rádio UFS FM 92.1	Universidade Federal de Sergipe	Sergipe	Yes
4. Universidade FM 106.9	Universidade Federal do Maranhão	Maranhão	No
5. Rádio Universitária 88.9 FM	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte	Rio Grande do Norte	No
6. Universitária FM. 107.5	Universidade Federal de Uberlândia	Minas Gerais	No
7. Rádio Universitária 100.7 FM	Universidade Federal de Viçosa	Minas Gerais	No
8. Rádio Federal FM 101.3	Universidade Federal de Alfenas	Minas Gerais	No
9. Rádio UFMG Educativa 104,5 FM	Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais	Minas Gerais	Yes
10. Rádio Federal FM 107.9	Universidade Federal de Pelotas	Rio Grande do Sul	No
11. Rádio Educativa UFMS 99.9 FM	Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul	Mato Grosso do Sul	Yes
12. Rádio UFSCAR 95.3	Universidade Federal de São Carlos	São Paulo	No
13. FURG FM 106.7	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande	Rio Grande do Sul	Yes
14. Rádio UFOP Mariana 103.5 FM	Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto	Minas Gerais	Yes
15. Rádio FM Universitária 96.7	Universidade Federal do Piauí	Piauí	Yes
16. Rádio Universitária FM 95.9	Universidade Federal de Roraima	Roraima	Yes
17. Rádio UFT 96.9 FM	Universidade Federal do Tocantins	Tocantins	Yes
18. UNIFM 94.5	Universidade Federal do Paraná	Paraná	No
19. UniFM 107.9	Universidade Federal de Santa Maria	Rio Grande do Sul	Yes
20. Rádio da Universidade 1080 AM	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul	Rio Grande do Sul	No
21. Rádio Paulo Freire AM 820	Universidade Federal de Pernambuco	Pernambuco	No
22. Rádio Universitária UFG 870 AM	Universidade Federal de Goiás	Goiás	Yes
23. Rádio Universitária AM 1570	Universidade Federal Itajubá	Minas Gerais	No
24. Rádio Universitária 105.7 FM	Universidade Federal de Lavras	Minas Gerais	No
25. Rádio Universidade AM 800	Universidade Federal de Santa Maria	Santa Maria RS	No
26. Rádio Universitária 99.7 FM	Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri	Minas Gerais	No

Source: own work.

Table 2. Radio stations researched with their respective websites and social media networks

Rádios	Own sites	Other institutional website	Social media
Rádio Universitária 107.9 FM	https://bit.ly/4ezYb6W		Instagram @radiouniversitariafm
Rádio Universitária 96.9 FM UNIFAP	https://bit.ly/4dHT2su		facebook.com/radiounifapoficial Instagram @radiounifapoficial/
Rádio UFS FM 92.1		https://bit.ly/3YbB8d1	facebook.com/radioufs Instagram @radioufs
Universidade FM 106.9	https://bit.ly/3Nhd159		facebook.com/universidadefm106
Rádio Universitária 88.9 FM	https://bit.ly/4gTVL4M		facebook.com/fmuniversitarianatal/ Instagram @universitariafmnatal
Universitária FM 107.5		https://bit.ly/3BD3zYC	
Rádio Universitária 100.7 FM	https://bit.ly/3YiNTCB		
Rádio Federal FM 101.3		https://bit.ly/4eEAKD	facebook.com/groups/radiofederal
Rádio UFMG Educativa 104.5 FM	https://bit.ly/4dSI0kh		facebook.com/ufmgeducativa Instagram @ufmgeducativa
Rádio Federal FM 107.9	https://bit.ly/4dZwjbz		facebook.com/RadioFederalFmUfpel
Rádio Educativa UFMS 99.9 FM	https://bit.ly/3ZY9ZLN		
Rádio UFSCAR 95.3	https://bit.ly/3NtyUPP		facebook.com/escutediferente Instagram @radioufscar
FURG FM – 106.7		https://bit.ly/4eL2tZy	
Rádio UFOP Mariana 103.5. FM	https://radio.ufop.br		Instagram @radioufop
Rádio FM Universitária 96.7	https://bit.ly/3Y5PwC6		facebook.com/RadioFmUniversitaria967
Rádio Universitária FM 95.9	https://bit.ly/3Y0IH61		Instagram @rtv.ufr
Rádio UFT 96.9 FM		https://bit.ly/4eL9Gsn	Instagram @uftfm
UNIFM 94.5	https://bit.ly/4f0HukO		Instagram @unifm94.5
UniFM 107.9		https://bit.ly/4h3K0Og	facebook.com/UFSMrádios
Rádio da Universidade 1080 AM	https://bit.ly/4fjrWcr		facebook.com/radioufrgs Instagram @radioufrgs
Rádio Paulo Freire AM 820	https://bit.ly/3zX7iQg		facebook.com/radiouniversitariapaulofreire Instagram @radiopaulofreire
Rádio Universitária UFG 870 AM	https://bit.ly/3NpYRjv		Instagram @radioufg/ facebook.com/radioufg/
Rádio Universitária AM 1570	https://bit.ly/3U2wECY		
Rádio Universitária 105.7 FM	https://bit.ly/3YkQzdz		facebook.com/universitaria105fm Instagram @universitaria105fm
Rádio Universidade AM 800		https://bit.ly/4h3K0Og	facebook.com/UFSMrádios Instagram @radiosufsm
Rádio Universitária 99.7 FM	https://bit.ly/3YkSd4l		facebook.com/UnicentroFM

Source: own work.

Public image building

University radio stations mainly project themselves to the public as educational —a feature present in the descriptions of 17 of the 26 stations analysed. This term relates in part to the type of non-profit licence under which the public universities operate, while also referring to the production and dissemination of educational programmes aimed at promoting scientific knowledge and stimulating critical thought.

The second predominant identifying feature is the cultural dimension that comes with the broadcasters' educational character: the promotion and appreciation of local and regional culture, as well as the dissemination of musical genres not commonly aired on commercial radio stations, are keystones of these stations when building their public-facing image.

Third comes the institutional dimension: broadcasters cast themselves as institutional communication channels that make public the research, teaching and outreach activities of universities. This institutional aspect stems from the strategy for scientific dissemination and the diffusion of scientific knowledge developed by institutions. A significant portion of these channels position themselves as the university's official conduit for dissemination.

The fourth dimension relates to the aim of being a teaching laboratory for students —especially those undertaking communications and journalism degrees— in offering students the opportunity to practice and develop professional skills in an authentic radio production environment, involving them in the practical activities of producing the station's content and, in some cases, in the regular production of programmes derived exclusively from this teaching activity.

Finally, university radio stations are notable for their activity based on an ethos of a plurality of voices and cultural diversity. The broadcasters claim to be open to different opinions and forms of artistic expression, hence ensuring programming that reflects the multiplicity of the segments of society. This status is evidenced through the promotion of quality public debates and the advocacy of human rights, gender issues and racial diversity. This is a dimension often associated with the role of a public broadcaster, although of the 12 federal IES stations linked to the RNCP, only five are observed to be defined as public, four of which happen to operate under licences granted by the EBC.

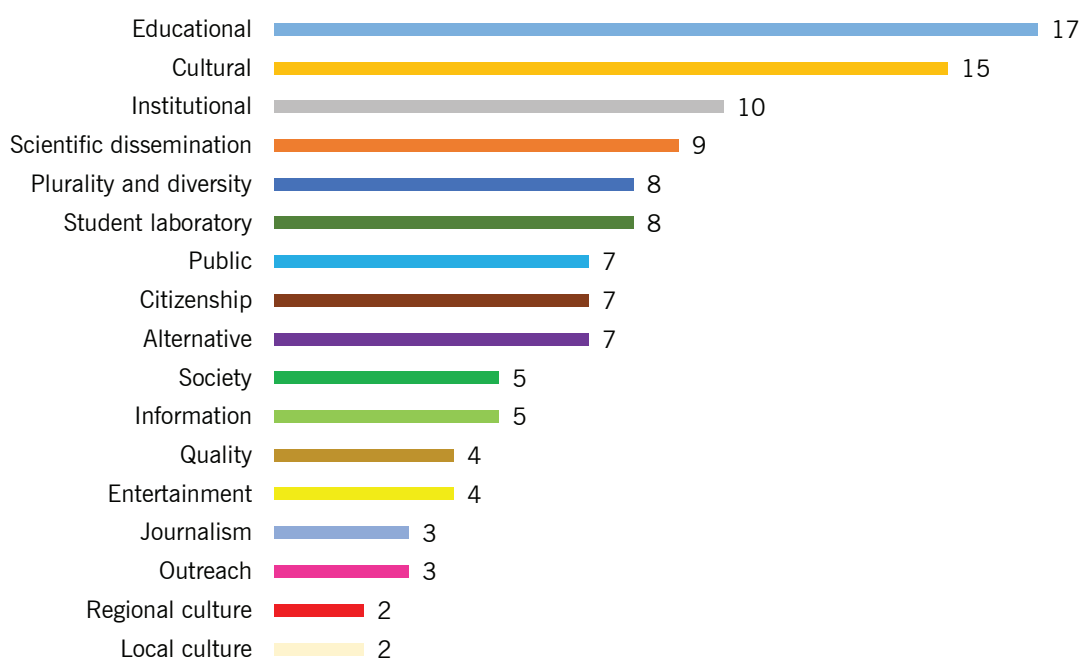
Defining the public programming

The public positioning of university radio stations is based on their configuration and shaped by the area in which they are located. The categorical content analysis of the programming sections of the broadcasters' websites and social media revealed qualifying elements on the one hand, and an emphasis on programme genres on the other.

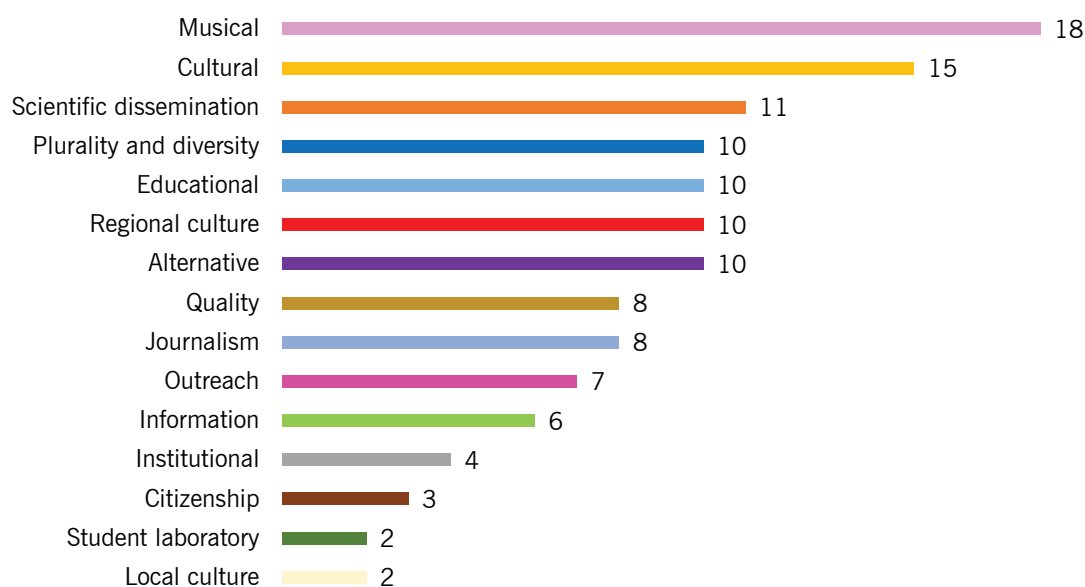
The qualifying elements observed included: programmes aimed at promoting local and regional culture, with an emphasis on artists and musical genres that reflect the cultural identity of the area; the adoption of the principles of diversity and plurality of voices in journalism; a commitment to education and nurturing critical thought among the public, and the positioning as an alternative to traditional media in terms of the diversity of topics covered and the quality of productions.

In terms of genre, most broadcasters organise their programming around the triad of music, news and journalism.

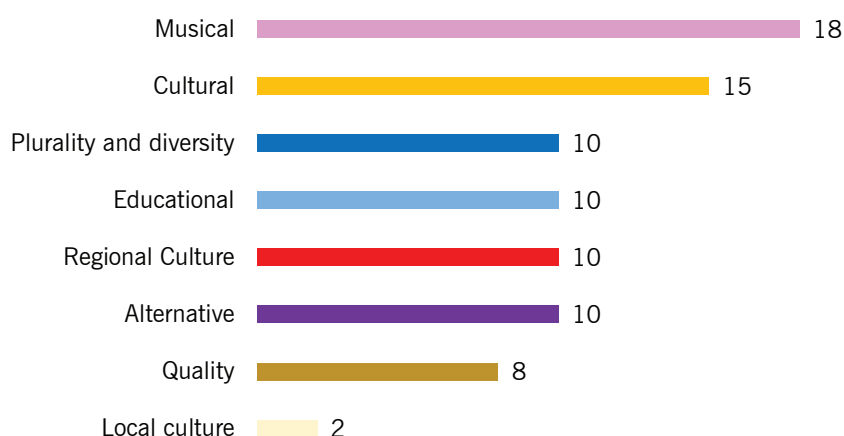
Figure 1. Features that define university radio stations in the eyes of the public



Source: own work with atlas.ti.

Figure 2. Features that define university radio programmes

Source: own work with atlas.ti.

Figure 3. Features that define the musical programming of university radio stations

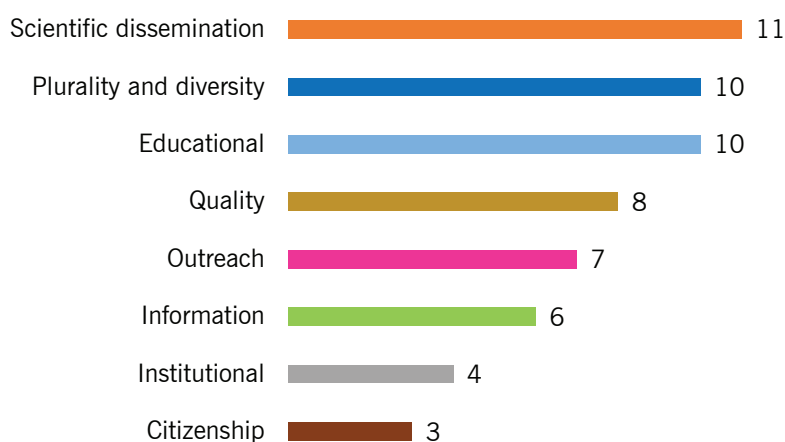
Source: own work with atlas.ti.

Each of these genres brings with it its own qualifying elements that, when combined, give each programming branch its own characteristics.

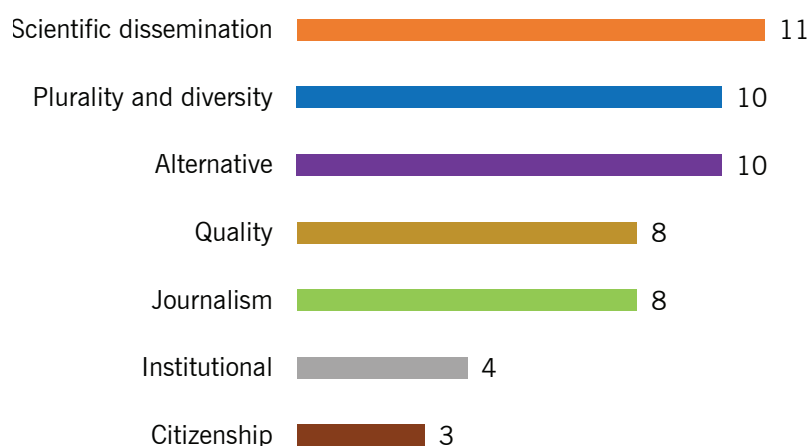
In terms of musical programming, all the stations analysed claim to promote regional and local sounds. Their programming includes genres rarely played on commercial stations, such as ethnic, regional and local music. There is a clear desire to demonstrate that they offer a space for alternative music from independent artists not affiliated with major record labels. Within this branch, educational music programmes also prevail, which feature information about genres and artists to encourage an appreciation of music. The stations aim to carefully select a musical repertoire guided by quality and the principles of

plurality with a diversity of voices and styles, from rock to jazz, blues, chorinho, samba and pop.

The news branch encompasses programmes aimed at disseminating the research, teaching and outreach activities that make the scientific knowledge produced in universities accessible. This includes programmes to promote widening participation, the affirmation of citizenship and social rights, as well as content that encourages social and community participation. It also includes institutional broadcasts relating to university events, achievements and activities. The radio stations claim that their news programmes stand out for the quality of their content and the multiplicity of sources, formats and topics.

Figure 4. Features that define university radio news

Source: own work with atlas.ti.

Figure 5. Features that define the journalistic programming of university radio stations

Source: own work with atlas.ti.

The news programming of the stations analysed is comprehensive, of quality and varied in terms of the choice of topics. The stations emphasise that they offer up-to-date news, debate programmes and analyses of social and political events. They are acutely aware that this type of content is a means of stimulating awareness and civic engagement. Some of the stations also count institutional communication and scientific dissemination as part of their journalistic activity, and they present themselves to the public as being set apart from traditional media, either through their approach that favours a plurality of sources or through their selection of subject matter. The educational aspect also permeates this dimension, with broadcasters claiming to produce programmes aimed at understanding relevant social and political issues, contributing to the education of civic society.

Participation and social control in management of the stations

The public system differs from other communication models in that it is a space managed by principles of transparency, democracy, participation and social control, which requires broadcasters with managerial autonomy and diverse funding sources to be effective. However, most university radio stations are funded exclusively with public resources from the institution itself. Although some operate under the auspices of non-profit foundations controlled by the university, this does not mean they are managed independently and immune to institutional pressures—and even less so that they enjoy financial autonomy.

In this vein, none of the stations analysed has a board of directors or an editorial and programming committee in

place.³ Although the principles of Brazilian public broadcasting envision collaboration between civil society and broadcasters, the radio stations analysed did not have councils to this effect. The closest initiative identified was by Rádio Federal FM from the Federal University de Pelotas, which is currently forming a programming council, with proposals for the creation of such being analysed by the Advocacia-Geral da União (Advocacy General of the Union).

As researcher Edna Miola (2009) observes, the role of civil society in public broadcasting through social participation models constitutes part of the process of validating the broadcasters and legitimising institutional and editorial decisions. Miola points out that few public broadcasters have established mechanisms for regulation and participation, with these existing mainly in more established groups, such as the Father Anchieta Foundation, the TV Minas Cultural and Educational Foundation and the Empresa Brasil de Comunicação.⁴ (2009:102).

The mechanism the broadcasters use to approach society is the public call for proposals, aimed at sourcing potential partners interested in the independent production and co-production of programmes using the criteria and procedures established in the calls. This action is a way of including productions by individuals, associations, student groups and community radio stations —with or without the support of incentives— as a strategy for diversifying content by including points of view and perspectives derived from different experiences in society.

Of the 26 stations analysed, only three were identified for whom public calls are a regular practice: Rádio Federal FM de Pelotas, Rádio Paulo Freire and Rádio UFSCar. Interestingly, none of these are affiliated with the RNCP. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, other stations had experimented with making public calls, such as Rádio Universitária UFG and Rádio UFOP.

Although in general broadcasters express their public commitment through the provision of diverse, ethical and citizen-oriented programming geared towards social transformation and democracy, few associate their work with a public broadcasting management model in the sense advocated by UNESCO (2001) and the SRP, based on the principles of autonomy and social control. Here lies a permanent contradiction in the country's media ecosystem: broadcasters claim to be public in terms of their programme content but are incapable of being fully integral by assuming the other requirements of the concept.

Conclusions

University radio in Brazil is a broad and dynamic concept comprising dimensions linked to its educational licence type and objectives based on promoting education, culture and citizenship. Because of these factors, these broadcasters can predominately be defined as educational/cultural stations that disseminate cultural and artistic content, promote cultural diversity, offer a space for local and regional expression, and encourage social debate —giving voice to minorities and

underrepresented groups. This reality of the broadcasters is strongly related to the identity of the university itself, and its commitment to the community in which it operates. Public and professional education and training, the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity, actions to promote citizenship and reflections on the world constitute the basis of the university triad of teaching + research + reach. University radio stations do not adhere to just one of these three axes but rather encompass them all. They are linked to social intervention, the construction and dissemination of knowledge, training and social development. The identity of these stations, based on the characterisation of the university itself and the space they occupy, is directly related to this educational/cultural dimension, not only due to their content but also because of the aspects and processes involved.

This educational/cultural dimension is complemented by other facets such as: the notion of the quality alternative radio station, diverse in terms of its topics, formats, genres and range of voices; the institutional radio station that serves as a conduit for disseminating the activities and values of the university and includes the promotion of academic events, research, courses and —most especially— scientific diffusion; and the radio station that promotes citizenship by disseminating information that can contribute to improving the quality of life of the population. Here, we can observe the origins of radio —close to the public and active— in dialogue with the principles of diversity and the dissemination of knowledge applied to everyday, local life. These actions also encompass the human development of the students, who engage in dialogue with the regional community and create content aligned with local demand, and professional training, built upon the variety of content and formats produced and the quest to adapt to a specific editorial profile. This training is often hindered by the lack of infrastructure and human or financial resources required for professional development, undertaking special productions or ensuring the close supervision of students. Radio as a space for quality information —a shared principle of both universities and public radio— also appears as a marker of self-identification for the stations analysed.

Although there is a public policy to integrate university radio stations under the command of federal IESs into the Public Broadcasting Service through the RNCP, for these to be recognised as public stations in a broader sense beyond the features of their programming —which may include dimensions such as financial independence, social participation and control in their management— is still a future feat that depends on a greater understanding of the logic of a truly complementary system.

In part, this dearth of understanding stems from the structural and historical factors that have conditioned the formation of the Brazilian media system: since the 1930s, market logic has predominantly been driven by political and business interests, which have strengthened the commercial radio model. Public radio service is a newcomer to the country's media ecosystem,

and although it was provided for in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, it was not until 2008 that the principles and objectives of the Public Broadcasting Service were defined and the first public communications company was created. The EBC has only conditional autonomy because it depends on the public budget for its operation, and its directors are appointed by the federal government. During the period from 2016-2022, under the tenure of conservative presidents Michel Temer and Jair Bolsonaro, the company suffered severe operational intervention, and social participation and managerial autonomy were restricted. The policies for bringing university radio stations closer to the public sphere were also halted during this period, and are currently being revived due to the centre-left government's interest in broadening its political visibility base.

Overcoming the challenge of integrating university broadcasters into the public sphere depends on the consolidation of the institutional mechanisms that underpin the Public Broadcasting Service in all its dimensions, whether in the management of the system, the construction of effective public policies or on behalf of the universities that manage the channels —and this is something which implies broadening the understanding of these broadcasters' activities beyond the scope of institutional dissemination, and linking this comprehension to the principles of autonomy, participation and social control.

One of the challenges of researching Brazilian university broadcasting is understanding the place of decision-making and public participation systems in its organisation. Any analysis of this, however, must be undertaken while accounting for the diverse aspects of these stations —whether their financial management, the recognition of their place within the university structure, their affiliation with student training processes or their freedom about their editorial and programming decisions. Observing the forms of civil society participation in Brazilian university broadcasting requires an understanding of its place in public communication and the impact of shifts in political systems on its development.

Funding

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Notes

1. "Communication policy" is seen as a "flow of public decisions aimed at maintaining social balance or introducing imbalances that tend to modify that reality." From Saravia's more objective and operational perspective, public policies can be understood as a system of public decisions oriented towards preventive or corrective actions or omissions, intended to maintain or modify the reality of one or more sectors of social life, through the definition of objectives and action strategies and the allocation of the necessary resources to achieve the established objectives (Saravia, 2006: 29).
2. UNESCO defines public broadcasting as neither commercial nor controlled by the State. "The only reason for public broadcasting is to provide a public service. And the public broadcasting organisation is the voice that reaches all citizens. Public broadcasting organisations enable access to and participation in public life. They develop knowledge, broaden horizons and enable people to better understand themselves by improving their knowledge of others and the world." (Unesco, 2001, p. 7). UNESCO considers that the service should be guided by the principles of: a) universality, public broadcasting aimed at all; b) diversity, which complements the idea of the first principle and emphasises the importance of plurality in terms of programme genres, topics covered and audiences of interest; c) independence, which is based on the circulation of a variety of ideas and opinions, free from the limitations of private, political and commercial interests; and d) differentiation, which points to the need to produce, disseminate and create plural content that covers a variety of genres and formats.
3. Article 15 of Law 11,652, in which the Public Broadcasting Service and Empresa Brasil de Comunicação are constituted, establishes the obligation for the formation of an editorial and programming committee – a technical body for the institutionalised participation of society in the EBC, of a consultative and deliberative nature, composed of eleven members appointed by entities representing society, by means of a triple list, and designated by the President of the Republic.
4. It is not possible to guarantee stability and permanence in the work of councils. In the specific case of Empresa Brasil de Comunicação, a surge of political disputes and instability led to the dissolution of the Board of Directors in September 2016, followed by a series of interventions in the EBC's activities, which led to its inclusion in the National Privatisation Programme in 2021 (Nitahara and Rego Monteiro da Luz, 2021). EBC resumed the debate on civil society participation with the regulation of the Editorial and Programming Committee through the implementation of Decree 12,005 of April 2024 and by publishing calls for forming the Social Participation, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Editorial and Programming Committee in October 2024.

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The perception of linear radio among communication students from Generation Z

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to determine how radio is perceived as a source of information and entertainment by young Generation Z university students who are studying on communication courses and will be the media workers of the future. A qualitative and quantitative methodology was used, based on 3 focus groups and a survey. The main findings of the survey reveal their perception of radio as a medium for mature audiences, the lack of content that meets their expectations and the failure to adapt it to their digital consumption habits. However, through podcasts, Gen Z students are already consuming radio narratives, sometimes without being aware of it. We conclude that, in order to attract this generational segment, radio broadcasters need to implement creative and innovative strategies to consolidate their presence in podcasting and enhance their corporate image in this emerging landscape.

Keywords

Radio, podcast, audience, Generation Z, music consumption.

Resum

Aquest estudi té com a principal objectiu determinar quina és la percepció de la ràdio com a mitjà d'informació i d'entreteniment dels joves estudiants universitaris de la generació Z que cursen estudis de Comunicació, els quals configuraran la futura força laboral dels mitjans. Per a això s'empra una metodologia qualitativa i quantitativa, basada en 3 focus group i una enquesta. D'entre els principals resultats de la prospecció en destaca la seva visió de la ràdio com un mitjà per a adults, l'absència de continguts que compleixin les seves expectatives i la manca d'adaptació al seu patró de consum digital. No obstant això, a través del pòdcast, els estudiants Z ja consumeixen narratives radiofòniques, de vegades, sense ser-ne conscients. Es conclou que, per atreure aquest segment generacional, la ràdio està abocada a implementar estratègies creatives i innovadores per consolidar la seva presència en el pòdcasting i potenciar la seva identitat corporativa en aquest territori emergent.

Paraules clau

Ràdio, pòdcast, audiència, generació Z, consum musical.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, mainstream media have managed to attract younger generations of audiences “through the various participatory and interactive formats that the Internet provides” (Carrera et al., 2020, p. 563). It is evident that generational transitions follow a gradual, staggered sequence, if we consider the incoming cohort —Generation Z— with respect to outgoing cohorts,

especially Generation X and Baby Boomers and the digital divide that this entails (Mori Cureses, 2023). This *impasse* is central to safeguarding the stability and economic viability of media and media consumption, yet it does not seem to occur naturally. This process not only involves transferring professional roles and responsibilities, but also other factors, e.g. adapting to the emerging communication dynamics of the market or reshaping the demands of the new audience. The specific form this

generational shift takes is, therefore, a key parameter of media adaptability in an increasingly segmented media environment with a wider range of news and entertainment content on offer. However, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have marked a turning point in the generational shift of traditional media audiences. Since the second decade of the 21st century, media consumption among 14-25 year-olds has plateaued, and this cannot be considered temporary (López-Vidales and Gómez-Rubio, 2021).

Linear radio is no exception to this phenomenon. The medium's audience ratings have fallen by 7.5 percent over the last ten years, from 2012 (61.9 %) to 2022 (54.4 %) (AIMC, 2023). According to Zumeta (2023), this trend will be virtually impossible to reverse and should lead us to reflect on how these figures will evolve over the next decade. The reason for this lies in the current omnichannel nature of the audio medium, which allows listeners to access audio content away from the airwaves, e.g. through streaming or on-demand radio, podcasts or audiobooks, using any digital device. These new options for consumers "broaden and enhance the capacity of audio media to reach large segments of the population both quantitatively and qualitatively" (Pedrero-Esteban et al., 2023, p. 84).

A higher percentage of members of Generation Z should have become regular radio listeners by now. According to the Estudio General de Medios (General Media Study), audiences aged 14-19 accounted for 5.2% of all listeners in Spain in 2022, while for the 20-24 age group it was 4.8% (AIMC, 2022). The lack of radio content that is geared towards this segment of the population "is jeopardising the future viability of these companies, which are seeing a gradual decline in the generational replacement of their audiences" (Robert-Agell et al., 2022, p. 4).

Generation Z (Dolot, 2018), also known as digital natives (Prensky, 2001), post-Millennials (Frey, 2018), or the technoliterate generation (Taylor, 2005), among other labels, consists of people born between 1993 and 2005 (Turner, 2019), between 1995 and 2012 (Twenge, 2023) or between 1995 and 2009 (McCrindle, 2014). In any event, these are digital natives "who regard Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a natural part of their environment" (Perona-Páez et al., 2014, p. 209). They exhibit distinctive characteristics based on their use of new technologies for information and communication (Pérez-Escoda et al., 2016) and show a dependency on the Internet (Puspitasari et al., 2019). It is considered to be the first fully digital generation (Vilanova and Ortega, 2017), because it never experienced life before the Internet (Prensky, 2001). Members of this segment of the population have taught themselves how to access and master ICTs, becoming proficient with an innate command of the language (García et al., 2007).

Digital natives see the web as a space for interacting, obtaining information and learning, where they search for, create and share content in real time thanks to the immediacy provided by the digital environment (Álvarez et al., 2019). They mainly access content on mobile phones. According to Busquet, "the smartphone is an extension of their senses

that allows them to stay in touch with reality.../...and they cannot conceive the possibility of a life without it" (Busquet, 2021). From a sociological standpoint, Generation Z "is an enterprising, globalised, self-taught and non-conformist group of young people; they are adept at multitasking, but they are also individualistic, pragmatic and have little attachment to values such as family, friendship or hard work" (López-Vidales and Gómez-Rubio, 2021, p.544).

Social networks have become this group's natural habitat for real-time communication and instant content generation on digital platforms. (Carrera et al., 2020; Marugán Solís and Martín Critikián, 2023). This is the generation that uses them the most (6.5 networks on average) and spends the most time connected to them (1 hour and 32 minutes a day) (IAB Spain, 2023). More specifically, the platforms they most frequently access are Instagram and TikTok (BCMA, 2022). Besides providing interactive and communicative functions, social networks have redefined the role of traditional media by becoming their primary sources of information and entertainment. As a result, conventional media users among this segment of the population are the lowest ever recorded in the history of audience measurement (López-Vidales and Gómez-Rubio, 2021).

Generation Z has adopted the use of audio as an essential tool in building its identity. For Pelegrí, Sales Manager at Spotify Spain, "audio is not simply a source of entertainment, but an intrinsic tool for sharing ideas and feelings, serving as a catalyst for cultural evolution" (Del Hoyo, 2023). The high levels of listeners of playlists and podcasts on audio distribution platforms, which increased by 76% in 2023 year-on-year, are a good illustration of this (IAB Spain, 2023). However, given the above figures, listening to linear radio does not seem to be part of Generation Z's equation.

To date, academia has barely discussed this topic. There has been notable studies by Perona-Páez et al. (2014) on the audio consumption of young people in the omnichannel age; by Puspitasari et al. (2019), examining whether private radio in the Bandung region of Indonesia meets the news and entertainment needs of Generation Z; by López-Vidales and Gómez-Rubio (2021), on the communication paradigm shift of Millennials and Generation Z; and by Robert-Agell et al. (2022), which analyses the phenomenon from a media economics perspective. Against this backdrop, the main aim of this study is to determine whether Gen Z university students who major in communication studies are also showing little interest in using this medium for entertainment and news, unlike the generations that preceded them, who have become regular listeners of the medium.

1.1 Podcasting: the new form of radio for Gen Z university students

The content consumption habits of Generation Z are intrinsically linked to the fact that they are digital natives. In this sense, its members share certain defining characteristics, such as having

access to on-demand content; they intuitively use Google and YouTube as their main search tools; they are more visual than previous generations, and from an early age they create content on social media and share it (Freire, 2018). In terms of media consumption, according to data obtained from the research carried out by López-Vidales and Gómez-Rubio (2021) the preferred media among young Spaniards who belong to this group are the Internet, social media and virtual platforms (62.3%), television (25.3%), radio (9.78%), newspapers (2.47%) and magazines (0.19%).

In the United States, the Spoken Word Audio Report (2022) on audio consumption habits revealed that Generation Z was seeing the largest rise in consumption with an increase of 214%. This figure is due to the 116% rise in podcast audiences (Edison Research, 2022). In 2023, the categories that were most widely downloaded by these young people on the Spotify platform were comedy; society and culture; health and fitness; education and news (Spotify, 2023).

Podcasts are consumed on-demand using any digital playback device. The high penetration of smartphones makes them a key tool for consuming audio products (Pedrero-Esteban et al., 2019). You can subscribe to audio feeds, which are identified with an RSS (*Really Simple Syndication*) tag, and download them automatically to your devices. This makes it unnecessary to visit the original source to listen to new content that is published regularly (Nafría, 2007; Gallego-Pérez, 2010).

The figures available for 2023 indicate that podcast audiences among this generational segment grew by 20% and more than half of them listened to at least one podcast in 2023 (Spotify, 2023). However, “contrary to what might be assumed due to the rise of podcasting, this format still has little weight as a listening platform for Generation Z” (Robert-Agell, et al., 2022, p. 4).

With podcasts, adult audiences have rediscovered the appeal of audio storytelling, while for younger generations, they serve as the main medium through which they are introduced to spoken audio. Besides providing a source of entertainment and information, 62% of young people in this demographic use this medium to find answers before talking to their families and to relieve their stress (Zamarrón, 2022). The option of subscribing to content helps to build listener loyalty, while fostering the creation of a community among audiences (Barbeito-Veloso and Perona-Páez, 2019), providing a sense of belonging to Generation Z.

In terms of production sources, audio distribution platforms host both amateur and professional podcasts owned by podcasting industry operators, including production companies, distribution platforms and media outlets (Dosdoce.com, 2023). For radio companies, the format “represents a disruptive technology that has helped the radio industry to rethink its practices and preconceived ideas about audiences, consumption, production and distribution” (Pedrero-Esteban and Conteras-Pulido, 2019, p. 361), and has allowed it to adapt its identity to new communication channels that meet

the needs of modern digital listeners. Some of the most popular podcasts on the major audio distribution platforms are either in-house productions of the radio company, created specifically for on-demand consumption, or repurposed content from the airwaves (on-demand radio). In Spain, this latter category includes shows such as *Nadie sabe nada* (Cadena SER), *Segunda acepción* (Cadena SER), *Buenismo bien* (Cadena SER), *Las noches de Ortega* (Cadena SER), *La sotana* (Cadena SER), *El partidazo de la COPE* (Cadena COPE) and *Crimis* (Catalunya Radio), among many others. In these instances, for radio broadcasters, podcasts are “an attractive way to distribute what they already offer on air” (Martínez-Costa, et al., 2020, p. 56) and to build an audience “outside the boundaries of mainstream radio” (Tapia-López, 2016, p. 9).

2. Objectives

According to the above information and the literature discussed above, Generation Z has little interest in linear radio. The main aim of this paper is to determine whether undergraduate students of communication sciences from this generation, most of whom are likely to be part of the media landscape in the future, also exhibit this skewed attitude towards radio, given that they are assumed to have a broader knowledge in this field than students from other disciplines (Giraldo-Luque and Fernández-Rovira, 2020).

3. Methodology

To answer this research question, we replicated the methodology used by Perona-Páez et al. (2014) in their study on media, devices and consumption habits of young people in the digital sound-sphere. We followed the mixed method approach in two stages. In the first, qualitative approach, three focus groups were set up. This empirical tool provides an insight into the spontaneous discourse of the participants, how they attribute meanings to a topic, idea or concept, and the perceptions and attitudes of the set of people who are being represented by these particular groups (Edmunds, 1999; De Miguel, 2005).

In the second, quantitative stage, we conducted a survey aimed at the target group in order to build on the results obtained with the first method. This dual data collection approach stems from the fact that focus group discussions serve as a preliminary device for data collection, which increases the reliability of the quantitative research design (De Miguel, 2005). The results obtained using the focus group method largely determine the design of the questionnaire. Firstly, the preliminary information that has been gathered makes it possible to adjust the questions to follow the direction set by the groups. And secondly, it allows us to follow the verbal code of the individuals in the groups.

The study sample is composed of a total of 255 individuals, students from the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the

Universitat Internacional de Catalunya and Abat Oliba CEU. All participants were enrolled in journalism, audiovisual communication, advertising and public relations and marketing courses for the 2021-2022, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic years. They all belong to Generation Z, with an average age of 20 at the time of the study.

3.1 Focus group: participants, design and procedure

The focus groups were held between 2021 and 2023. The representatives were recruited among communication students based on random criteria. A total of 18 students took part. To ensure productive discourse, the group was divided into three focus groups that were each composed of six subjects, a number that ensures the effective viability of the method (Juan and Roussos, 2010).

The meetings lasted for approximately 45 minutes. The groups were coordinated by a moderator, who first introduced the participants to the topic of discussion and led the group conversation with the aim of gathering as much information as possible in the allotted time, indicating the key points — required to fulfil the research objectives— to be discussed. More specifically, the guiding questions presented by the moderator included topics such as the sources of information and entertainment used, radio medium consumption habits and methods, perceptions of the medium and an appraisal of radio programming. There are also discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of radio compared to podcasting and vice versa. This approach would allow us to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

The three sessions were recorded and subsequently transcribed, categorised and analysed. At a later stage, we identified the topics that had emerged naturally in the participants' discourses. These are the Recording Units (RU), themes whose presence or frequency have some bearing on the chosen analytical objective (Bardin, 2009). An in-depth analysis of the conversations allowed us to obtain a number of fragments that fit the purpose of the study.

3.2 Survey: participants, design and procedure

In the second stage of the research, in order to supplement the information obtained using the qualitative approach, an online survey was conducted, targeting the segment under study. A questionnaire was designed with questions adjusted to the direction previously set by the focus groups. It was distributed based on lists provided by the two universities where the study was being carried out, on the Google Docs online platform, between 13 and 20 February and between 22 and 26 April 2024. It consisted of 18 closed-ended and open-ended questions, with the option to include additional answers. The questions were divided into the following areas: 1) Demographic information, allowing us to identify and exclude any participants who did not belong to Generation Z. 2) Media consumption habits, to gauge their preferences. 3) Radio consumption, in order to understand their habits and ways of listening to the

medium —live or recorded— and the categories of content they consume —information, entertainment, etc.— 4) Perception of the medium, to identify factors that may be responsible for the group's lack of interest in linear radio. 5) Consumption and perception of podcasts compared to radio. 6) Finally, we gathered suggestions for radio companies on how to increase the group's interest in the medium. Beforehand, the questionnaire was tested to identify any problems with understanding the questions and the order in which they were asked.

Of the 237 surveys received, we were able to work with 234, an adequate number which, according to the saturation criterion (Morse, 1995), enabled us to determine the group's attitudes towards the phenomenon under study. The 3 rejected surveys were discarded because the subjects did not belong to the generational segment under study. The process of tallying the results was performed using the Google Forms platform, by exporting the answers to a spreadsheet, enabling a systematic interpretation of the results.

4. Results

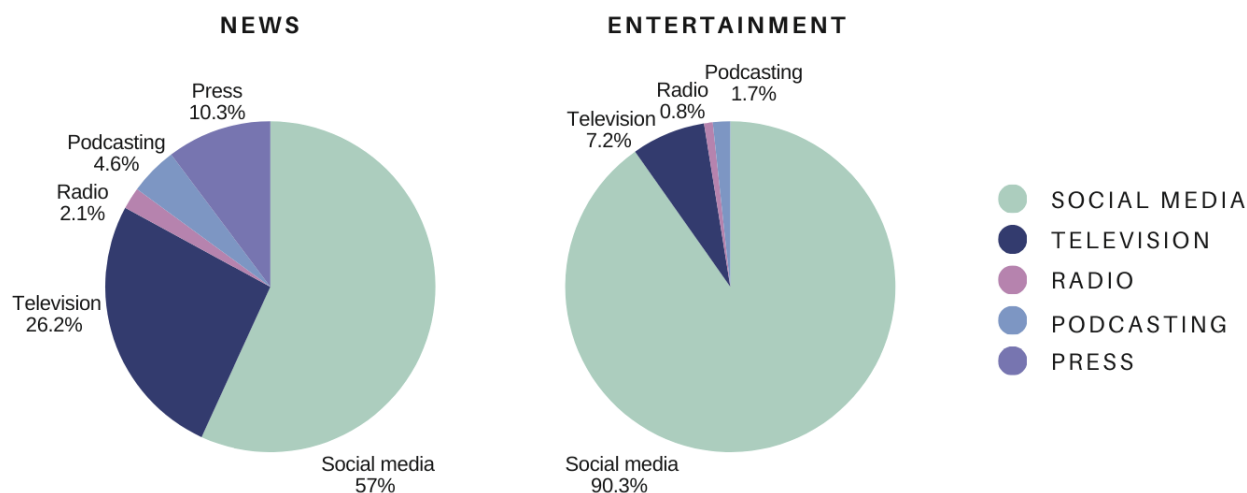
The most significant results obtained from the focus groups and surveys are detailed below.

4.1 Radio consumption and perception

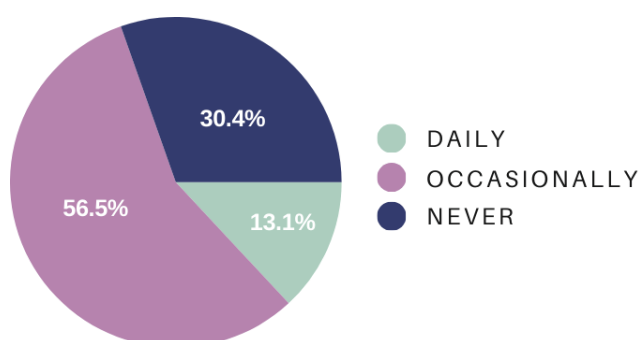
We start from the assumption that Gen Z students have a strong preference for using social media as their main source of information and entertainment, followed by television (Figure 1). In terms of using audio media for news, podcasting ranks fifth among their preferences (4.6%), followed by radio (2.1%). For entertainment, podcasting is the preferred audio medium for students (1.7%), while radio accounts for only 0.8%.

Regarding radio consumption, 39.7% of respondents actively choose to listen to the medium, while the rest do so passively, because others around them are tuning in, especially parents (65%). The daily listening frequency is 13.1%, either actively or passively, mostly while commuting (74.7%). 15.2% listen to the radio while performing other tasks —multitasking— and 10.1% listen to the radio during periods of relaxation (Figure 2). In terms of how they listen, 68.4% listen to it live via their analogue tuner, while 31.2% prefer to listen on-demand on audio distribution platforms. Furthermore, 24.5% listen to it live on the Internet, and 8% listen on demand via the radio station's website or app.

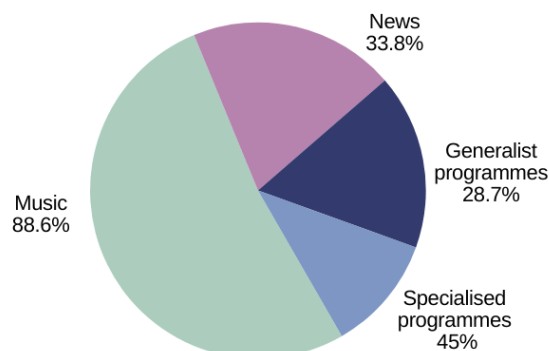
Music consumption plays a significant role in preferences for radio (88.6%). They appreciate the fact that on the radio they can discover the latest musical releases and get information and details about the performer. After discovering them, they select them on platforms, listen to them again and add them to their playlists. Through platforms such as Spotify, "finding new releases is not so easy, unless you get lucky with the algorithm", remarked one focus group participant. The sense of lack of control they feel as a result of not being able to choose

Figure 1. Media used by Gen Z communication students for information and entertainment (as % of total sample)

Source: Own elaboration based on field work.

Figure 2. Listening frequency and radio content of Gen Z communication students (as % of total sample)

Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 3. Radio content consumed by Gen Z communication students (as % of total sample)

Source: Own elaboration.

the songs played on the radio and the frequent interruptions from commercials are repeatedly mentioned. For these reasons, they prefer to stream music. However, they do appreciate the surprise effect of hearing a song they like on the radio which they were not expecting (51.4%).

In terms of listening to spoken content, they express a preference for specialised programmes, general entertainment and news (Figure 3).

The Generation Z students ranked several aspects of radio, in descending order of importance: the possibility of obtaining real-time information on current affairs, the fact that it is free of charge, the option to listen on demand, the medium's credibility as a source of information, and the fact that it covers a wide range of topics (Table 1).

Despite acknowledging the strengths of radio, it is important to stress that young people from this generation tend to associate the medium with a more mature audience, such as grandparents and parents. Therefore, they see it as a sort of companion that

provides them with a sense of familiarity, but also something that is out of touch with their current interests and their digital profile (53.6%). In this sense, they admit that they have never given the medium a chance and in some cases, they are unaware of the range of radio stations available. Some state that they are already used to listening to audio content on platforms and are not interested in discovering new stations other than the ones they have become acquainted with in their family setting. The high levels of advertising (34.2%) are also highlighted as a weakness of the medium. They believe that advertisements interrupt the content too often, as their comments reveal: "I often switch off the radio because there are lots of adverts. I find it annoying, when all I want in that moment is a break from reality"; "there is too much advertising on the radio, which I can avoid by paying for platforms". Thus, they appreciate the low levels of advertising on audio distribution platforms and, in particular, the option to subscribe to premium plans, which gives them access to ad-free content through paid subscriptions.

Table 1. Perception of radio among Gen Z communication students (as % of total sample)

STRENGTHS	
Real-time information	56.1%
Free of charge	54.9%
Listen-on-demand option	41.4%
Credibility	33.5%
Wide range of topics	31.2%
WEAKNESSES	
Contents not adapted to your profile	53.6%
High levels of advertising	34.2%
Lack of interaction	14.3%
Fixed content	13.1%
Same offer in all broadcasters	7.2%
Inconvenient not to be able to watch	7.2%
Unreliable media	2.1%

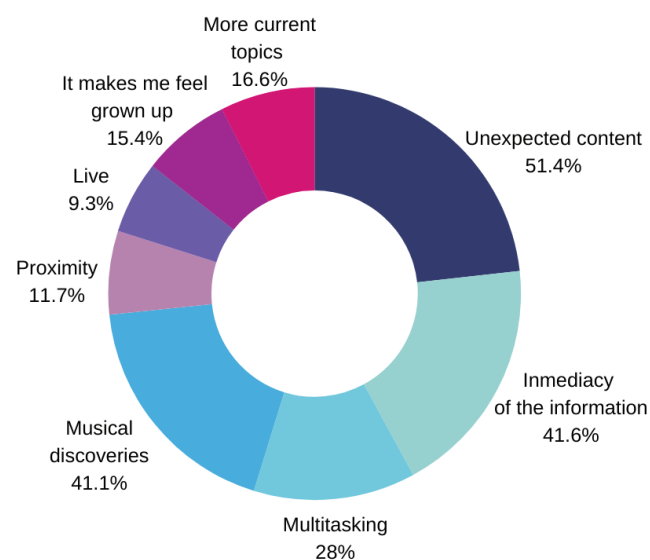
Source: Own elaboration.

As regards the role of audio platforms, they mainly use them to listen to music. Among those who choose podcasts, 62.4% listen to them occasionally, 18.6% listen daily and 19% never listen to this format. In contrast to radio, they appreciate the fact that podcasts give them access to specialised content (63.7%), they can select on-demand content and avoid the constraints of scheduled programming found in linear radio (57.8%), a wider range of content tailored to their generational profile (36.3%), and less advertising, which they can avoid altogether with the premium subscription model offered by platforms (31.2%). 25.7% of Generation Z students surveyed reported that podcasts gave them the power to control playback through features such as pausing, fast-forwarding and adjusting speed. This gives them a greater sense of control and autonomy than traditional radio. They also highlight the brevity of podcasts (20.3%) and the fact that they can be shared (17.7%).

Conversely, regarding their perception of radio compared to podcasting, they highlight the surprise effect of listening to unexpected content (51.4%), the immediacy of the information (41.6%), musical discoveries (41.1%) and the possibility of carrying out other activities while listening (28%).

4.2 Generation Z's suggestions for creating a connection with the medium

The participants in the focus groups are aware that their role as active consumers and future communicators is important

Figure 4. Perception of radio compared to podcasting among Gen Z communication students (as % of total sample)

Source: Own elaboration.

for the survival of the medium. Some of them believe that they do not listen to the radio because this habit was not instilled in them from an early age, so that they now lack any point of reference. In light of these observations, in two of the three sessions the students made several unprompted suggestions aimed at building a more effective connection with linear radio. These initial inputs were further expanded upon in the surveys that were conducted (Table 2).

Notable suggestions include the need to create content that is tailored to Generation Z, focusing on their particular interests and preferences (41.8%). They also highlight the importance of including more voices of young journalists in the creation of radio content, which would increase the feeling of identification and empathy within the group (19%). Although some acknowledge that efforts are already being made towards this end, they feel it is essential to broaden the range of programmes designed for, produced and presented by this generation. In this vein, they suggest that collaborations between radio and social media influencers should become more common. However, they also express criticism regarding the quality of content aimed at young people, claiming that it is superficial or banal simply because it is intended for them. They also highlight the potential of social media, the medium they engage with on a daily basis, to create a buzz around radio programmes, which could encourage young people to tune in.

Table 2. Gen Z communication students' suggestions

Content adapted to Generation Z	41,8%
Products created by Generation Z (journalists and influencers)	19,0%
Elimination or reduction of ad slots	12,8%
More interaction with the audience	8,3%
Greater presence of linear radio on social media to promote it and consume fragments of it.	5,6%
More offer of linear radio on podcasting platforms	4,6%
Shorter programmes	3,4%
More offer of thematic radio stations with specialised contents	1,9%
Meets my expectations	1,5%
There is no solution	1,1%

Source: Own elaboration.

Eliminating advertising or reducing ad slots is another recurring theme discussed by Gen Z students (12.8%). However, they are aware that advertising is the main source of revenue for many broadcasters, so its total elimination is viewed by the group as unrealistic.

Time management is a common concern, and they suggest that radio should focus on shorter, less dense and more dynamic programmes (3.4%). Regarding this point, they recommend that broadcasters share condensed versions of the highest-quality linear radio programmes on social media (5.6%) and offer more content on podcasting platforms (4.6%).

Despite these suggestions, they admit that they have a deeply entrenched habit of consuming on-demand content and that even if the radio were to offer a more suitable content of the kind they suggested, they would be unlikely to listen to it live.

5. Discussion

In general terms, the results of this study confirm the phenomenon that had previously been reported by authors such as López-Vidales and Gómez-Rubio (2021), who highlight Generation Z's detachment from traditional media. They also confirm that digital immigrants and digital natives have different preferences regarding content, leading to the digital divide that has already been posited by other authors (Mori Cureses, 2023). While we disagree with Zumeta's (2023) assertion that this trend is impossible to reverse, there are elements such as the immediacy of on-demand content, that hinder competition from traditional radio, which is constrained by live schedules and content, echoing the arguments put forward by Álvarez et al. (2019).

As for the spoken audio medium, Gen Z students see linear radio as a medium that is mainly aimed at mature audiences, which does not cater to their current interests or their digital profile. They have two main criticisms: firstly, the lack of content tailored to their generation and, secondly, the failure to cater for their digital consumption habits, marked by a preference for on-demand content and new media formats, as referred to by authors such as Gómez de Travesedo Rojas and Gil Ramírez (2020) and Cortés Quesada et al. (2022), as remarked above. While it is true that radio has focused its attention on the most profitable audience segments, Spanish radio also offers, albeit limited, programming designed specifically for Generation Z, which can be easily found through a simple Google search. Furthermore, there are already thematic radio stations, especially music stations, that cater to their preferences by speaking their *language*.

It is important to note that some of the podcasts that they listen to, which were mentioned in the focus groups and surveys, are produced by radio broadcasters –native podcasts–, selected content from their schedules –on-demand radio–, or *ad hoc* content produced by broadcasters, which can only be consumed on platforms. Therefore, we believe that the problem is not due to a lack of appealing content, but rather to the limited availability of radio content in the digital environment with which they engage; to a weak sense of identification with the content creators; and to the absence of a radio culture in the group, which prevents them from associating the content with the creator. In other words, through podcasting, Generation Z is already consuming radio narratives, but sometimes they are not aware of it, essentially because they do not usually listen to traditional radio and are not familiar with the range of radio stations on offer. As such, podcasts have emerged as the preferred format of Generation Z for consuming radio narratives. This revelation came to light during the focus groups when they discovered that some of the podcasts they listen to originate from traditional radio programmes. The moderator pointed out the connection, which was totally unexpected by the participants. This discovery underlines the continuity and progression of audiovisual storytelling in the digital age, where the boundaries between traditional and modern media are becoming blurred and where Generation Z is not aware of the original source of the content due to the limitations outlined above.

Moreover, we observed that this generation's radio consumption habits are based on familiarity. Most of the stations they actively choose to listen to are predetermined because they are frequently listened to in their home environment. To a certain extent, they replicate family consumption habits by tuning in to the stations that are played in their homes. This behaviour underlines the strong influence of the family environment on their choice of stations and the emotional connection they feel when tuning in to stations that are a permanent fixture in their most intimate environment. However, as remarked by Robert-Agell et al. (2022) "the traditional prescription of the family setting towards radio consumption has been altered

completely, and this chain of habit transmission will have to find other formulas for achieving contact with the medium" (p. 16). Habits being passed down through families will not be enough to make this generation engage with the medium; its content needs to be reshaped to meet the expectations of the generation and, above all, it must be made available through the channels with which they engage.

Finally, we have found that the spoken audio consumption habits of this generation are marked by a preference for short formats (Scolari, 2020), due to their lack of patience and the immediacy to which they are accustomed; and also by on-demand consumption of content, which allows them to control what they listen to and when they do it. This makes it very difficult for them to adapt to the radio medium, which is based on continuous, live broadcasts and long programmes. In this regard, we agree with Pedrero-Esteban et al. (2023) on the possibilities offered by the digital medium to connect with new audiences. As such, podcasting has emerged as the present-day/future equivalent of radio for Generation Z.

6. Conclusions

Generation Z are known for being the first digital natives which, *per se*, poses a resulting challenge to the survival of traditional radio. Against this backdrop, linear radio must prepare for a radical transformation, since, as the results have shown, there is no sign of generational replacement in audiences. Radio production companies therefore need to deploy creative and innovative strategies to consolidate their presence in the emerging field of podcasting. In recent years, there has been a marked tendency towards inaction that must now be remedied as a matter of urgency. Furthermore, it is also necessary to strengthen corporate identity and brand awareness within podcasting, by establishing a distinctive position in this expanding medium. Another notable aspect of the study is that a significant number of young podcast listeners are not aware that much of this content is produced by traditional radio broadcasters, which they dismiss or label as old and outdated, mainly due to a lack of familiarity with the broadcasters' output. This lack of recognition emphasises the need for a more effective branding strategy within this digital audio medium. Consequently, we highlight the urgency for traditional broadcasters to adapt to change and also stress the importance of a more effective branding and communication strategy in the digital landscape.

For broadcasters, podcasts could become a strategic asset, whether they create original content to supplement their regular schedules, or content that can be consumed both on linear radio and via podcasts. Additionally, the practice of cherry-picking content from radio schedules to be distributed on audio platforms or in the media's own digital repositories (webs or apps) remains an effective way to broaden their audiences among digital users.

While we have identified a growing perception that radio is not fully exploiting the potential of podcasting to engage and retain digital audiences, there is also a lack of innovative proposals from listeners which could help to transform the medium or bring about the aforementioned generational shift. However, in the focus groups we observed a problem that runs counter to these strategies. The participants wanted highly specific and segmented content and, furthermore, they did not make any suggestions that catered for broad requirements, only very precise ones. Therefore, in view of these findings, we conclude that an integrated strategy is required between radio and podcasting to combine hybridisation with content repurposing and the creation of original content.

The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of how linear radio is perceived among Generation Z communication students, the results of which should be compared with larger quantitative samples to gain a more accurate picture of the results of this initial analysis. Furthermore, it is important to stress that even communication students, who are set to become the communicators of the future, are not showing a great deal of interest in radio. According to some remarks made by participants in the focus groups, this lack of interest is also reflected in their reluctance to establish future employment links with radio companies. This may lead to a gradual loss of younger workers in the medium, creating a negative feedback loop. It is therefore essential to address this lack of interest and to encourage greater appreciation and respect for radio in communication faculties, and for the various professional opportunities it offers, thereby helping to safeguard the future of the medium as a profession. In this respect, we also intend to pursue further lines of research that reflect on the consequences that this lack of interest in traditional radio may have on the next generation of workers in the radio medium.

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The evolution of the dramatic genre on RNE. From radio drama to binaural sound fiction in the age of podcasting

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Abstract

Sound fiction has always had a place on the public broadcaster Radio Nacional de España (National Radio of Spain, RNE). The objective of this article is to analyse its development using a mixed methodology that combines a literature review, content analysis of five works representative of different periods, and interviews with professionals who work at the station. The essence of fiction on RNE is adaptations of literary classics, live performances and the use of new technologies with a narrative sense. The tendency is to use film techniques in the scripts, to experiment with binaural sound to achieve an immersive effect and to include audio series to expand the audience niche. Likewise, although there is a need for greater investment in human and economic resources, this paper confirms that this is a genre on the rise, as gleaned from the number of podcast productions, currently 115 on the RNE Audio platform.

Keywords

Fiction, RNE, radio drama, binaural, podcast.

Resum

La ficció sonora sempre ha tingut espai en l'emissora pública Radio Nacional de España (RNE). L'objectiu d'aquest article és analitzar-ne l'evolució a través d'una metodologia mixta que combina revisió bibliogràfica, anàlisi de contingut de cinc obres representatives de diferents èpoques i entrevistes a professionals de la cadena. L'essència de la ficció a RNE són les adaptacions de clàssics literaris, la representació en directe i l'aplicació de noves tecnologies amb sentit narratiu. La tendència és utilitzar tècniques del cinema en els guions, l'experimentació amb el so binaural, que aconsegueix un efecte immersiu, i la incorporació d'audiosèries per ampliar el nínxol d'oients. Així mateix, tot i que s'hi aprecia la necessitat de més inversió en recursos humans i econòmics, es confirma que és un gènere en auge, segons es desprèn del nombre de produccions en format pòdcast, 115 a la plataforma RNE Audio.

Paraules clau

Ficció, RNE, radioteatre, binaural, pòdcast.

1. Introduction

Radio Nacional de España is the broadcaster that has kept the dramatic genre in its line-up for the longest time. Even though the concept of radio theatre seems somewhat out of date or from another era, it has evolved with the transformation of the different formats. After conceiving the earliest works in the dramatic genre as radio theatre, which merges theatre with radio content, the term audio drama was later used for stories recounted via sound and performed before the public, but not necessarily to be broadcast on the radio; finally, radio-produced fiction (Ortiz & Volpini, 2017) and sound fiction are the names

currently used, on digital audio platforms as well (Rodero *et al.*, 2019).

When we look back to the beginning of fiction production on public radio, we can signal the date of 5 August 1939, when one of the first radio adaptations catalogued as important was broadcast: *La verbena de la Paloma* with a script by Tomás Seseña. RNE of Barcelona began its regular broadcasts of plays on 4 September 1949 with the radio dramatisation of *En Flandes se ha puesto el sol* by Eduardo Marquina, adapted by José María Tavera (Munsó, 1998, pp. 375, 378). Its broadcasts kept airing until 1968, and until 1983 with adaptations of universal classical plays using theatre production methods due

to the initial lack of knowledge of the radio language (Hernando *et al.*, 2020).

Radio drama experienced its golden age on this public broadcaster, and the best voices in the country were on its Actors Roster of professional actors, directors, scriptwriters, editors and sound technicians in the 1950s and 1960s. But the arrival of the Transition to democracy, freedom of the press in 1977 with Royal Decree-Law 24/1977 and the focus on news over other contents changed the line-ups for both public and private broadcasters. Despite this, the survival of the professionals, more than the station, reveals the determination to make room for audio drama in its programming. If we compare RNE with the BBC, we find that the British public radio station never dropped the genre, and works like *The Archer* (1951), with more than 20,000 episodes, remain on its lineup.

While in the past radio theatre or radio novels managed to gather the family around the radio, today sound fiction is listened to on podcasts with earphones and enjoyed privately. Privacy and availability anytime anywhere generates an immersive effect that seeks to captivate the listener using the same ingredients: creativity and the ability to create mental images in the audience.

2. Objectives and methodology

2.1 Objectives

The objective of this article is to review the dramatic genre on Radio Nacional de España (RNE), the Spanish public radio station, and to assess its importance and narrative evolution during the station's different eras. To do so, the overarching objective can be stated more specifically in the secondary objectives:

1. To conduct a historical review of the evolution of the dramatic genre, in addition to ascertaining the most prominent dramatic programmes in the genre's different periods.
2. To explore the radio dramas' different production processes via professionals from this station.
3. To conduct a case study of representative dramatic programmes during the different periods.

2.2 Methodology

To achieve these objectives, we used a methodological triangulation: a mixed analysis method with quantitative and qualitative techniques to ascertain the target of the study and provide a more comprehensive picture (Gómez-Diago, 2010, p. 72). To do so, we applied the techniques of literature review, content analysis and in-depth interviews.

The data collection technique was a literature review of scholarly texts and sound documents from RNE, like the programme *Documentos*, audios from the RTVE Sound Archive and other complementary informative texts in the press, blogs and magazines specialising in audio.

We conducted a case study (Rodríguez, Gil & García, 1999) of five representative works from different periods using a mixed quantitative and qualitative methodology and content analysis to draw conclusions via the interpretation of the data (Bardin, 1991; Bernete, 2013). To conduct the analysis, we used the active listening technique called *close analytical listening* devised by Spinelli and Dann (2019, p. 5).¹

The pieces chosen reflect three criteria: 1) they come from these periods (in the decline phase, three pieces from the different decades were chosen because it is a more extensive period); 2) production, on-air time and frequency of broadcast: a) during the golden age and the resurgence, the criterion is whether it remained on the line-up and b) during the decline phase, the frequency and production were the focal point, bearing in mind that this was when the genre became marginalised; and 3) its prominent role on public radio following the criteria of the panel of experts, in addition to its availability in digital format in the RNE archive and the Biblioteca Nacional de España (National Library of Spain, BNE).

We conducted a content analysis with formal variables, production variables and variables related to the creation process and content (Table 1).

We faced certain limitations accessing the works from different periods in the analysis of the sound productions, given that open-access is highly limited. Access to the line-ups or information on certain programmes was obtained through the digital library MyNews.

Finally, we held in-depth interviews with seven professionals from the station, which helped us to 'expand knowledge from inside the community being studied' (Keating & Della Porta, 2013, p. 326). We did this through semi-structured interviews, which followed three fundamental lines of inquiry, with open-ended questions in order to get detailed, descriptive information so the professionals could express themselves on general and specific issues related to their professional work to get qualitative data for the study. The following lines of inquiry were addressed:

1. General and historical matters.
2. Specific questions on the creative and production process.
3. Technical and economic matters.

The answers helped to contextualise the different periods and provide a picture of the creative process in the pre-production, production and post-production processes.

2.2.1 Sample analysed

RNE is comprised of six radio stations: Radio Clásica, for classical music; Radio 3, with cultural and music programming; Radio 4, with general programming in Catalan; Radio 5, with continuous news; and Radio Exterior, a public service abroad. The works analysed were broadcast on Radio 1, Radio 3 and the RTVE platforms (RTVE Play and RNE Audio).

The sample spans three periods from 1961 to 2022. The works were chosen bearing three periods in mind: golden age

Table 1. Variables of the content analysis

Content analysis	
Formal variables	Year, title, director, producer, actors-characters.
Production variables	Original work, adaptation. Length: 5-10 minutes, 11-30 minutes, 31-60 minutes, more than 60 minutes. Performance: recorded, live. Human and technical team.
Creation variables	Theme, genre: tale, story, radio novel, series, radio theatre, fiction (Rodero, 2011).
Content variables	Characters: well-rounded or ambiguous and flat, or around a single idea (Pérez Rufí, 2020, p. 103). Narrators: heterodiegetic (tells the story as an outside voice without being involved), homodiegetic (tells the story as a character), autodiegetic (tells his/her experience as a main character in the story) (García Jiménez, 1996; Martínez Costa, 1998). Language: <i>telling</i> narration (with mediation by a narrator) or <i>hearing</i> narration (without mediation by a narrator) (Guarinos, 2009). Radiosemes: words: monologue, dialogue with different purposes (characterising: related to the characters; action-oriented: driving the action; informative: about what is not experienced firsthand; creating a temporal and descriptive hiatus: about the characters or settings); purpose of the music (expressive: enhancing the moods or expressing emotions; narrative: organising the action; setting: describing the situation and action) and purpose of the effects (realistic: reproducing reality; narrative: as a punctuation sign; symbolic or expressions: enhancing or expressing emotions; atmospheric: elements found in the scene) (Guarinos, 2009; López-Villafranca, 2019 and Rodero, 2024). Static scenes, with less sense of depth, or dynamic scenes, with a sense of movement or depth (Volpini <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Fernández Aldana, 2024).

Source: Own work.

Table 2. Sample of works analysed

Phase	Year / Director	Work	Programme / Station
Golden age	1961 Juan Manuel Soriano	<i>Alicia en el país de las maravillas</i> [Alice in Wonderland]	<i>Teatro Invisible</i> Radio 1
Decline	1981 Carlos Faraco	<i>El juego</i>	<i>Tris Tras Tres</i> Radio 3
Decline	1997 Juan José Plans	Chapter 1 <i>El discípulo de Drácula</i>	<i>Historias</i> Radio 1
Decline	2000 Carlos Faraco	Chapter 02 <i>La primera noche en el puerto de Laris</i>	<i>Cuando Juan y Tula fueron a Siringa</i> Radio 3
Revival of the genre	2023 Benigno Moreno and Mayca Aguilera	<i>Las aventuras de Tintín</i>	<i>Ficción Sonora</i> Radio 1, RTVE Play and RNE Audio

Source: Own work.

(1950s and 1960s), decline (1970s to 2000s) and revival of the genre (2010 until today) (Barea, 1994; López-Villafranca & Olmedo-Salar, 2020) (Table 2).

2.2.2 Panel of experts

The selection of experts is justified by their careers, in addition to their experience in the genre's different periods. These experts are scriptwriters, producers, directors and actors whose answers contributed to our in-depth understanding and

provided information on the phases of the creative process: pre-production, production and post-production. The following professionals are part of the panel:

1. Federico Volpini, radio broadcaster, director and scriptwriter of audio dramas. Former director of Radio 3.
2. Mayca Aguilera, producer of *Ficción Sonora* RNE.
3. Benigno Moreno, director of *Ficción Sonora* and former director of RNE.
4. Alfonso Latorre, scriptwriter of *Ficción Sonora*.

5. Gregorio Parra, director of *Videodrome* on Radio 3 until 2021.
6. Juan Suárez, announcer, scriptwriter, voice actor on *Ficción Sonora* on RNE and host of *La Libélula*.
7. Ana Alonso, former actress on *Ficción Sonora* on RNE.

3. Historical review of the evolution of radio drama in three phases

3.1 The golden age of radio drama in Spain

In 1945, *Teatro Invisible* was created under the direction of the journalist and dubbing actor Juan Manuel Soriano Ruiz. This show was broadcast from Barcelona every Sunday at 10 pm and it stayed on air for 20 years. It had a company which included prestigious actors like Julia Pacheco, Beatriz Vergara and Manuel Luque, among others (Balsebre, 2002). It was rivalled by *Teatro del Aire* from Radio Madrid (Cadena SER), which had been started three years earlier, in 1942, and launched the playwright and scriptwriter Antonio Calderón. The genre began to gain popularity with *Teatro Invisible*, but the competition with the private station to broadcast high-quality radio drama influenced RNE's decision to focus on dramatic plays, with adaptations and works devised for the medium. *En Flandes se ha puesto el sol* by Eduardo Marquina was the first *Teatro Invisible* piece, broadcast on 4 September 1949. Its mission was cultural, and professor Armand Balsebre highlighted it as a 'naturalistic representation' with recordings of real sounds outside the studio (Cendros, 1999).

Live broadcasts were common from the very start, with literary readings or variety series that were narrated to the audience (Aguilera & Arquero, 2017, p. 3). In this sense, Guarinos (2009) stresses the naturalness of the performances, which downplayed a good structure of the story, although audiences were also able to enjoy the magic of noisemakers, sound effects and live music.

One of the most outstanding radio dramas in the golden age was *El Quijote* [Don Quixote] in 1965, which was performed by legendary actors like Adolfo Marsillach, Fernando Rey, Francisco Rabal and Nati Mistral (Barea, 1994). It consisted of twenty recorded hours with a cameo by director Luis Buñuel, which Radio Nacional de España revived and digitalised into 16 compact discs in 2005 (La Nación, 2005).

Radio novels contributed to the massive success of the dramatic genre, and in the postwar years and the 1950s they became entertainment spaces for the entire family before TV arrived in Spanish homes, as well as being an escape valve in the Franco dictatorship. According to the director of RNE's *Ficción Sonora*, Benigno Moreno, the term *radio theatre*, unlike what many authors thought, was due to 'the performance of radio novels in the theatre. The actress Lola Herrera told us where the word came from before a performance, which we didn't know, and it's something that makes more sense than the idea of theatre on the radio' (Moreno, 2024). With radio

novels, Spaniards were able to forget their social and economic hardships after the war, which contributed to the fact that up to eight different novels were produced daily (Gelos, 2016, p. 15).

More than 9,500 pieces of radio theatre from 1951 to 1985 are included in the RNE Sound Archive, although one can assume that the real number is higher because not all programmes were archived and others were lost or forgotten when the public broadcaster moved from Paseo de la Habana in Madrid to Prado del Rey in Pozuelo de Alarcón (outskirts of Madrid) in 1971. In addition to *Teatro Invisible*, other programmes also stood out as dramatic genres in works like *Navidad*, *Teatro en el Estudio*, *Esta semana me llamo Cleopatra*, *Siguiendo su destino*, *Otra vez la primavera*, *Eugenia Grandet*, *Quince bajo la luna*, *Los cipreses creen en Dios* and *Egoísmo*, among others (Fernández-González, 2019, p. 282).

RNE had an Actors Roster on staff who performed literary adaptations, dramatic works and melodramas created for the medium, with the participation of the leading figures of Spain's theatre. Aurora Vicente, Lourdes Guerras and José María del Río were on RNE's Actors Roster, the latter when it was dissolved in 1992 (Prieto, 2009). In the 1970s, the audience became fragmented and devoted its attention and time to television, a medium that had just reached the country and captured the radio audience (Balsebre, 2002; Ayuso, 2013).

3.2 The decline of the genre: Radio drama in marginal spaces

In the 1980s, the public station resisted the disappearance of the dramatic genre but it focused more on news with the hire of Eduardo Sotillos as the director of RNE between January and November 1981, as part of the 1980s Statute for RTVE. The update consisted of news, live coverage and cross-cutting radio genres, which was dubbed 'total radio' (García Gil, 2021, p. 388). Sotillos justified the decision to prioritise news because 'the events that kept happening day after day in the design of the recently-born democracy brought the station more drama than the theatre productions did' (Afuera, 2020, p. 45).

Radio drama survived on Spanish public radio thanks to the determination of its professionals: Carlos Faraco and Fernando Luna, Federico Volpini, Jesús Beltrán and Juan Ignacio Francia. And when the Actors Roster no longer existed, it continued to survive thanks to Juan José Plans, Faraco, Volpini, Isabel Ruiz Lara, Rafa Roa, Javier Gallego 'Crudo', Lourdes Miyar, Manuel Moraga, Lourdes Castro and Álvaro Soto, among others (Volpini *et al.*, 2020, p. 24).

'RNE's decision to terminate radio theatre primarily reflects this disinterest and lack of understanding within the company, which after 1991 was primarily made by and for journalists' (Volpini, 2024).

Afuera (2020) attributes the decline of radio drama to social and economic reasons, which fostered the production of news and music programmes. However, economics was not the determining factor, according to Benigno Moreno, who is in

charge of *Ficción Sonora*:

'It's not that news was chosen for economic reasons; it's because we became the regime's radio station for a period of time. We also did plays with an ideological bias that was no longer feasible with the advent of democracy, plus radio theatre began to be viewed as uncool in the idea of modern Spain that held sway in the 1980s' (Moreno, 2024).

The option was to do radio drama outside the regular programming. Volpini *et al.* (2020) highlight *Diálogos con la Música* by Ramón Trecet (1977), a series of science-fiction tales set to music and performed by a single voice; *Juventud y Pitanza* (1978), dramatised stories; *Arkham 3* on Radio 3 (1979); the Radio 3 program *Tris Tras Tres*, with Carlos Faraco and Fernando Luna, from 1981 to 1988; *Los hombres de Cibola* (1982); *La telaraña*, by Isabel Ruiz Lara (1990); or the chapter of *Cabeza de vaca. Las vidas de Alvar Núñez*, which was recorded in 1992 and was the last dramatic production by RNE's Actors Roster.

When the genre was declining, Juan José Plans was a role model with *Sobrenatural* and *Historias*, cult programmes on Radio Nacional de España's Radio 1 that were broadcast between 1994 and 2003. In 1998, *El Ojo de Yavé* presented an hour of dramatised fiction every day based on original texts, and in 2000 *El Chichirichachi*. The awards that the station received contrast with the fact that it was turning its back on the genre. In 1963, *María*, written and produced by Leocadio Machado, received the Prix Italia award, as *Herederos del tiempo* did in 1998, in addition to an honourable mention in the Prix Italia for *Almacenes Conciencia* (2002) and the award for best radio drama from the First Radio Open sponsored by the CCCB and Radio Barcelona for *Viaje alucinante al Universo Melange* (Fernández González, 2019, p. 112; Volpini *et al.*, 2020, p. 31).

There emerged a kind of nostalgia for the genre in the late 1990s, and *En Flandes se ha puesto el sol* was brought back to public radio 50 years later in homage to the director Juan Manuel Soriano, with the voice of Constantino Romero as the main character (Cendros, 1999).

3.3 From radio theatre to sound fiction

There were halting attempts to include fiction in programmes in the 2000s, but it was no longer called 'radio theatre' but fiction. On Radio 3, Federico Volpini, the director of the broadcaster from 1999 to 2003, tried to revive it with the serial *Cuando Juan y Tula fueron a Siringa* (2000), written and directed by Carlos Faraco. In 2022, Radio 3 and Radio 4 simultaneously broadcast the three-chapter series *El corazón de las tinieblas* [The Heart of Darkness] by Joseph Conrad, featuring Constantino Romero (Volpini *et al.*, 2020). Another effort by Radio 3 is *Videodrome* (2000), written and directed by Gregorio Parra, an innovative programme revolving around music and film that included adaptations by the scriptwriter Mona León Siminiani. In that decade, other productions that stood out for their experimental,

avant-garde nature were *Guerra y Paz* (2001), *Los Inmortales* (2002), *Hércules de Tirinto*, *Tirante el Blanco*, *La Guerra de Troya*, *Radio teatro piezas* (2006-2007).

In 2005, *Epifanía de un sueño* was shown at the Almagro Festival; it featured Josep Maria Pou and Juan Echanove in an adaptation by the Chilean Jorge Díaz, and the station revived the traditional format occasionally, every two or three months (Rojas, 2005). It was the seed of *Ficción Sonora* when, according to Benigno Moreno (2024), 'the idea arose that the technicians and producers would become part of the show and that the viewer would have the opportunity to see how radio is made'.

In 2006, radio theatre plays were performed in front of audiences at Madrid's La Casa Encendida every month. They were a mix of 'humour, terror, suspense and science fiction, enveloped in an avant-garde radio production' (Gallo, 2006). That year, *Querido Mozart* was performed on Radio 3 with the participation of José Sacristán, based on the letters that the musician exchanged with his parents and brother. In 2006, the experience was repeated at the Almagro Festival with *Fuenteovejuna en el frente 1936*, inspired by the Lope de Vega work. In 2007, RNE and Caja Madrid produced *Los farsantes del contrafoso (Farsa semífusa)*, which brought together some of the most famous Golden Age texts. *Viaje del Parnaso* (2006) was produced with the Compañía de Teatro Clásico. The playwright and scriptwriter Laila Ripoll wrote *Guernica, el último viaje* (2006). In 2007, *El guante de hierro*, also adapted by Ripoll, was performed at La Casa Encendida in conjunction with Obra Social de Caja Madrid on the occasion of the five-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Inés de Suárez. In 2008, *El jardín de Venus*, by Félix María de Samaniego, *El convoy de los 927*, by Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis, and *El perro del hortelano* by Lope de Vega in 2009 are performed in this same festival. In parallel, programmes like *Especia Melange*, *El mono temático* and *La ciudad invisible* were launched in 2008 (Hernando *et al.*, 2020, p. 115).

RNE started collaborating with Madrid's La Casa Encendida in 2009 to occasionally offer the programme *Ficción Sonora RNE*, with two or three fictions per year. It is an audiovisual format which can be listened to and watched on RTVE and is designed to be performed before an audience. Some of the titles that can be listened to and watched on the RTVE website include *Psicosis* (2010), on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the film *Psycho*; *Ninfosis* (2010), an original work by Inko Martín, a writer from San Sebastián; *El exorcista* (2010); *Drácula* (2011); *Extraños en un tren* (2011); *La vida de Brian* (2012); *El último trayecto de Horacio Dos*, by Eduardo Mendoza (2012); *Un mundo feliz* (2013); *Blade Runner* (2014); *La isla del tesoro* (2014); *Platero y yo* (2014) on the play's centennial; *El joven Frankenstein* (2015); *Sherlock Holmes: El signo de los cuatro* (2015); *El Quijote del siglo XXI* (2015); *Café de artistas* (2016); *Jekyll y Hide* (2017); *Lorquiana* (2017); *A sangre fría* (2018); *Alicia en el país de las maravillas* (2020); *Reformatorio (de madres y padres)* (2020); *Ventajas de viajar en tren* (2021);

Las aventuras de Tintín (2023); and *La Valentía* (2024), a work written by Alfredo Sanzol in 2018.

In 2011, radio drama was brought back to RNE with short plays by Spanish creators written with the support of the Fundación Autor and produced in conjunction with the Almagro Theatre Festival. This experience gave rise to fiction series like *Noches de miedo*, on RNE as well (2011). In 2014, *El Quijote* was once again performed with the actors José Luis Gómez (narrator), Josep Maria Pou (Don Quixote), Javier Cámara (Sancho Panza) and Michelle Jenner (Dorotea), with a script and adaptation by the language scholar Francisco Rico, a Cervantes expert. In 2016, RNE adapted *Historia de una escalera* by Buero Vallejo. And every year, live fictions are still performed on the grounds of the Almagro Festival, including *Casa con dos puertas es mala de guardar* (2018), *Sor Juana Inés, con el favor y el desdén* (2019), *Magallanes, el viaje infinito* (2020), *La reina muerta* (2021), *Puñados de fuego. Margarita Xirgu en el exilio* (2022), *Entre bobos anda el juego* (2023) and *La dama boba* (2024).

Original plays that are winners of the Margarita Xirgu Awards are performed on Radio Exterior de España. *El emir y la máquina* (2008), by Francisco García Quiñonero; *El oscuro túnel de la mirilla* (2011), written by Manuel Ismael Serrano; *Alanda* (2012), by Emilio López Verdú; *No volveré a pasar hambre* (2016), by the author Paz Palau; and *Un candidato para el fin del mundo* (2020), by María Zaragoza, are available.

Noteworthy initiatives include *El quejío de una diosa* (2019), by the Seville-based theatre company *Mujereando*, directed by Carmen Tamayo and performed by non-professional actresses, homeless women and victims of gender violence; and *Regreso a la Calle Mayor* (2022), which Radio Nacional de España produces with the Filmoteca Española based on the unpublished script by the filmmaker Juan Antonio Bardem, the centennial of whose birth was celebrated in 2022.

3.4 Innovation and creativity through new technologies and podcasting

The rise of podcasting around the world, which gained momentum with National Public Radio's *Serial* in 2014, has also had repercussions on the production of sound fiction. The first business models were launched in the United States during this period, which transformed the commercial productive practice and turned it into a mass phenomenon (Bonini, 2015). This aspect was already foreseen in the first era of podcasting, in which it was deduced that the alliance with radio could benefit and even become the future of the medium (Menduni, 2007). What is clear is that the increase in the production of these works of fiction, as well as other sound productions, has been favoured by the consolidation of podcasting with the 'platformisation' and evolution of the cultural production infrastructures, through practices geared at the development of software and programming applications in the last five years (Sullivan, 2019). The advent of podcasting in the age of 'audification' (Piñero-Otero & Pedrero Esteban, 2022) and the fine-tuning of the platforms of broadcasters like RNE Audio,

in addition to the RTVE website, have enabled public radio to increase its range of programmes (Ruiz Gómez & Legorburu, 2023) and to connect via platforms, as the BBC had already done (Berry, 2020), focusing on experimentation and a variety of formats (López-Villafranca & Olmedo-Salar, 2023, p. 88).

In the new era, in 2011 Lab RTVE was set up as the first media innovation lab in Spain and developed a wide range of creation pieces (Ivars & Zaragoza, 2018, p. 261). This is the age of podcasting, which capitalises on transmedia and binaural sound. *Carlos de Gante* (2015) and *Tiempo de Valientes* (2016) are examples of transmedia TV series. The podcast of *Carlos, el emperador* takes a chronological survey of the first seventeen years in the monarch's life (1500-1517). *Tiempo de valientes* (2016) recounts the adventures of one of the main characters from *El Ministerio del Tiempo*, Julián Martínez. The second season, *Una llamada a tiempo* (2017), recounts complementary plots on another of its most beloved characters, Pacino. Other productions are *Bienvenido a la pasarela* (2017), a transmedia podcast of the story *Estoy vivo*, directed by Daniel Écija; *El punto frío* (2019), which is a transmedia product produced by RTVE in conjunction with Dadá Films & Entertainment, with a podcast with stories different to the web series on the mystery stories of Martín, the main character (López-Villafranca, 2021); and *Maitino: el podcast* (2020), a transmedia version of the acclaimed TV series *Acacias 38*, which uses twelve 10-minute episodes to narrate the love story of Maite and Camino in a parallel plot.

In 2018 and 2019, seven chapters of binaural sound² fictions developed by Playz and the RNE *Ficción Sonora* department were produced, creating an immersive sensation by means of post-production using 5.1 equipment. 'Binaural suggests listening on a level where the listener is inside that level, and it is very interesting from the narrative standpoint' (Moreno, 2024).

These innovative fiction pieces are joined with the experience that Gregorio Parra, host of *Videodrome* until 2021, is undertaking with 5G technology, namely an adaptation of the Calderón work *La vida es sueño* (2019).

'This radio theatre is broadcast with an image whose signal was distributed from a TVE studio in Castilla la Mancha as we were making it in Madrid; more precisely, in the Cineteca del Centro Cultural del Matadero. The technicians from RTVE thought it was a good chance to test the technology. It was an adaptation of Calderón's *La vida es sueño*, within a dream triggered in the main character during the test of "a new technology" at a public hospital in which a "dream study" could be transformed into images and sound. The transmission of the dream was possible thanks to the collaboration of the interdisciplinary artist lury Lech, who created the music and the images projected onscreen. We actors were inside the screen (the images were projected over us)' (Parra, 2024).

Parra's intention was to continue showing that radio is still a dream, 'that sounds fabricate the images inside us as much as the images we actually see; that radio is not being killed by technology' (Parra, 2024).

The programme *La libélula*, hosted by Juan Suárez, is from this later period, with dramatized adaptations of literary texts, which tries to get ‘the listener to get a feeling similar to going to a bookshop, picking out a book and reading a few random pages’ (Suárez, 2024).

In the last five years, in addition to the programmes mentioned above and the work from *Ficción Sonora* as the star programme, other original fiction series have emerged, like the podcast *El hackeo* (2024), a three-episode thriller about privacy, boundaries and false morality after a cyberattack. They are joined by audio series adapted from literary texts like *Los Santos Inocentes* (2021) on the occasion of the work's fortieth anniversary, organised into six episodes and broadcast on *El ojo*

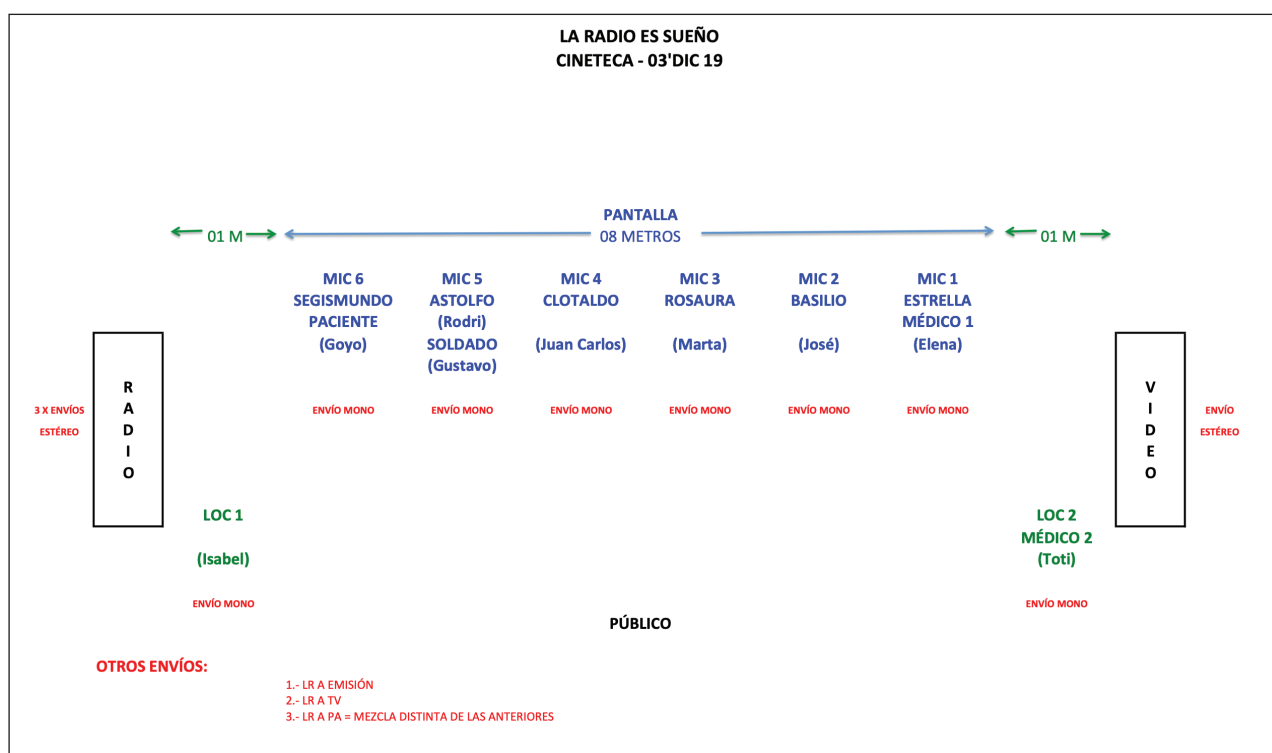
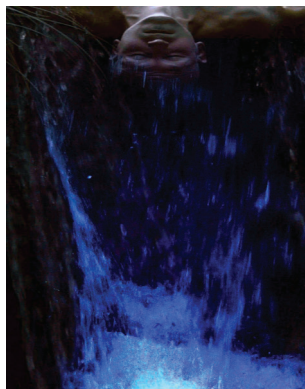
crítico; *Trafalgar* (2022), the radio version of the Pérez Galdós work in four episodes; and *La Tribuna* (2023), an adaptation of the first novel by Emilia Pardo Bazán in four chapters.

4. Case studies

Formal variables. Descriptive analysis of the works

Alicia en el País de las Maravillas (1961) is an adaptation of the Lewis Carroll story *Alice in Wonderland*, in the *Cuentos Infantiles* space of *Teatro Invisible* on RNE, Barcelona. Directed by Juan Manuel Soriano, it was adapted by Sergio Schaff, with musical direction by maestro Luis Ferrer. It features eight actors from the Actors Roster: Gloria Roig, Joaquín Díaz, Marcela Nieto, Ramón Vaccaro, José María Angelat, Estanis González, Arsenio Corsellas, Rosa Griñón and Fernando Parés.

Figure 1. Image and scene of the physical layout of the work *La vida es sueño* (2019)



Source: Gregorio Parra (2024).

Tris Tras Tres (1981-1987) was an evening programme on Radio 3. The chapter called 'El juego' (1981) from the series *El Manantial de la noche*, was directed and hosted by Carlos Faraco, and the scriptwriter was Fernando Luna. It had four characters (antiheroes) played by Lola Calderón, Guillermo de la Estrella, Artemio Espada Clark and Manuel Montano. It tells the adventures of a modest detective who gets involved in an absurd, ingenious plot; this character is played by Faraco, who also directs and narrates the series, along with 'El Pesca', the neighbourhood thief and former convict played by Alberto Sánchez.

El discípulo de Drácula (1997) is one of the episodes of *Historias*, hosted by Juan José Plans. It tells the story of a young man who is heading to Count Dracula's castle in the Carpathian Mountains in Transylvania. This work commemorates the first centennial of the first edition of *Dracula* and the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of its author, Bram Stoker. There are seven actors: Roberto Cruz as the disciple, Natalia Estrada as the mother, Blanca Gala as the girl, Luis Alonso Carrasco as the friend, Lourdes Guerras as Amparo, Pilar Socorro as the young woman, José Antonio Ramírez as the jailer and Juan José Plans as the narrator and director. The music is by Manuel Ruiz Ramos, the special effects by Joaquín Úbeda and the production by Roberto Cruz.

Cuando Juan y Tula fueron a Siritinga is a science-fiction series with 86 chapters broadcast by Radio 3 in 2000. We will analyse the episode entitled 'La primera noche en el puerto de Laris', about the main characters' arrival in this imaginary place. It was directed by Carlos Faraco, with coordination and plot development by Carlos Faraco, Juan Suárez and Mona León Siminiani. Mayca Aguilera and Carlos Hurtado created the music. The leading roles in this chapter are played by Juan Suárez, Sara Vitores, Federico Volpini, Carlos Faraco and Lourdes Guerras.

Las aventuras de Tintín (2023), in turn, is a video podcast in RNE's *Ficción Sonora* which adapts Hergé's comics *Los cigarros del faraón* and *El Loto Azul*. It features a young Tintín and his dog Milú; Tintín is played by Biel Montoro, while Fernando Cayo plays Filemón Ciclón, Oliveira da Figueira and Wang Jen-Ghié.

The average number of characters in these works is four, although this number rises in large productions like *Las aventuras de Tintín*, which has more than 40 characters.

Production variables

Regarding production, three are adaptations and three are original productions. As the station's producer, Benigno Moreno, says, 'we don't only make adaptations; recently we made an original with Elvira Lindo. We make a lot of adaptations because it's also the essence of RNE. We know that they are very minority works, but that's one of RNE's purposes' (Moreno, 2024).

The works last between 5 and 10 minutes in *Teatro Invisible* and *Tris Tras Tres*, between 30 and 60 minutes in Plans' *Historias* and more than one hour in *Ficción Sonora* shows. Only *Las aventuras de Tintín* is performed live.

Human and technical team

The first production, *Alicia en el País de las Maravillas* (1961), features actors from RNE's Actors Roster. Twelve actors from a select roster of radio and theatre actors perform, in addition to three people on the adaptation, supervision and direction team, one professional specifically working in special effects and another on the musical adaptation. It is a large team in which technological evolution, like video recorders and sound-effects generators, and the artistic direction teams led radio drama to its golden age (González-Conde *et al.*, 2029, p. 22). *Tris Tras Tres* (1981-1987) was coordinated by Carlos Faraco and Fernando Luna as a daily programme on Radio 3, with a production team made up of five professionals and the participation of seven producers. Even though the production team and producers were extensive, the actors were employees in different departments of on-staff announcers and actors, in addition to a roster of amateur actors who participated over the almost six years that the broadcast lasted. According to Volpini *et al.* (2020, p. 25), they did not need the Actors Roster because of 'Fernando Luna's sound developments, and the irresistible power of Carlos Faraco's voice: rich, well modulated, magnificently used, and both of their ability to create atmospheres'.

With the disappearance of the Actors Roster in the 1990s, the production of the other fictions is primarily due to the professionals' interest more than the resources on the human team, given that the emphasis was on the technical side, with better equipment. However, there was not a specific group of actors for these works. In *Historias*, Juan José Plans, besides standing out for his unmistakable narration, focused on the complications of production, sound developments and field depth. When *Cuando Juan y Tula fueron a Siritinga* (2000) was produced, one of the most expensive and celebrated fictions on that station, the Radio 3 director at the time, Federico Volpini, highlighted that the station was a 'bridgehead' in keeping dramatised fiction on its schedule (Volpini *et al.*, 2020), despite the fact that the group's policy had downgraded these spaces to a lower priority. Sound experimentation, the script and the atmospheres were finely-tuned, while the performances were done on a voluntary basis by the radio professionals who stood out in other areas. Part of the team was made up of Javier Gallego 'Crudo' in production, Mona León Siminiani and Alfonso Latorre as the scriptwriters, and special collaboration by Andrés Aberasturi and the subsequent producer of *Ficción Sonora*, Mayca Aguilera, who began to work with Benigno Moreno to create a well-crafted, highly original production. More than 20 people were on the team, and their creativity shone through in every episode. This production became so successful that there was a fandom phenomenon around the fantastical world of Siritinga, with stickers, independent musicals presenting the characters or the spaces where the action developed and other curiosities. It was one of the first series in which the multitrack editor SADiE was used to produce a drama on a public station.

In *Las aventuras de Tintín* (2023), it is evident that the productions survived thanks to a very small team working in the genre, along with the occasional collaboration of organisations. The station's team of thespians is comprised of just two people: the director Benigno Moreno and the producer of *Ficción Sonora* Mayca Aguilera. Occasionally the writer and scriptwriter Alfonso Latorre joins them. As Aguilera (2024) says:

'there are no scriptwriters; there is no set structure. It's just the two of us and we have limited budgets, co-productions with foundations, and many of those secondary actors are always the same, former colleagues who have retired or work in the news and other programmes'.

Regarding the evolution of the technical team, in 1973 the RNE building Casa de la Radio was constructed, and studios were specifically created to record dramas: Theatre 1 and Theatre 2. Theatre 1 is no longer used for dramas because it was dismantled, and Theatre 2, where *Ficción Sonora* is recorded, was renovated in 2021. We further discuss the renovation and technical details in the section with the panel of experts.

Creation variables

Within the dramas analysed, we have examined one tale, one story, two serials and one live fiction event. The themes are varied: for children, with the adaptation of the tale *Alicia en el país de las maravillas* [Alice in Wonderland] (*Teatro Invisible*) and *Las aventuras de Tintín* (*Ficción Sonora*); mystery, in Plans' *El discípulo de Drácula* (*Historias*); and humour, in *El juego* from *Tris Tras Tres* and the episode of *La primera noche en el puerto de Laris* (*Cuando Juan y Tula fueron a Siritinga*), which also blends with science fiction.

Content variables

The characters are flatter in the initial period of the dramas, like the *Teatro Invisible* tale, in which the characters are clearly defined with simple attributes; in the *Tris Tras Tres* episode, in which the characters are somewhat childish in tone and their stories are absurd; and in the *Cuando Juan y Tula fueron a Siritinga* episode, with characters with a highly original, creative dramatization but whose function is clearly defined by its humorous, fantastical tone. The character of Dracula in *Historias* is more well-rounded and complex, with many edges, keen drama and a powerful performance. There is a mix of well-rounded and flat characters in *Las aventuras de Tintín* from *Ficción Sonora*, in which the auxiliary characters or antagonists are flatter than the main character.

The role of the heterodiegetic narrator is clearer in the golden age (*Alicia en país de las maravillas*), and the narrator is more descriptive (*telling*), although the evolution of the genre gave way to dialogues and actions that replace the narration (*hearing*). The narrators tell the story as characters (homodiegetic) in *Tris Tras Tres* and *Cuando Juan y Tula fueron a Siritinga*. In the latter, 'as the series goes on, it has more dialogue and

less narration' (Aguilera, 2024). And in the case of *Historias*, the narrator, Juan José Plans, regarded as the 'narrator of narrators' and 'supernatural master', gets involved in the story and even becomes a key part of it despite being heterodiegetic (RTVE audio colecciones, no date). There is no narrator in *Las aventuras de Tintín*, but there is an announcer who 'signals' the date or location of the action.

In the pieces analysed, the radio language is essential in determining the evolution and narrative dimension of the genre on public radio. In his work on radio aesthetic, Arnheim (1980) underscored the fact that the medium prompts sensory experience and creates mental images in the audience, as later corroborated in other studies (Rodero, 2011; Romero, 2017). Words, music and noise or sound effects, in addition to silence, compose a message with very specific expressive systems that adapt to the medium and comprise a specific code (Gutiérrez & Perona, 2002; Balsebre, 2004; Blanco & Fernández, 2004; Haye, 2004). This has enhanced the immersive function of sound fictions thanks to the language and the sound design. Regarding the drama genre in particular, Rodero (2005; 2011; 2024) and Guarinos (1999; 2009) have examined the functions of this language, which we will apply in this case study. When we analyse the radiosemes, we found that words have a more descriptive purpose in the golden age and the age of decline, but in the majority of works the dialogue serves to advance the story, push the action and sometimes characterise the characters, as in *El discípulo de Drácula* and the *Tris Tras Tres* episode. The music at the beginning is used as background sound and expressively in the 1965 story and in *Tris Tras Tres*; it is expressive in *Cuando Juan y Tula fueron a Siritinga*; and it fulfils a narrative or chronotopic function in the sequence changes in Juan José Plans' story and *Las aventuras de Tintín* in of *Ficción Sonora*. Silence is hardly used.

Regarding sound effects, they are expressive and reinforce the mood in *Alicia en el país de las maravillas*; they are realistic in *El juego* from *El juego* and *El discípulo de Drácula*; and they are symbolic when the wind blows or we hear the abyss that envelopes the character. In *Cuando Juan y Tula fueron a Siritinga*, they are realistic; they describe the action and the characters, but they are also symbolic and expressive, and they take us to the series' imaginary world where they reveal the characters' and even the narrators' thoughts. And in *Ficción Sonora* there are realistic effects, atmospheric effects -like the recreation of the ambiance on a night when a tropical storm is raging, or the sound of glasses clinking at a party- and symbolic and expressive effects to accompany comical characters like Hernández and Fernández.

The scenes are dynamic in the performances of the characters in the *Teatro Invisible* tale and static in the narration. There is dynamism in the other pieces: in *Tris Tras Tres*, there is a wide variety of scenes in the performances and movement and close-ups in the narration; in *Historias*, the scenes have more depth and the very close-up for the main character, with different scenes for the atmospheric sounds heard in

different directions; the *Cuando Juan y Tula fueron a Siringa* episode plays a lot with the music and sound effects, which are enormously expressive; and there is even more depth and variety of scenes in *Las aventuras de Tintín*, if possible, based on the characters' movement, and you can even see them play their role in audiovisual format.

5. Creative processes. Panel of experts

5.1 Pre-production. The creation of fiction works

The ideas and themes chosen are not eminently commercial, according to the professionals: 'we do not do dystopias. That's a different type of product. If public radio doesn't do classical works, nobody is going to do them' (Aguilera, 2024). The people in charge of *Ficción Sonora* try to bring the classics to the audience, as in the broadcast of the work *El Quijote del siglo XXI* (2015), which they painstakingly adapted and used the sound language to reach the audience who wanted to access it in a different way.

The script is one of the cores in this creation phase, which is very carefully crafted at the station in terms of the careful use of technical and literary elements. In the golden age, this was done on a daily or weekly basis, as we see in this sample of *Sobremesa en color*, a programme hosted by José Luis Pécker, which included the dramatic section 'Historias de un policía', written by the scriptwriter Joaquín Alarcón Rubio.

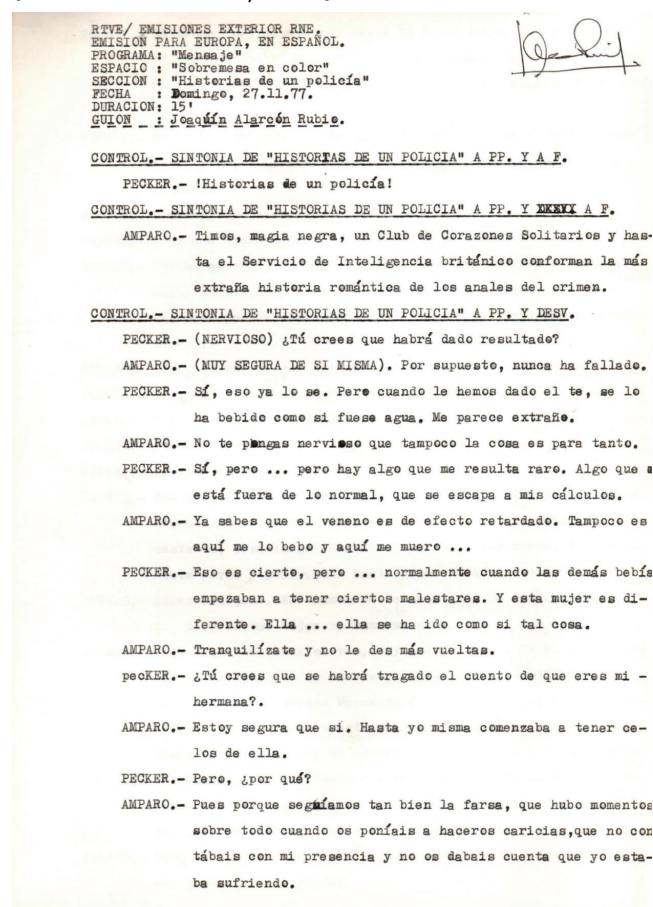
In the golden age, there was a prior work of choosing scripts and assigning a certain producer, with a cast of actors who fit the roles they were playing (*Documentos RNE*, 2014). When the genre started declining, the soul and effort of the station's professionals are what kept it alive:

'Hours of writing, of struggling so that the text could give what it hadn't had. The issue was not what we wanted to achieve but what could be done. But it all came out great, really great at times. The stories by Carlos Faraco and Fernando Luna, by Juan Ignacio Francia and Jesús Beltrán, and my own ones, I hope, emanated magic; they were powerful and overcame any technical shortcomings' (Volpini, 2024).

Nowadays, Alfonso Latorre, the scriptwriter for RNE's *Ficción Sonora*, is a witness to and mastermind of the change and evolution of the scripts in this type of production, which are closer to TV series and films:

'I use film and TV techniques to write sound fiction. I start with storyboards and treatments, and I make versions of them until I am confident of the structure. Then I move on to the script itself, and I also make successive versions of it. I don't know if the techniques used in the past were very different, but I get the impression that they focused more on theatre than on film when writing them. When I organise and write, I think cinematographically; I visualise the scenes in my

Figure 2. Image of a script from 'Historias de un policía' (Sobremesa en color, 1977)



Source: Personal archive of Joaquín Alarcón (2024).

head and, based on that, I try to find a way so that these scenes, only with the help of sound, can also be recreated in the listener's mind. We can say that I use a game of transcoding: mental image – sound – mental image' (Latorre, 2024).

5.2 Production and post-production. Recording live

In the recording process, there is a perfect yet delicate coordination between the scriptwriters and the production team, the actors' director and the actors themselves. In this section, we discuss production and post-production, given that they are parallel processes in *Ficción Sonora*.

5.2.1 Directing actors. Performance

In the golden age, radio theatre or radio dramas were broadcast frequently. Scripts for drama shows, in programmes like the one we presented in the section above, were made live, and the actors themselves, in conjunction with the scriptwriters and programme hosts, corrected them along the way. The Actors Roster disappeared in the 1990s, which made the recording and production of works with few resources trickier.

'On Radio 3, from 1979 until 1982, when its director Eduardo García Matilla submitted *Temas de la Pasión*, a production by the broadcaster recorded with the Actors Roster, to the Italy Prize, we had rare access to the Roster and not much more after that date. Still, they were wonderful times in which imagination, enthusiasm and dedication made up for the lack of means' (Volpini, 2024).

Juan Suárez, the actor, sound editor and director and host of the programme *La libélula*, believes that there has been a change in dramatization compared to the golden age, in which the tendency is towards 'naturalism, although I think that at times this is confused with a kind of sloppiness'. Ana Alonso used to be an actress in *Ficción Sonora* and is now the director of actors at Cadena SER and the head of the SER Podcast; she believes that it was 'very different work to that of the Cadena SER fictions because it was worked on before the show, rehearsed thoroughly in several sessions and all carefully measured, so the live show was very gratifying' (Alonso, 2024).

Since the 2000s, Benigno Moreno and Mayca Aguilera have directed the actors and produced the shows; they believe that in both *Ficción Sonora* and other dramas on the station, the sound language is enhanced and the actors are asked 'to forget about the microphone and just act'. They use pocket microphones so that the actors move bearing in mind the dance of microphones. Dubbers and theatre people have to change the way they act: not speaking loudly as in the theatre and without mannerisms as in dubbing. In the opinion of the director of *Ficción Sonora*, the important thing is knowing how to act and then adapting to the medium, using the radio language, vocalising and performing in front of the microphone as the actors they are, great professionals, because 'when the actor is an actor, there is a learning process and they end up understanding the mechanism; it's just acting' (Moreno, 2024).

Suárez (2024) believes that the existence of an Actors Roster would clearly improve the frequency and number of fictions on the station, given that in addition to the actors hired for these stories, the RNE staff perform other functions, and their contribution to the fictions is 'just for the fun of it'. It is not their main job, but they voluntarily participate in these works while working on other places on the radio station.

'Retired colleagues do it just for the fun of it, because they like to perform and want to continue. Other colleagues like Juan Suárez, Amaya Prieto, Julio Valverde and Ricardo Peralta, who work for the station, occasionally get some kind of bonus or compensation, but they do it basically because they like it. All the professional actors earn money with the contracts stipulated by RTVE which are made for people from outside the station' (Aguilera, 2024).

5.2.2 Prior to the live show

Mayca Aguilera and Benigno Moreno work closely with the scriptwriter Alfonso Latorre before and during the rehearsals with the actors, so that once the script is written, they make any changes needed, using their own codes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Script for *Las aventuras de Tintín* with technical notes (*Ficción Sonora*)

Source: Moreno and Aguilera (2024).

In *Las aventuras de Tintín*, a work we have used as a sound reference, there are 250 cuts performed live, which are measured down to the second and rehearsed with the actors. It is a laborious process that requires previous assembly and disassembly to insert the cuts live.

'Things are changed in the text until the end. We record the words with the actors, which is not just the first time they read it together or the reading used to define the characters' voices. There is a very important phase, which is the word recording on which we do the editing. We have to put all this together with a high, complex quality, and later we have to break it down into fragments, which will be interwoven with the live performances' (Aguilera, 2024).

5.2.3 Production, recording

The studio Teatro 2 was renovated in 2021 to make RNE's sound fictions.

'It's a studio that's like a cube; it's nested within the building's structure. No wall touches anything else and it's really spacious, with a table on wheels which is where we record other programmes like *Documentos*, but it can be moved and taken away when we record the fiction. We move the microphones and lecterns as needed' (Aguilera, 2024).

There are two chambers in the studio: the reverberating chamber, which simulates the sound of people inside places like a church or a cave, and the anechoic chamber,³ 'where the effects from manipulating objects are recorded', in addition to stairs with a wooden and marble part to simulate the sounds of going up and down' (Aguilera, 2024).

According to the people in charge of *Ficción Sonora*, they record with one microphone per actor, not like in the past where the microphone was placed in the centre and the actors moved around the space to create the different scenes.

When recording after the rehearsals, the actors have to coordinate under the direction of the technical team: 'they have to know when to come up to and leave the microphone, when to project their voice, that type of thing which is decided in

the rehearsals and is later reflected in the live show' (Suárez, 2024).

In recorded productions, Mayca Aguilera (2024) claims that 'you have to describe where they are, the scene they're in, the action, the noise, and you put them in the situation to project, or the movement they have to make to recreate an action, so the performance is much fresher and stands out more'.

5.2.4. Post-production

Post-production has changed a lot over the years since tape recorders were used, equipment become digitalised, computers and binaural system editing started being used. The *Ficción Sonora* team says that what is interesting about all these techniques is the 'narrative shift', given that if they don't make sense narratively, they should not be used. For example, in *El Monte de las Ánimas*, it made sense to use them 'because of the game with ghosts, its gloomy atmosphere and to simulate different spaces' (Aguilera, 2024).

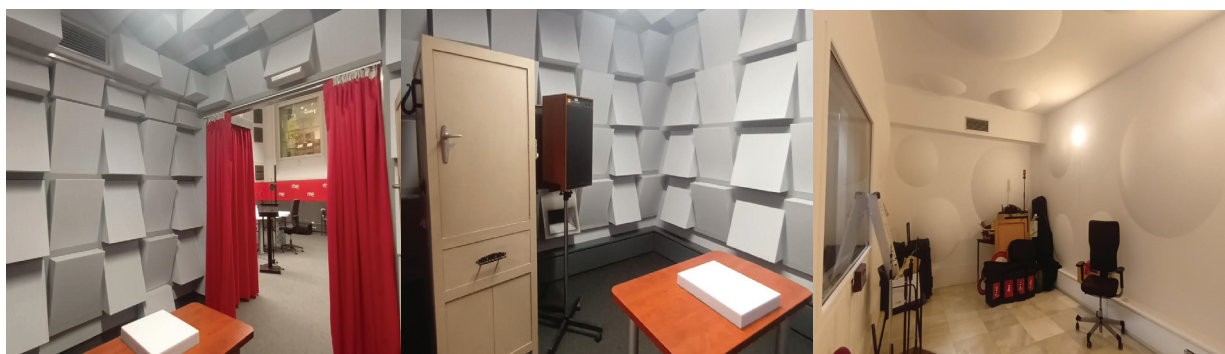
Another factor of interest for post-production is the soundscapes used in live and recorded shows, which are the hallmarks of *Ficción Sonora*. For example, in *Los Santos Inocentes* (2021), these soundscapes were recorded on a farm because 'the sonority and reverberation is different and we preferred not to use canned effects because they fit the action

Figure 4. Theatre 2 studio (*Ficción Sonora*)



Source: Aguilera and RTVE (2024).

Figure 5. Anechoic chamber and reverberating chamber in Theatre 2 (*Ficción Sonora*)



Source: Aguilera (2024).

Figure 6. Control room where the binaural sound is edited and processed

Source: Aguilera (2024).

and sound better' (Moreno, 2024). The figure of the noisemaker continues to exist in some way at RNE, but not live, in the recordings to create Foley sound effects, a concept coined for the first time in 1920 in film referring to a technique in which real sounds are recorded in a studio to generate sounds that imitate reality (Arias Larrea, 2019, p. 6).

The control is elevated and the studio is on the ground floor. It is equipped for 5.1 recording with a multitrack editor called SADiE, which is later processed binaurally. Regarding binaural sound, 'we record the words only, we record on tracks and without scenes so that we can edit them ourselves' (Moreno, 2024). Aguilera highlights the number of panoramic scenes and fine, varied movements in the works that are later edited. Sometimes they prefer to record in close-up and vary them.

5.3 The future, according to the experts

The future of fiction is guaranteed because of its professionals' good work, as noted by Federico Volpini (2024): 'Today Juan Suárez often and Isabel Ruiz Lara occasionally participate in audio drama on Radio 3, although the main programme, which is infrequent and disseminated over time, is *Ficción Sonora*. They are marginal shows which hardly affect the continuity of the programming.'

The advent of podcasting has also fostered the revival of the genre, given that, according to Suárez (2024), 'there is a stronger and stronger commitment to sound fiction, and it is promoted more in-house, and in fact more programmes contain some fiction contents or brief pieces to support their own contents'. Latorre (2024) points to the overabundance of podcasts and platforms that have filled with products 'many of them irrelevant, of questionable interest and low economic yields'. Aguilera and Moreno concur, as they believe that the commercial aspect is prioritised, with scripts that are not designed for audio, but that they manage to adapt thanks to knowledge of the sound language and painstaking work with professionals from other sectors, who allow themselves to be guided by the expertise of the station's professionals.

Conclusions

From the historical standpoint, the fiction that RNE has made stands out for its excellent adaptations of classic works and a team of professionals that never gave up in their determination to create high quality productions, even when the genre was in decline. During the golden age, the Actors Roster stood out for their live performances with works that are still conserved in the RNE Archive. The works analysed in the case study show us that RNE productions had a style of their own and have evolved with the new technologies, which they use conscientiously and always with a narrative sense. The themes chosen over time show that they have been targeted at minority audiences, more interested in culture than in fads or commercial products.

As fiction stopped being part of the programming line-ups, the imagination and ingenuity of the RNE professionals made up for the lack of means, as found in the production processes. As happens today, even though there is keener interest in the genre now, the team of professionals in charge of dramas is quite small, and they have to draw on outside professionals, volunteerism from their colleagues who have other jobs at the station and perform or collaborate occasionally and sometimes without pay, and funding from foundations and other private organisations. The production processes reaffirm the fact that the station's good work is due to the efforts of its professionals, oftentimes out of vocation rather than for pay. We find cinematographic techniques in script creation, but the station prioritises the sound language, an aspect that can be recognised in the stories of its fictions, which are based more on dialogue and action. In this sense, we can detect a transformation, and even though the essence of sound is never lost, we do find an interest in creating a story in which both the script and the use of techniques like binaural technology create an immersive effect in listeners. This technological and narrative evolution is the outcome of greater complexity of the characters and plots and the way the sound editing is played with by experimenting with the scenes, their depth and dynamism.

The fact that many current productions were created to be consumed as podcasts has also changed the way they are produced and the stories themselves, given that live sound fictions have a certain structure and narrative, which differ from those of the binaural pieces or audio series that the station has been producing since 2022. RNE is beginning to develop series similar to those on other platforms, like *El Hackeo*, a briefer, serialised original audio series with a narrative structure similar to that of other platforms, which seeks to end each episode with a *cliffhanger*, a narrative resource that is used in audiovisual series which consists of creating a great deal of dramatic tension that is interrupted and then resolved in the next episode.

According to its professionals, the advent of podcasting has been beneficial in reviving the genre with the video podcast of *Ficción Sonora*, even though it remains to be seen whether the station commits to the genre by earmarking more human and technical resources to this department in the future. Even though the *Ficción Sonora* professionals believe that the overabundance and quest for commercialism may jeopardise quality, the shift in trend has been far from damaging and has brought the genre to younger audiences, with productions in which internationally renowned audio platforms and producers are working. The evolution of the genre in terms of quantity and quality can be perceived in the public station, and even though it does not have the resources it needs, the *Ficción Sonora* section of the RNE Audio platform houses 115 productions in the guise of podcasts on the date this article is being written, which indicates that the genre is more vital than ever and that audiences are interested in it.

The public radio station plays a crucial role in Spain because it has committed to the genre and has constantly experimented with it over time, even when no fiction was being produced in any radio station or broadcaster. On the other hand, the application of technological innovation with binaural sound, sound narrative with an immersive function and live performances are the hallmarks of RNE's audio dramas. The quest for quality in the scripts, adaptations, the creation of soundscapes and Foley sound effects, which is later used in live shows, comprise a working methodology that is only used by public radio. This entails an economic and human effort that other private stations and platforms cannot afford, despite the fact that there is no human team to do this work permanently or a department with more professionals.

Regarding possible lines of research, the number and variety of pieces analysed could be enlarged to further study the different phases. Furthermore, audio series and more recent productions by the station could also be added, and the number of professionals who have participated in the different periods could be expanded.

Notes

1. This technique consists of listening carefully and analytically pausing the sound every few seconds to observe both the language (who is speaking, what are they saying, where and to whom are they saying it) and how the audio is processed, how the elements of the narrative are composed, reactions as a listener and connections that are drawn and how the different sound elements are used to ascertain its meaning.
2. Binaural sound creates a sense of 3D sound in listeners, similar to what happens when they are physically located in the same place as the sound source.
3. An anechoic chamber is a room designed to absorb the reflections of soundwaves or electromagnetic waves and is insulated from any source of outside noise.

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The narrative non-fiction podcast in Spain and its evolution over time

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Abstract

The podcast has become an ally of traditional radio. Many of its most acclaimed figures are the evolution of radio formats that have lost their niche on the radio waves. An example of this is the narrative non-fiction podcast, also known as the documentary podcast, which could be considered as the evolution of radio reporting. In this paper we count the main narrative resources of the formats published in Spain up to and including the year 2020, and we compare them with a current format in order to analyse the evolution of these variables. Through this quantitative analysis, we can conclude that it is a format divided into half-hour episodes, with a narrator and three interviews per episode, and that it usually also contains archival documents, musical backgrounds and sound effects. As it has evolved over time, the interventions have become shorter and we find more dynamism.

Keywords

Podcast, narrative, non-fiction, Spain, evolution, journalism.

Resum

El pòdcast ha esdevingut un aliat de la ràdio tradicional. Molts dels seus exponents més reclamats són l'evolució de formats radiofònics que van perdre el seu lloc a les graelles hercianes. N'és un exemple el pòdcast narratiu de no ficció, també conegut com a pòdcast documental, que podria considerar-se l'evolució del reportatge radiofònic. En aquest treball comptabilitzem els principals recursos narratius dels formats que es van publicar a Espanya fins a l'any 2020 inclòs, i en fem una comparativa amb un format actual per analitzar l'evolució d'aquestes variables. Gràcies a aquesta anàlisi quantitativa podem concloure que és un format dividit en episodis de mitja hora, que compta amb un narrador i tres entrevistes per episodi, i que sol contenir, a més a més, documents d'arxiu, fons musicals i efectes de so. A mesura que ha evolucionat en el temps, les intervencions són més breus i hi trobem més dinamisme.

Paraules clau

Pòdcast, narratiu, no-ficció, Espanya, evolució, periodisme.

1. Introduction

In the last 20 years, the way we interact with audio has changed completely. 2004 is the year in which podcasting was born at the hands of Adam Curry and Dave Winner, emerging in an interconnected, technology-focused society. The first podcast was launched in Spain that same year, with our country showing a clear interest in this new form of communication. Without the technological explosion that began years before its birth, a network as robust as the one that sustains it would not have emerged. Moreover, it came into being at a time when society was tired of conventional media. With technologies on the rise, the speed of information began to gain ground in online newspapers and on radio and television programmes.

It is then that a new medium sought its niche by focusing on thought-provoking content dedicated to subjects that have no place in the traditional media. What started as a niche tool has established itself as a thriving communications industry in many countries around the world.

There are many podcast formats, but one closely tied to journalism is the narrative non-fiction podcast. This type of format is based on investigative journalism and cross-checking with primary sources. Although the term is widespread among members of the podcasting industry, and often also referred to as documentary podcasting, the variables that define it have not yet been defined. This paper seeks to specify the basic characteristics of the format by also carrying out a temporal comparison that explores the evolution of its main variables over

time. Through a quantitative analysis in which we will measure a series of variables, we will unravel the narrative resources used by narrative non-fiction podcasts.

2. Reference framework

First, we will draw on Ruiz and Salgado's (2022) definition of narrative non-fiction podcasts:

"A web-based audio format that stands out mainly for the presence of a narrator who is part of the story, who gets involved and moves away from objectivity, is longer than other formats, is often divided into different episodes and usually includes documentary sources that have been compiled in an initial research process. It is not limited to certain themes, but there is a remarkable variety of subjects and a notable presence of narrative resources, with the way the story is told occupying a substantial place" (p. 323).

We can divide the history of podcasting in Spain into different stages. The first of these begins with the arrival of the first formats. This includes the creation of the first podcast associations in 2010 and the proliferation of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. The second stage, backed by authors such as Bonini, 2015 and López and Homssi, 2021, and the one that concerns us most, began in 2016, when the first narrative non-fiction podcast arrived in Spain. This second stage is characterised by an improvement in the production system, with the creation of production companies exclusively for the creation of these formats, with professional podcasts becoming more and more prominent than amateur ones. In fact, many of the most prominent amateur podcasters go on to become part of platforms or production companies. The third stage begins in 2021 with the massification of the industry thanks to the positioning of large audio platforms in the market such as Audible, Spotify or Podimo. This research analyses all the narrative non-fiction formats that were published in the second stage of podcasting in Spain and compare them with a recent format to see how they have evolved over time.

2.1 Journalists switch to podcasting

The second stage is the beginning of the professionalisation of the podcasting sector with the arrival of the media and journalists. The podcast is beginning to position itself as an entity in its own right, increasingly separate from radio, and is even beginning to be defined as a reviver of forgotten formats, as Markman (2015) argues. It is a rediscovery of various types of genres and a renewal of sound content, departing from what has been exploited until now. A new way of telling stories by redefining what has already been done on paper and even in audiovisuals, but now in a sound medium. It also changes the way the listener listens, for while other podcasts require

a level of attention similar to radio, this listening is now active and attentive. Another characteristic of narrative non-fiction podcasts is serialisation (Gutiérrez, Esteban and Núñez, 2019), which can be plot-based (formats in which several chapters are required to understand the story in its entirety, in such a way that the information is reported between episodes) or they can be resolved chapter formats (although the substance of the discourse is similar, each chapter is independent in itself, and the story ends and concludes in the chapter). Serialisation is a differentiating element of the format, which constructs new needs for the audio listener, but on closer analysis, they are not so new, but rather revive old formats such as radio dramas. This way, the listener creates a special bond with the content.

The narrative non-fiction podcast is a format that uses environmental resources, voices (often appealing to the listener), music and, above all, testimonies, all to create immersive atmospheres. It often coincides with the elements of radio itself, but it also has its new variables, as we will discuss. Moreover, it uses everyday, simple language, and there are regular interactions with the audience (Azurin, Ñaupas and Rodríguez, 2015). It is based on the sound documentary, defined in the Spanish Sound Documentary Forum (SONODOC) as 'telling real stories with sounds' (de Beauvoir, 2018, p. 23).

The narrative podcast is usually a format created by journalists. The evolution of journalistic investigation is, therefore, part of the story, which sometimes creates two plots: the one told by the interviewees and the one explained by the journalist about the process of the investigation (García, Esteban and Núñez, 2019). At present, the content we are beginning to encounter is increasingly narrative (Lindgren, 2016), and sound is being harnessed to enhance narratives by immersing the listener and thus evolving the narrative level in an increasingly sophisticated way (Dowling and Miller, 2019). Podcasting is therefore beginning to opt for long-form journalism, investing time and resources, bringing back the chronicles that hardly have a place in the other media, which are evolving towards immediacy and saturation. There are limited appearances of chronicles and extensive reports on general radio, so the possibilities of narrative genre creation may be one of the reasons behind the expansion of the podcasting universe, which, moreover, is beginning to incorporate many fiction elements and sometimes even dramatisations within the non-fiction formats themselves (Legorburu, Edo, and García González, 2021).

For all these reasons, podcasting is beginning to stand out as an ideal platform for more elaborate productions, such as documentary narratives (Beauvoir, 2015). Specifically, Podium Podcast is presented as a content portal with infinite possibilities, such as the loyalty of audiences thanks to subscription and the publication of episodes at specific times and, moreover, the option for each user to choose an individual line-up, in terms of content and schedules. This resulted in Podium Podcast obtaining 208,000 unique users in its first six months. Half a year later, from June 2017 to February 2018, there had been

five million downloads (Moreno Cazalla, 2017); nine million on its first anniversary, and 40 million on its third (Legorburu, Edo and García González, 2021).

2.2 Podium Podcast and other driving platforms

Although prior to Podium Podcast there were platforms such as Cuonda, Sonoro Global Media Corp or DIXO, the first Spanish-speaking (Mexican) platform promoted by a media corporation, different authors (López-Villafranca, 2024; Legorburu, Edo and García González, 2021; Pérez-Alaejos, Pedrero and Leoz, 2018) consider Podium Podcast to be the source of the professionalisation of the sector.

The Prisa Group's platform has a wide variety of formats: there are major productions, but also programmes led by content creators in social networks, journalistic investigations, archive recovery, etc. When it was created, it divided its catalogue into four blocks: entertainment, essentials (sound library), fiction and journalism, and five years later, although other categories have been created, podcasts included in the 'journalism' block account for 31.49% of its total content, which shows its commitment to this type of format (Legorburu, Edo and García González, 2021). Its former director, María Jesús Espinosa de los Monteros, says:

"This platform focuses on issues of latent and not immediate current affairs, with two main contents standing out: events, linked to news related to gender violence, child abuse, scams or accidents; and biographies of personalities, mostly from the world of culture" (Legorburu, Edo and García González, 2021, p. 523).

Furthermore, several platforms emerge in 2020 that continue to reshape the landscape. We are talking about Spotify, Audible and Podimo. Spotify begins its narrative non-fiction journey with the great success of *XREY*, by journalist Álvaro de Cózar, followed by other titles such as *El Rey del Cachopo*, *Los papeles* and *Misterio en la Moraleja*. Audible launched its platform with non-fiction titles such as *El Móvil de Mendes* and then added others such as *Hierba* or *El Desafío ETA* (López-Villafranca, 2024). Podimo, although currently dedicated to conversational content, also includes narrative non-fiction titles such as *GAL: El Triángulo* and *Tú no me conoces*. Given a much more diversified offer, the enrichment of the sector is indisputable and the amateurism with which podcasting was born is consigned to the sidelines. With the sector at its peak, we should highlight the birth of Sonora, the audio platform of the Atresmedia group, which closed after just two years of operation, leaving its catalogue of more than 50 narrative non-fiction podcasts in the hands of Ondacero Podcast. Nor should we forget iVoox, one of the pioneering platforms in the world of podcasting which, nevertheless, has chosen to occupy the amateur niche over large-scale professional productions. As a result, the audio industry and the professionals working in it have undergone a major transformation, bringing about the

creation of a podcasting identity (Martín-León, Díaz-Lucena, 2024).

3. Methodology

This paper presents a quantitative methodology based on the compilation of variables from the titles relevant to the analysis. Once the information had been compiled, a previously structured template was completed in order to obtain concrete data that could be extrapolated to the group as a whole.

The main objective of this study is to define the format of the narrative non-fiction podcast in Spain by observing and classifying its most important narrative sound variables. As a secondary objective, we add the temporal verification of these variables with respect to recently published titles.

Before starting, it is necessary to define the object of study in different areas.

In terms of spatial delimitation, we will focus on the Spanish scene given the vast number of podcasts that can be found worldwide, as well as the many differences that can be observed between them. A global analysis would certainly taint the results. Therefore, we will take into account those podcasts published on Spanish platforms or their versions in Spain and which are also in Spanish. Nevertheless, we do have relevant information on other countries to understand trends in there and for comparison purposes.

In addition, only Spanish podcasts that are carefully produced, in other words, those that have production companies, platforms or media outlets behind them, will be included in the study. Intensive research has been carried out on the following platforms: Cuonda, Podium Podcast, Apple Podcast, Google Podcast, Spotify, iVoox, Audible, Podimo, Storytell or traditional media such as *El País*, *eldiario.es*, *COPE* or *Radio Nacional de España*, looking for narrative non-fiction formats. Therefore, we will analyse those podcasts that are not amateur, i.e., those that are supported by a professional production or broadcasting, and thus we will be able to properly analyse how the podcast has entered the journalistic profession.

With regard to the titles to be studied, this paper focuses on those made for distribution only on the internet, leaving aside those formats that were first broadcast over the radio waves and then transferred to the internet, but including those made by conventional broadcasters for online distribution.

We will also not analyse branded podcasts, i.e., podcasts that have been promoted by a commercial brand and serve as advertising or sponsorship for that brand.

In order to carry out the corresponding classification, an analysis will be made of the quantitative variables of the classification of cybermedia proposed by Salaverría, Martínez-Costa and Breiner (2018, p. 1038). To these we also add the main narrative resources of the format to be analysed: the number of episodes and the length of each one; the narrative resources, i.e. the narrator and his/her presence; the use or

not of audio¹ and sound effects²; the voice or interview clips; the ambience³; the archive documents⁴; the possible sound re-enactments⁵; the sound layers presented⁶; the music used, both neutral backgrounds and recorded songs; the use of musical sweepers⁷ and silences⁸, and the use or not of an intro⁹ and its analysis. These sound elements are extremely important, as Moreno-Espinosa and Román-San Miguel argue:

"They are of great importance to emphasise the information: the call sign (composed of spoken and musical elements that allow the listener to be reminded of the station or programme he/she is tuning in to. It is usually broadcast after the time signals), the jingle (musical effect that allows to identify a station and a specific program), the intro theme (more elaborate jingle or theme tune, which includes the fixed credits: name of the program, the name of the announcer, name of the sections, theme, etc.), the bed (musical background used for reading, to underline the content of the information, draw attention to it or intensify the rhythm of the speech. It is also called a musical cushion), the sweeper (a brief burst of continuous sound used to separate news or information from advertising), the bumper (a sweeper used to separate sections) or musical cues (musical effects used to give strength and drama to a text). Music is the radio's sound resource par excellence" (2020, pp. 244-245).

Therefore, the units of classification are the following: number of episodes; duration; narrative resources (narrator, interview clips, archival documents, re-enactments, musical backgrounds and songs, sweepers, sound effects, audio effects and silences), and intro theme. It should be clarified that in the case of variables such as sound effects or audio effects, only those that are obvious and clearly identifiable will be analysed. Possible processing that is not identifiable by the average user does not

fall within the scope of the study.

A total of 38 different formats were analysed, which are listed below in order of publication: *Le llamaban padre*; *Diario de un naufrago*; *Charles Manson: vuelve la bestia*; *El año de Podium*; *Miguel de Unamuno: el intelectual que agitó a una generación*; *Borges según Borges*; *Camarón*; *Miguel Hernández: viento del pueblo*; *Gloria Fuertes: poeta entre los musos*; *Fórum*; *Un viaje a la final imposible*; *V: las cloacas del estado*; *Valencia Destroy*; *Lo conocí en un Corpus*; *Donde quiera que estés*; *Los sonidos de Dudamel*; *El día que Abdul dijo adiós a Siria*; *Olafo*; *Regreso a las Ramblas*; *La mitad del mundo*; *Venezuela: huir o morir*; *Las tres muertes de mi padre*; *Máster*; *Invisibles*; *Volver: cinco historias de la crisis catalana*; *En el corredor de la muerte*; *Un bonito cadáver*; *Crónicas Jondas*; *Igor el ruso*; *La línea invisible*; *XREY*; *Buscando una luz*; *24424: lo que nos jugamos en Bankia*; *El móvil de Mendes*; *IN-visibles*; *El desafío: ETA*; *Laífe* and *De eso no se habla*.

In addition, we analysed five titles published between 2021 and 2024 (*Misterio en la Moraleja*, *Los Papeles*, *¿Por qué Matamos?* *T3*, *GAL: El Triángulo* and *Gowex*) to make a comparison of the format and analyse its evolution over time. Each of these titles corresponds to a platform in the podcasting sector in Spain.

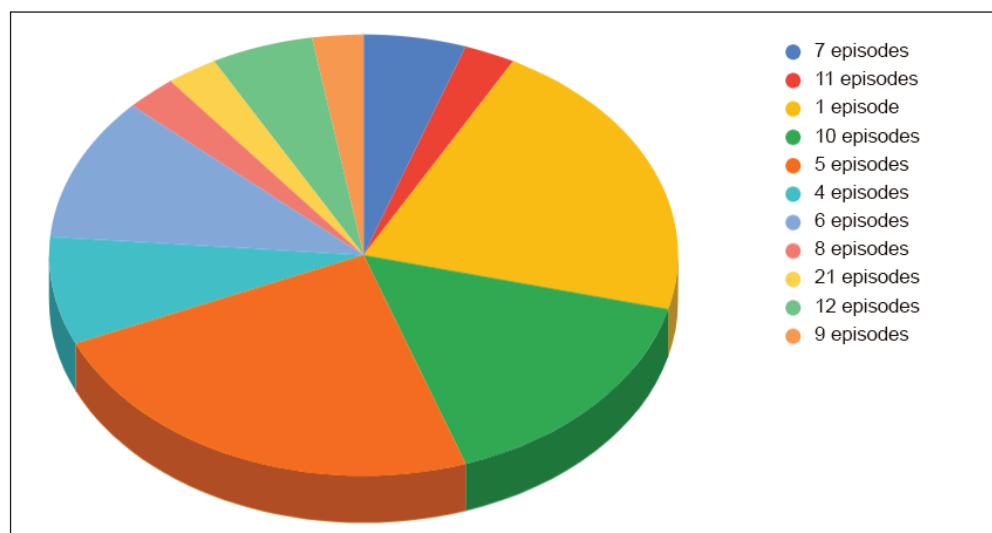
An exhaustive reading and reflection of a bibliographical compilation of reference authors on the subject was carried out to complete the qualitative analysis.

4. Analysis of the results

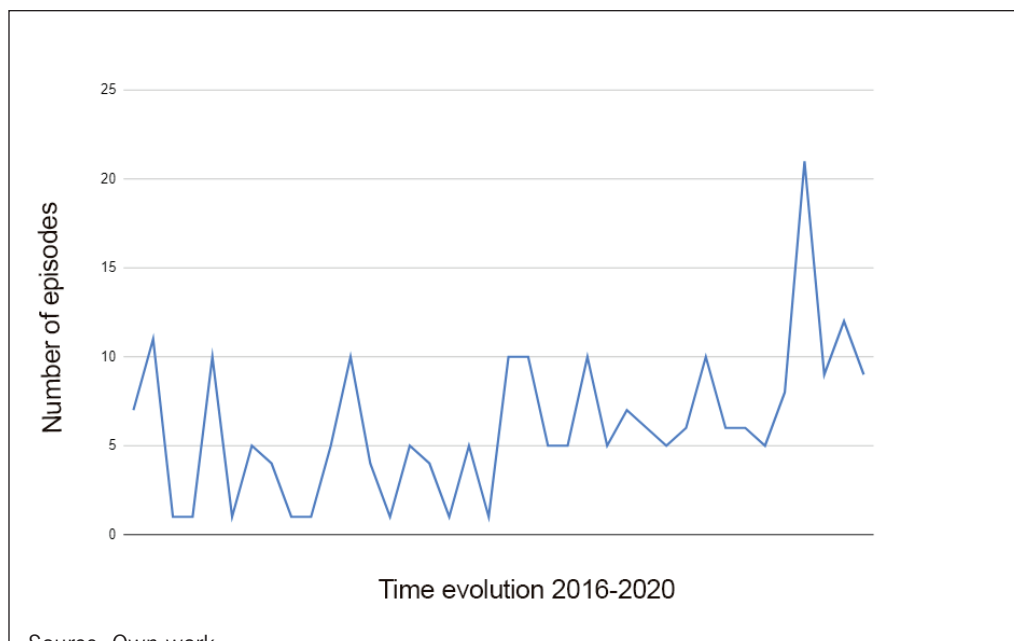
Following the empirical study carried out, we can define the narrative non-fiction podcast through its format variables.

With regard to the number of episodes, these formats have an average of six episodes per series. Five episodes is the most widespread formula (Figure 1), accounting for 26.3% of the titles.

Figure 1. Number of podcast episodes analysed

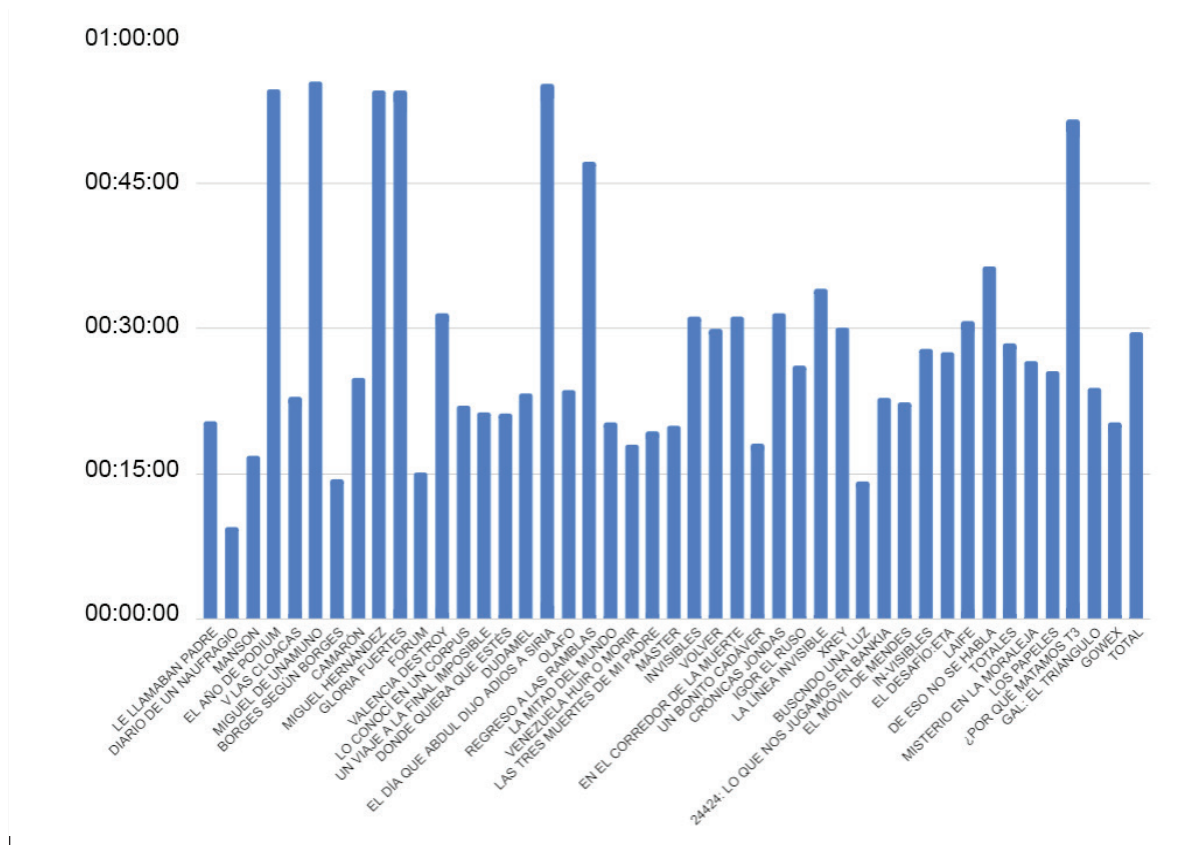


Source: Own work



Source: Own work

Figure 3. Average length of the podcast episodes analysed



Source: Own work

In the early years of the narrative non-fiction podcast, we find quite a few single-episode titles (Figure 2), although as the format progresses, the one-episode titles are gradually disappearing. It should also be noted that some of these formats are included in Podium Podcast's Micro podcast. Titles with 10 chapters also stand out, accounting for 15.8% of the total. It is worth noting

that after the 12-episodes we jump to the 21-episode option.

The average running time of the episodes is 28 minutes and 42 seconds. We find titles that are far from this length (Figure 3): they are those with a single chapter that have a longer duration. Besides, the average total duration is 2 hours and 33 minutes.

Of all the podcasts analysed, 74% feature a single narrator, 21% feature two narrators and only two formats include three narrators. The narrator appears on average 27 times, i.e., almost once per minute on average, and the appearances last 29 seconds on average. It should be noted that 65.7% of these narratives are in the first person.

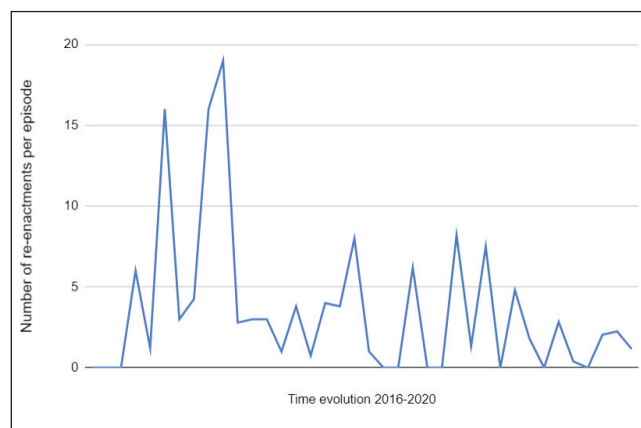
The average number of interviews conducted is 15 per format, or 3 per episode. Interview clips are mostly from people involved, experts in the field and journalists with a knowledge of the case. They have an average of 27 clips per episode, each clip has an average duration of 39 seconds, and they appear an average of 0.9 times per minute.

On average, there are seven archive documents per episode with an average length of 20 seconds.

Re-enactments are less common. Looking at the average across all titles, we see four per episode with an average length of 16 seconds. Moreover, the trend in their use is declining (Figure 4).

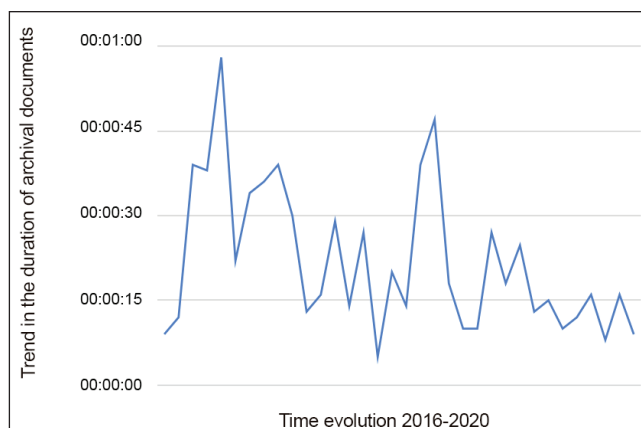
As the format progresses over time, voice clips (Figure 5) and archival documents (Figure 6) become shorter.

Figure 4. Trend in the average number of re-enactments of the podcasts analysed



Source: Own work.

Figure 6. Trend in the duration of archival documents



Source: Own work.

We find different types of intro themes (Figure 7). The longer ones include archival documents and/or interview clips, as well as a narrator's voice and identifying music. Other simpler ones simply give the relevant titles through the voice of a narrator or announcer, sometimes over silence and sometimes over a neutral musical background. They last 20 seconds on average.

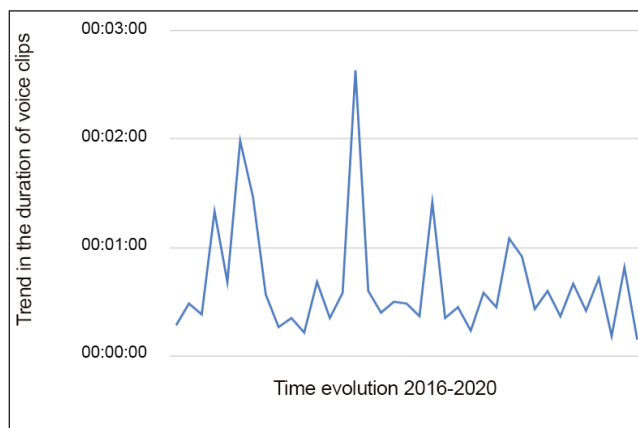
In each episode, we find an average of 12 musical backgrounds that appear and disappear in sweepers, and an average of 15 sweepers per episode with a maximum duration of 54 seconds. The longest sweepers are found in recorded songs and not in background music.

We observed an average of two silences per episode and it should be noted that 42.1% of the formats do not use silence as a narrative device.

55.3% of the formats include some form of audio effect. The most commonly observed are reverberations and audio modification to simulate situations such as a phone call.

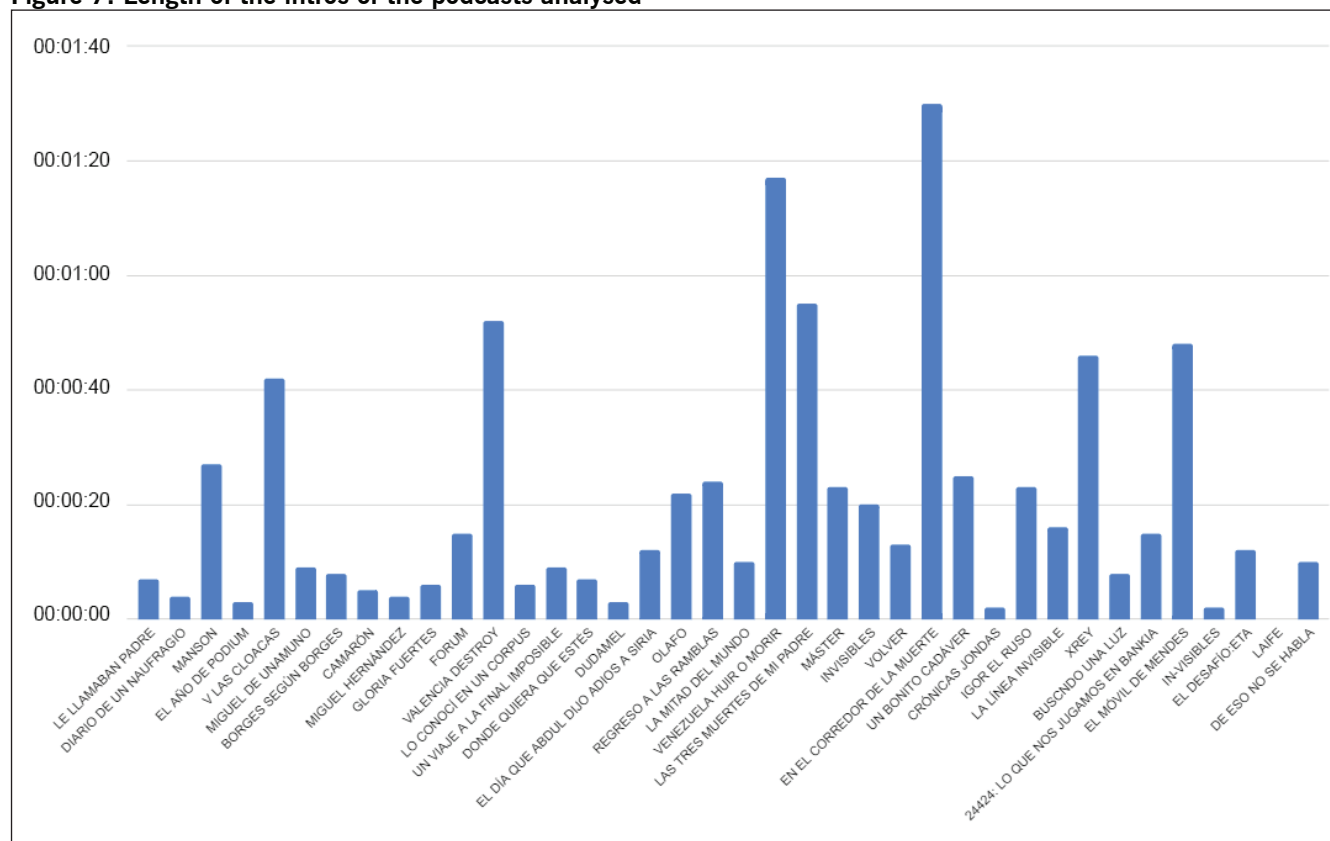
Regarding sound effects, 86.8% of the formats include them. They are used especially to recreate scenes, situations and atmospheres described by the narrator. In many cases, they

Figure 5. Trend in the duration of voice clips



Source: Own work.

Figure 7. Length of the intros of the podcasts analysed



Source: Own work.

also appear underneath an interview clip, which makes the listening experience more immersive and allows us to imagine the event in a more direct way. Some of these sound effects are recorded in real life, many others are recorded using objects that can simulate the same sound, and others are recreated technologically.

Since this study ends in December 2020, we decided to carry out a comparison with several more recent titles to check the evolution that the variables indicated have had over time. In this way, we can check whether the foundations of the above-mentioned format are still in place or whether, on the contrary, developments over time have created new foundations. Based on different authors (Martín et al., 2024; López, 2024; Martín-León, Díaz-Lucena, 2024), we decided to extract the formats of the main platforms that are gaining strength from 2020 onwards: Spotify, Audible, Podimo and Sonora. We selected the following titles for our analysis: *Misterio en la Moraleja* (2022); *¿Por qué Matamos?* Temporada 3 (2023); *GAL: El Triángulo* (2021) and *Gowex* (2024) of each of the platforms respectively. We have also selected a title from a traditional media because the immersion in audio by newspapers and radio stations is becoming more and more prominent (Martínez, León, Pedrero, 2022). Specifically, we have chosen the podcast *Los Papeles* (2021), produced by the newspaper El País and True Story.

From the analysis of titles published from 2021 onwards, we conclude that the most common number of episodes is

still five, with three of the titles meeting this standard. The average duration is 29.5 minutes, less than one minute longer than the total average between 2016 and 2020. The total length increases because the title *¿Por qué Matamos?*, with 20 episodes, skews the results. 80% of the titles have a single narrator, in line with our previous analysis, which concluded that 74% of the podcasts analysed had one narrator. Moreover, all of them are journalists, confirming that it is a format used by journalism professionals. On average, the narrator appears 29 times in 29-second appearances. Surprisingly, the exact average length of the narrator's appearances remains the same as in our study framework, and their number increases from 27 to 29. With regard to interview clips, the average of three interviews per episode remains unchanged, with 25 20-second clips. Regarding archival documents, they appear an average of 17 times per episode, with clips averaging 11 seconds. We therefore confirm what we argued in our analysis with regard to the tendency to make clips and archival documents increasingly shorter and more fragmented. Re-enactments are trending downwards, with 2 per episode with an average of 12 seconds. The average intro time also drops to 12 seconds. The 12 backgrounds per episode remain the same and the number of sweepers per episode does not change much, dropping from 15 to 12. We also confirm the downward trend of silences and audio effects, as well as the increasing presence of sound effects.

5. Discussion

Having analysed the variables of the formats published in Spain since the birth of the narrative non-fiction podcast in the country up to and including the year 2020, and making a comparison with several recent titles, we can conclude the following variables of the format.

This is a format that has a narrator who directs the plot of the story and appears once a minute in interventions of around 30 seconds. It is a long format that is usually divided into episodes (usually five or six) and these episodes are on average 25 minutes long. In total, we find around two hours of content if we add all the episodes together. There are about three interviews per episode, and the clips taken from them also appear once per minute in interventions of between 20 and 40 seconds. We also observed around ten archival documents per episode with an average length of 15 seconds.

It is a format that usually has musical backgrounds that help us to better situate the story told by both the narrator and the interviewees. On average, there are 12 musical backgrounds, which usually play for about 2.5 minutes. We also observed quite a few musical sweepers, with an average of one every two minutes. We hear numerous sound effects that help us to imagine the story better. Furthermore, the audio effects barely stand out. Re-enactments are not so frequent either, with an average of four per episode, although we must point out that many of the titles analysed do not have any. Silences do not play an important role in the titles analysed either. Most formats feature a simple intro of less than 20 seconds with a musical element and a narrator.

We also observe that the modification of these variables shows an evolution over time towards more dynamic formats with a greater number of cuts and clips either from narrators, interviews or from archives, but of shorter duration.

Based on the above, we conclude that the narrative non-fiction podcast has its own characteristics that set it apart.

For future papers, it would be interesting to pool the different definitions of podcasting, as well as classifying all the formats that currently exist. It would also be of great value to carry out this same narrative analysis on some different formats that are on the rise, such as conversational or interview podcasts, as well as to carry out an extensive analysis of the themes presented through podcasting. One of the major dilemmas of podcasting is also its main source of funding, which is why it would be of great interest to conduct a study analysing the future of funding for the podcasting industry.

Notes

1. Audio processing by means of a computer programme normally carried out in the post-production process.
2. Audio file recorded in a real or recreated way that serves to set the mood of the spoken word. Known in the audiovisual world as foley, i.e., effects that seek to recreate sounds that were not picked up at the time of recording.
3. Actual sounds recorded on site where an event takes place.
4. Sound files taken from previous broadcasts such as news from other media or parts of films.
5. Readings or sound fictions for which it has not been possible to find the sound archive and which are performed by one or more announcers and actors.
6. The foreground is what we hear most clearly in a sound file; below this layer we can find other complementary sounds, such as musical backgrounds.
7. A musical pause in which we do not find any other type of sound document beyond the backgrounds or the songs.
8. A silence shall be considered to be 1 second or longer in which no sound can be identified.
9. Initial montage identifying each series, which may include a voice-over with the name of the series and the title of each episode. It usually has its own identity and sometimes features narrative devices such as musical backgrounds, sound or audio effects and interview clips.

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Ableism in the media in Catalonia: the perception of disabled adults

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Abstract

Ableism is the ideology related to discrimination against people with disabilities and is based on socially constructed collective representations. These representations are internalised through stories that are created and amplified by the media. This paper seeks to characterise the perception that people with disabilities have of the way they are represented in the media. To do so, a qualitative methodology and the technique of focus groups were used.

The results indicate that the participants attribute the cause of discrimination and stereotypes faced by the group to media representations. In addition, the lack of representation is perceived as an obstacle to the normalisation of disability, while their presence in the media is seen as essential to reducing prejudice. Finally, it is pointed out that the life stories shown online contribute to building an active minority, indispensable to advocate for the elimination of physical and social barriers.

Keywords

Ableism, media, disability, social representations, prejudice, perception.

Resum

El capacitisme és la ideologia que promou la discriminació de les persones amb discapacitat i se sustenta en unes representacions col·lectives construïdes socialment. Aquestes representacions són interioritzades mitjançant relats creats i amplificats pels mitjans de comunicació. Aquest treball busca caracteritzar la percepció que tenen les persones amb discapacitat sobre les seves representacions en els mitjans de comunicació. Per a això, es va utilitzar una metodologia qualitativa i la tècnica dels grups de discussió.

Els resultats indiquen que les participants atribueixen a les representacions mediàtiques la discriminació i els estereotips cap al col·lectiu. A més, la manca de representació és percebuda com un obstacle per a la normalització de la discapacitat i la presència mediàtica és primordial per reduir els prejudicis. Finalment, s'apunta que les històries de vida a les xarxes contribueixen a construir una minoria activa, indispensable per reclamar l'eliminació les barreres físiques i socials.

Paraules clau

Capacitisme, mitjans de comunicació, discapacitat, representacions socials, prejudicis, percepció.

Introduction

Despite advances in the recognition of people with disabilities, their day-to-day lives are still marked by stereotypes and discrimination (Nario-Redmond, 2019). These discriminatory attitudes have their origin in ableist ideology, which “is a set of assumptions (conscious or unconscious) and practices that promote the differential or unequal treatment of people due to real or presumed disabilities” (Campbell, 2009, p. 4) [Own translation]. The struggle to achieve emancipatory social change

for people with disabilities requires correcting these negative attitudes, allowing their participation in society and promoting compensatory actions and mechanisms when the situation of vulnerability requires it (Nario-Redmond, 2019).

Ideologies are transmitted through discourse, which is acquired, predominantly, from the two most influential ideological institutions: school and the media (Van Dijk, 2003). Ideologies are the source and result of the group's practices to perpetuate itself and its power, and are meaningless without the *other*, a group they want to dominate. Thus, ableism, as an

ideological structure that supports the discrimination of people with disabilities, is based on social representations that have been constructed and amplified by the media (Nario-Redmond, 2019).

This article reports on the research by Sabà (2023), which presents a more detailed development, as well as the questionnaire and focus group transcripts. It should be noted that in this paper, unlike in that research, the term *disabled person* is used, instead of *person with functional diversity*. This decision is based on the objective of adapting the language to the recommendations of international organisations (WHO & WB, 2011) and of the associations most representative of the disability community (Cebrián, 2012).

Models of interpretation of disability

In the World Report on Disability prepared by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank (WB), disability is defined as a contested concept because it is complex, multidimensional and dynamic (WHO & WB, 2011). For her part, Nario-Redmond (2019) adds that disability depends on the source, the environment and the historical period. In this regard, Shakespeare (2014) points out that many conditions that are not considered a disability in the global north are indeed a disability in the countries of the global south. Furthermore, a diagnosis does not necessarily predict a given person's functional ability in different contexts (Nario-Redmond, 2019). For this reason, in order to understand disability, one must resort to its interpretation models.

In the report by the WHO and the WB (2011), it is explained that in recent decades the medical and individualistic interpretation of disability has given way to a social perspective that contemplates the role of physical and social barriers. The first interpretation is what is termed the *medical model*, as opposed to the *social model*. However, Smith (2008) warns us that although these models are important in order to understand and define the characteristics of the interpretations, today, they are archetypes of the discourses on disability and allow various interpretations between the two extremes.

Below we will define both models.

Modernity led to the adoption of the medical model of interpretation of disability (Vehmas *et al.*, 2008). This model considers disability as “the inevitable product of the individual's biological impairments, diseases or characteristics” (p. 2) [*Own translation*]. For this reason, the disability rights movement maintains that the medical model is based on an essentialist interpretation of disability (Smith, 2008). This model focuses its efforts on diagnosing the physical causes that cause the disability, with the aim of preventing it, curing it or minimising its effects (Nario-Redmond, 2019). In addition, disability is seen as a personal tragedy and, for this reason, it is also termed the *individual model*. This individualistic approach leads to a paternalism that undermines the autonomy and agency of people with disabilities, turning them into passive beneficiaries of assistance and charity (Vehmas *et al.*, 2008).

Thus, people with disabilities are considered patients who must follow the instructions of healthcare professionals (Nario-Redmond, 2019).

In the 1960s, a critique began of the medical model, stating that it was a biased interpretation that tends to favour oppression and that does not take environmental elements into consideration (Vehmas *et al.*, 2008). In recent decades, a new interpretative framework has crystallised which is known as the *social model*. In this interpretive framework, disability is a wholly social phenomenon and the distinction is made between *impairment*, which is an attribute of the person, and *disability*, which is imposed externally by physical and social barriers (Mallett & Runswick-Cole, 2014).

The social model has provided people with disabilities with a clear goal: the removal of barriers, which has allowed this minority to achieve rights through collective struggle (Shakespeare, 2014). Because of this, a strict interpretation of the social model has been popularised that refuses to recognise the role of specific functional impairments and limitations. However, most academics in disability studies today believe that disability is constructed by a combination of factors such as impairments and social barriers. Disability is “the result of the interaction between individual and contextual factors, including limitation, personality, individual attitudes, environment, policies and culture” (p. 77) [*Own translation*].

Ableism

The concept of *ableism* is an analytical parallel to masculinism and racism, and arises within the disability rights movement (Nario-Redmond, 2019). This ideology can be defined as prejudice and discrimination towards people with disabilities, regardless of whether their impairments are physical or mental, visible or invisible.

Van Dijk (2003) describes ideologies as basic belief systems shared by a group. They are located in social memory, together with knowledge and social attitudes. These beliefs are not universally accepted and often lead to differences of opinion and conflict within sociocultural groups. “Ideologies underlie the social beliefs of a group, (so) the identity and identification of group members must follow a more or less fixed pattern of basic categories, together with flexible rules of application” (p. 27) [*Own translation*]. Likewise, ideologies form social representations of the shared beliefs of a group, functioning as a frame of reference that defines the coherence of these beliefs.

Ableism is the ideology that constructs an ideal of the *self* and the body as perfect and indispensable to be considered fully human, using to this end a set of beliefs, processes and practices (Shakespeare, 2014). This ideal is what is known as being *abled-bodied*, while disabled people are the otherness that allows it to be sustained. “The body with a disability acts as a metaphorical crutch for the support of ableist culture: it becomes a body that arouses cultural fascination but, at the same time, also rejection” (Shakespeare, 2014, p. 51).

Remote origins of ableism

The idea that discrimination against people with disabilities is a transversal phenomenon present in all cultures and eras is shared by many people (Nario-Redmond, 2019). Below, we will explore the two main contributions that have been made from disability studies to answer this question.

On the one hand, there is an unfounded fear of contagion, which has an evolutionary origin (Nario-Redmond, 2019). According to this theory, avoiding contact with people who have symptoms or signs of illness would be an adaptive mechanism beneficial for the survival of the individual. These mechanisms were considered to have evolved excessively and, when faced with the difficulty of identifying diseases, would overreact when they detected non-normative traits.

On the other hand, the terror management theory suggests that people tend to avoid contact with people with disabilities because they represent a palpable reminder of the fragility of body and mind, as well as the vulnerability of being human (Nario-Redmond, 2019). People with disabilities are excluded because they “serve as unwelcome reminders that life is unpredictable” (p. 12) [*Own translation*]. This perception can ultimately contribute to turning people with disabilities into targets of violence.

Attribution theory and stereotypes

Human beings relate to the environment through the senses. By comparing and highlighting similarities and differences, living things can interact more effectively with the environment around them (Doise, 1994). People use a mechanism similar to that of emphasising similarities and contrasts in order to interact with society. When we relate to people, perception will produce a judgment, in what is called the *process of attribution*.

The social environment defines the categories of people with whom one can interact (Goffman, 2006). In this way, the initial appearance of a stranger helps predict which category they belong to and what their social identity is. Social categorisation is a mechanism that allows us to form an idea of other people quickly and without needing too much effort (Doise, 1994). This process is also the origin of social stereotypes. Stereotyping occurs when one group emphasises the differences with another group, while at the same time emphasising the similarities within the same group. Attributing a neutral character to the stereotype is linked to avoiding effort through simplification (Amossy, 2010). However, the stereotypes about disability are, to a large extent, those that originate the negative prejudice towards this group, since they generate and perpetuate differentiated judgments and treatments which, in turn, can lead to stigmatisation (Doise, 1994).

We need to distinguish between stereotyping and prejudice (Amossy, 2010). The former refers to the belief, opinion and representation of a group and the people who compose it, that is, to the classificatory and emotional dimension. On the other hand, prejudice is an attitude that tends to negatively evaluate

the members of a group. According to social psychology, prejudice manifests itself at three levels: emotional, which is based on affections and attitudes; behavioural, which is based on actions and practices, and cognitive level, which originates in stereotypes and beliefs.

Disabled people are useful as an otherness that allows non-disabled people to define themselves as competent (Nario-Redmond, 2019; Shakespeare, 2014). Those who do not belong to the group can be seen as useful and strong by stereotyping disabled people as dependent and weak. Ableist stereotypes can influence personal expectations, as well as social expectations that often confirm stereotypes, restricting opportunities for people with disabilities (Nario-Redmond, 2019; Watermeyer & Görgens, 2013). These expectations manifest themselves subtly, conditioning the expectations of educators, and are a cause of dropping out of studies and the lower levels of higher education among the group (Nario-Redmond, 2019).

Prejudices towards people with disabilities are already transmitted from childhood, through the products of the cultural industries aimed at this segment of the population (Nario-Redmond, 2019). Thus, people with disabilities are represented as tragic victims, like Quasimodo and Nemo; evil characters, like Captain Hook and the grumpy hunter Elmer Fudd; or incompetents, like Mr. Magoo and Dopey (Nario-Redmond, 2019). These representations perpetuate the stereotypes that associate the group with helplessness and dependence, but never with characteristics such as motherhood or skills.

Media representations

Farr (1994) defines the current era as that of social representations, given the influence of the media on individual conversations and the dissemination of information, opinions and ideas on a national and international scale. Social representations are forms of common sense knowledge that arise from social interaction and allow people to understand and interpret everyday reality (Jodelet, 1994). Social representations are, to a large extent, created, transmitted and transformed by the media, and often exist solely because they have been disseminated through these media (Farr, 1994).

Representations of disability in the media often coincide with our own social representations and anticipate our reaction to specific situations (Nario-Redmond, 2019). The way the media portrays disability not only builds on our social stereotypes, but also reinforces them.

People with disabilities have been marginalised from mass culture, both in their representation in the media and in access to employment opportunities and participation in production (Ellis & Merchant, 2020). “They have been excluded from the production of mass culture, both in terms of their representation in the media and opportunities for employment and production” (p. 155) [*Own translation*]. However, authors such as Foster and Pettinicchio (2023) note that there has recently been a growing interest in mainstream media and brands to include the

representation of people with disabilities. However, they warn about the risks of a representation that lacks information and adequate planning in advertising and audiovisual products.

When people with disabilities are represented in the media, “the negative stereotypes related to the community of people with disabilities are reproduced” (Foster & Pettinicchio, 2023, p. 276) [Own translation]. Whittington-Walsh *et al* (2019) state:

Images of disability have historically been constructed from an ableist or non-disabled point of view, where disability is represented as something abnormal and disabled people are therefore perceived as less than human. (p. 158) [Own translation].

Among the most common stereotypes we can highlight “the image of the criminal, the evil and violent, the pitiful and dependent, the childish and asexual character, the extraordinarily talented individuals, the comic, the moral metaphors and the idea of *better dead* than disabled” (Whittington-Walsh *et al.*, 2019, p. 158) [Own translation]. However, the two most common representations are as subjects of pity or inspiration for overcoming adversity (Foster & Pettinicchio, 2023), which we will detail below.

On the one hand, in line with the perception of disability as a tragedy, the medical model promotes a vision of disability that focuses on suffering and pity (Nario-Redmond, 2019). As Hayes and Black (2003, p. 1) point out, “disability is situated within a discourse of pity”. Nario-Redmond (2019) relates this representation to certain characteristics associated with people with disabilities such as victimisation, helplessness, asexuality, incompetence, passivity, weakness and lack of attractiveness. In addition, the author highlights that news about disability focuses mainly on medical and social welfare aspects, presenting these people as a burden to their families and to the State.

Hayes and Black (2003) relate the representation of suffering with confinement. They argue that in Hollywood films the representation of disability falls into four phases: confinement, the hope of rehabilitation, the denial of this possibility of rehabilitation and, finally, reconciliation and acceptance of confinement. They claim that these elements articulate a paternalistic power that limits and confines the people in the group.

On the other hand, one of the hegemonic representations is what in English is called *supercrip*, which is short for *supercripple* (Grue, 2015). This is based on the achievement of overcoming adversity and can manifest itself in three forms: firstly, people with disabilities who rack up achievements within everyday experience; secondly, people with disabilities who are distinguished by exceptional achievements; and finally fictional characters, in whom functional limitations serve only to motivate their fantastic achievements (p. 209).

Although in representations of the *supercrip* or in overcoming adversity disability is presented as a positive attribute, because it establishes a causal relationship between achievement and limitation, this implies that people with disabilities need to

achieve something exceptional to deserve recognition (Grue, 2015). These stories serve the media to reinforce dominant ideologies, such as meritocracy and positive thinking (Nario-Redmond, 2019). The representation of people with disabilities is often instrumentalised to serve interests and goals that do not coincide with those of the group, such as instilling the worldview of Western capitalism or promoting the culture of effort in society (Cebrián, 2012; Nario-Redmond, 2019). Thus, the concept of *inspiration porn* has become popular (Grue, 2016). This type of representation of disability is problematic because it asserts that all people can progress with effort (Nario-Redmond, 2019). Otherwise, she warns us that this belief can lead to questioning the need for accessibility measures or the impediments to improve socio-economically.

The abundance in the media of overcoming challenges carried out by people with disabilities reflects the cultural pressure to achieve the ideal of body and functionality (Watermeyer & Görgens, 2013). The self-awareness of ableist prejudices causes people with disabilities to strive to overcome stigma and, at the same time, reinforces internalised oppression, because it forces them to define themselves “in opposition to a negative cultural assignment” (p. 269) [Own translation].

Objectives

This research study aims to determine the perception that people with disabilities have of their media representation. To answer this, people in the group will be asked what image they think the media projects about them.

In addition, this study will make it possible to explore whether people with disabilities recognise the existence of an ableist ideology and, if so, what role the media play in its creation and reproduction. Finally, the aim is to understand how they value the influence of the media on the origin, diffusion and maintenance of ableism.

The hypothesis is that people with disabilities are aware both of the invisibility of the group in the media and of the existence of hegemonic media representations that stereotype the people of the group: that of suffering and that of overcoming adversity. Another hypothesis is that people with disabilities attribute to the media a responsibility in the production and reproduction of social representations that promote their discrimination. Finally, the main assumption is that disabled people identify ableist ideology as the cause of discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping, even though they are not familiar with the term.

Through the focus groups involving people with disabilities, our study tries to characterise the social representations of the group transmitted by the media, in order to determine if they spread ableist ideology.

Our approach has many similarities with the work of Vázquez-Barrio *et al.* (2021). First, both studies start from the premise that there is not enough research on the perception of the representation of disability in the media by the minority. Both

our study and that of Vázquez-Barrio *et al.* (2021) use the focus group technique.

However, there are also significant differences between the two works. Unlike ours, the study by Vázquez-Barrio *et al.* (2021) includes non-disabled people in the focus groups. In addition, that study focuses on the analysis of journalistic coverage in traditional media. Instead, our research study addresses participants' perceptions of a wide variety of content, including traditional media, online streaming platforms (video on demand and OTT services), transmedia media supports, social media and products of the cultural industries.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology was used through focus groups to access the social representations and forms of ableist discrimination that are spread and reproduced by the media.

Procedure

The technique of focus groups was determined to bring out the ableist discourse based on the perception of the group affected by this discourse.

The selection of the participants was conducted through purposive sampling. They were recruited using the snowball method through an invitation distributed by instant messaging applications. Four different focus groups were created to cover all the features identified as relevant.

The following criteria for the participation of candidates were established: generational homogeneity, with ages between 20 and 45; an officially recognised degree of disability of at least 33% (including the moderator); heterogeneity of gender and place of residence, external visibility of disability and

socialisation as a disabled person. An attempt was made to cover the diversity of the sample while at the same time ensuring the internal homogeneity of the groups. For this reason, two groups were formed: one made up exclusively of people socialised as disabled, and another made up of those who have acquired this condition throughout their lives. Finally, group sessions were held inside and outside the metropolitan context to attend to territorial diversity. This information can be found in table 1.

The person moderating the focus groups had a semi-structured script that you can consult in the appendix of Sabà's (2023) research that started with a very open question: "How do you see the media's portrayal of disability?" (p. 113). The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and gave their consent for the session to be recorded and transcribed for academic purposes.

The discourse analysis was carried out at the logical-semantic level to prioritise manifest content and immediately accessible meaning following a more procedural than intuitive or intersubjective approach, as pointed out by Gil-Flores *et al.* (1994). Following the authors' instructions, the analysis of the information began with the data reduction process, segmenting and performing an open and inductive coding. Subsequently, these data were organised through memoranda and diagrams to facilitate the drawing of conclusions. The Atlas.ti v.23 program was used for the different phases of analysis.

Limitations of the research study

The research study had a propaedeutic vocation and was conceived as a first approach to the study of the perception of social representations of disability disseminated by the media. One of the main objectives was to establish a solid foundation and identify key questions that could guide future research.

Table 1. Technical details of the focus groups

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Participants	4	6	5	5
Gender	3 M / 1 W	1 M / 5 W	1 M / 4 W	2 M / 3 W
Place of residence	Girona Province	Barcelona Metropolitan Area	Vallès Occidental	Barcelonès
Type of disability**	Physical: 3 Organic: 1	Physical: 3 Organic: 1 Intellectual: 2	Physical: 5	Physical: 2 Mental health: 1 Intellectual: 1 Sensory: 1
Socialised or acquired	Heterogeneity	Heterogeneity	Acquired homogeneity	Socialised homogeneity
Location of the session	Figueres	Barcelona	Sant Cugat del Vallès	Barcelona
Duration	90 minutes	120 minutes	90 minutes	75 minutes
Date	6 April 2023	14 April 2023	16 April 2023	5 May 2023

** When a person had more than one type of functional diversity, only the one for which they were invited to participate was considered.

Source: Own work.

This work started as part of a Master's Thesis, which imposed restrictions on the time and resources that were available. As a result, it presents a series of limitations on the composition of the groups. The need for the participants to meet, at the same time, the internal homogeneity criteria of the study (being people between 20 and 45 years old with a recognised disability), the heterogeneity criteria at a general level (type of disability) and between the different focus groups (place of residence, external visibility of disability, socialisation as a disabled person), as well as the gender diversity of both the groups and the research as a whole, represented a significant challenge. It should be borne in mind that many disabled people have reduced mobility, lack of autonomy or health problems. Some groups suffered last-minute cancellations for these reasons.

That is why the study has three important limitations: firstly, the number of participants, which is only twenty people, and the composition of the focus groups, which ranges from four to six

people, which is considered a small number. Furthermore, there is a lack of gender parity, as only a third of the participants are men. Finally, a disproportion is observed in the representation of the different types of disability in the sample.

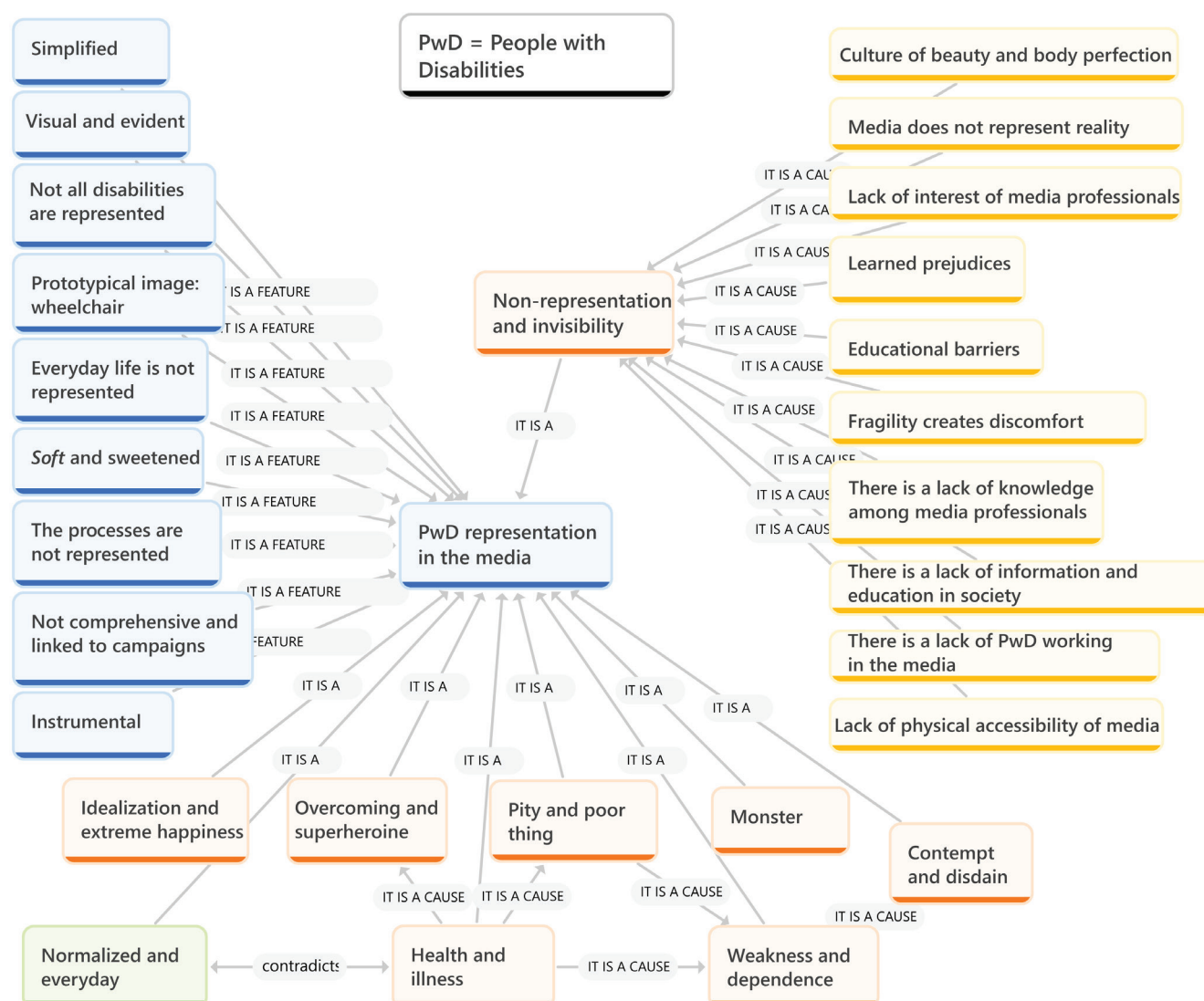
Results and discussion

Media representation of disability

Around the media representation of people with disabilities, codes have been generated by reducing data from the analysis and, subsequently, they have been grouped into categories. Afterwards, Diagram 1 was drawn up as part of one of the last steps in the data processing.

This diagram focuses on the media representation of disability and all the other codes grouped into categories converge towards it. In the centre, a little higher, the non-representation of disability appears. On the right, the causes attributed to

Diagram 1. Representations of disability. Forms of representation and characteristics



Source: Own work.

the invisibility of the collective are shown. At the bottom of the diagram, the concrete forms of media representation of disability can be found. Finally, the characteristics of media representations have been grouped to the left of the figure.

Diagram 1 serves us to structure the exposition of this section. Firstly, the non-representation and the reasons that could explain it are considered. Next, the media representation of people with disabilities is addressed when this occurs. Then, the two hegemonic forms of group representation are discussed: pity and overcoming adversity.

Non-representation and invisibility

The lack of representation of the collective is a central theme in all the focus groups, and the participants express themselves very clearly. Person 8 states: “That it does not appear, that it is not seen; this is already a form of discrimination” (group 2). The perception that the presence of people with disabilities is quantitatively scarce in the media is shared by all groups. For example, in group 1 the *screen share* is mentioned, which refers to the time proportion of their presence within the programming. It is stated that this *share* is much lower than what would correspond to the group based on its percentage of the population, which they quantify as being between 8 and 10%. In fact, they are arguing about the right of representation of disabled people as an oppressed minority. As we will see in the next paragraph, they attach great importance to this right to improve the situation of the minority.

In all the sessions they agree that there is a causal relationship between the presence of people with disabilities in the media and what they define as *normalisation* (sometimes they use the term *familiarisation*) by society. As in this example taken from group 1:

Person 3: *Lately, also, the issue of sexual diversity, the screen share percentage, I don't know it, but, well, if I looked at it if I'm convinced, I think it's much higher...*

Person 2: *Much much higher.*

Person 3: *...what is being projected than what really exists in society, which is there, but...*

Person 2: *And we have normalised it, of course.*

Person 3: *Yes, yes, by... by putting it, putting it, putting it above what would be a real mirror in society.*

In summary, they agree that presence in the media implies visibility and what is seen regularly becomes normalised. This *normalisation* connects with the process of *integration of the novelty* of the social representations of social psychology (Jodelet, 1994).

In the previous conversation it is also mentioned that the lack of representation does not exclusively affect this group. In addition, two groups compare the media presence of “racialized” people and of the LGBTQI+ community. These interventions underline the progress in recognition achieved by these minorities, which they attribute to greater media exposure. This comparison and the subsequent assumptions are indicative of the capacity of

social transformation that the participants grant to the media. Likewise, these interventions highlight that the participants attach great importance to the existence of an organised and combative minority.

The participants attribute this invisibility to multiple causes. However, closer examination reveals that these issues are interconnected and can largely be understood in terms of ableist discrimination and the exclusion of anything that deviates from the social norm. In this way, the most general reason given is that the media do not represent society, but only show a part of it.

Next, the causes of non-representation in the media are analysed and related to each other. In all groups, a connection is established between the low presence of people with disabilities and the culture of the perfect body. The cult of bodily perfection and the culture of ideal beauty are closely linked to the medicalisation of society and interact with other mechanisms of exclusion and privilege (David & Derthick, 2013; Shakespeare, 2014). In group 3 they argue that the media sell a skewed reality, which is closely linked to commercialisation.

Another block of reasons is related to the social, rather than innate, nature of prejudice. In all the groups, the issue of society's lack of information and education about disability appears as promoters of misunderstanding and lack of empathy. The participants denounce the negligence of the media in relation to what they consider their role to be: anticipate the various circumstances and challenges of life to prepare the audience. In addition, misunderstanding and lack of representation feed off each other: invisibility causes misunderstanding, which, in turn, generates an avoidance response that further increases the misunderstanding.

Similarly, it is emphasised that media professionals, as members of society, are not immune to the same prejudices as their fellow citizens. Groups 2, 3 and 4 are highly critical of journalists. They attribute a lack of interest and indifference to them, since they have an ethical duty to show the diversity of society. This excerpt begins with the question of how to convey to journalists their professional responsibility, but it is concluded that they are not interested in reflecting reality: “If you want to transmit news and, seriously, the aim, one supposes, is to represent the reality of society, you can learn more. What happens is that they don't make any effort because they want to be interesting to the mass audience” (group 2). Group 1 emphasises that this fact is particularly serious in the case of public media outlets.

In the focus group sessions, the lack of interest of media professionals is linked to the absence of disabled people in these environments. As observed in the theoretical framework, Ellis and Merchant (2020) confirm the hypothesis that in the media and, in general, in the cultural industries, the presence of disabled workers is very low. The participants of the groups attach great importance to this presence: “If you have a worker with diversity on your staff, by definition you are already raising your own awareness in different areas; in accessibility, in the way of dealing, in the news that affects us...” (group 3). Nario-

Redmond (2019) agrees that the presence of disabled workers in the media could help reduce prejudice among other workers through intergroup contact. In addition, the participants emphasise the importance of establishing preconditions to favour the presence of people with disabilities in all media production processes. The physical accessibility of the media is the most obvious one, which they remind us does not yet exist.

Another issue that causes anger among participants is the obstacles that prevent people with disabilities from accessing education and training. Groups 1 and 3 state that, for people with severe functional diversity, having a personal assistant is an essential requirement to be able to pursue a career, which, in many cases, is still not guaranteed. In addition, groups 2 and 3 complain that the Institut del Teatre, like other acting schools, demand access requirements that are impossible for a person with a disability to meet, and that these act as a barrier to education. This aspect correlates with the complaint by Kate O'Reilly (Kompórály, 2007), who points out that the prejudicial admission requirements of these schools prevent disabled performers from receiving regulated artistic training. According to Watermeyer and Görgens (2013), stereotypes limit the expectations of people with disabilities, as well as limiting the trust in their potential held by society, training centres and educators and, thus, it becomes a self-fulfilling prediction.

It should also be noted that, as groups 2 and 3 have commented, the topic of disability is often avoided in order not to make the audience uncomfortable. In this regard, Nario-Redmond (2019) points out that the contemplation of disability is uncomfortable because it reminds us of our vulnerability and fragility. Group 3 warns that disability will one day end up affecting all of us and notes that people do not want to be aware of this reality. The WHO and World Bank report (2011) agrees with the following statement: "Most people will have, at some point in their lives, a temporary or permanent disability, and those who reach old age will experience more and more difficulties in their daily functioning" (p. 3) [Own translation]. In the same line, group 2 remarks: "Disabled people are the mirrors in which people do not want to see themselves reflected. When we are very visible, people feel very uncomfortable" (group 2).

Characteristics of the representation

In this section, the perceived characteristics of this representation when it occurs are examined.

The idea that the media representation of disability is simplified has been repeated a lot in all the sessions. At the same time, other closely related characteristics have been highlighted, such as the lack of representation of the everyday life of people with disabilities. Some participants talk about a non-normalised image to point out that representations of disability are rarely included in mainstream representations. For example, in several sessions it is commented that a character with a disability in a film or series is never just another character in the cast; their condition becomes their most prominent trait and, often, the only trait that defines them.

Group 2 has considered that the representation is soft. Group 1 also expresses this idea with different words and a more general scope. The particularity of the approach of group 2 is that it associates it with the desire not to disturb the audience, which we have already discussed previously.

Group 3 provides another simplifying feature of the representation: neither the process nor the middle ground are represented. "There are two representations of the disabled in the press: the one who drools, which we've all been through. Many are shown drooling. And the superhero who runs 20,000 marathons in 20 days. And the middle ground is not explained, is never included" (group 3). Between these dichotomous and extreme representations "there is no middle ground... they do not explain the process or the middle ground that exists" (group 3). When they say 'process' they refer to rehabilitation and by 'middle ground' they refer to the degree to which a disability is affected.

Another attribute of representation, highlighted by all groups, is its tendency to exclude various disabilities, especially those that are not outwardly obvious. These diversities often include little-known affectations and symptoms. Likewise, the participants agree that the usual representation tends to be visual and spectacular. Group 3 mentions that the aim is often to represent an artificial and imposed type of diversity. The participants explain that surreal casting decisions are made: people with very visually obvious and identifiable disabilities are sought and, at the same time, it is necessary for the bodies of these people not to deviate from the canons of the ideal of the perfect body that excludes them. The practices described here agree with what Foster and Pettinicchio (2023) point out, which indicate a growing interest in including diversity. However, since this inclusion has not been done in an informed way or with objectives and planning that have included the participation of people with disabilities, it ends up presenting more risks than opportunities.

In addition, all the groups have highlighted the existence of prototypical images that make the others invisible. One example of this is the manual self-propelled wheelchair, which has become the emblem that identifies the entire group. Person 6 in group 2 says:

For me there are different levels of disability. When you say disabled, the image is of a person with a manual wheelchair who can more or less move around. And if you say intellectual disability, people are already thinking of Down syndrome. They already have some fixed images and the rest does not exist.

This simplification works against those people with disabilities who do not use wheelchairs. It is reported that the bulk of adjustments and people's empathy are aimed at the wheelchairs. The most adversely affected by this are the people with a disability that is not externally perceptible. Some people with non-externally obvious disabilities in groups 1 and 2 express that they do not identify with the disabled community and sometimes experience the impostor syndrome.

Likewise, person 17 says “there is a strong tendency to conduct highly specific campaigns and not in an integral way for the person with a disability, whether in advertising, or in making programmes or series” (group 4). The usual representation is for a campaign or day focused on a single illness or functional limitation, and rarely is the entire community discussed. In a similar way, Nario-Redmond (2019) points out that the denial of the existence of both the minority of people with disabilities and of ableism implies a particularistic view and a partial and fragmented treatment of disability, as some participants of group 4 complain. In other words, the tendency to focus attention on a specific group within the world of disability can sometimes indicate the denial of the condition of an oppressed minority.

Finally, the participants show that representations of disability are often characterised by their instrumental nature. This finding agrees with the results obtained by Cebrián (2012): “The image of disability in the media is an instrumental image at the service of other interests and objectives” (p. 113) [*Own translation*]. This instrumentalization occurs mainly in the two hegemonic forms of representation of disability: that of suffering and that of overcoming adversity. In the sessions, it is said that, in many cases, disability is used sensationally to increase the drama of a situation, exploiting the stereotype of pity. At other times, the person with a disability is portrayed as a superhero who has achieved a great milestone. Thus, the most common representations have an instrumental function, since they are used for a purpose that has nothing to do with the group, instead becoming a means. Although the character represented is a person with a disability, the message conveyed is intended for those people who do not belong to this minority. In the following sections, we will address these hegemonic representations in more detail.

The representation of pity

All the focus groups agree that, on the rare occasions when it occurs, the representation of disability is intended to provoke grief with a message of pity. They also share that behind this representation is “the idea of associating disability with illness” (group 1), which is at the core of the medical paradigm of disability. In one of the groups, the participants conclude that empathy towards sick people fosters compassion and pity, and that these attitudes, in turn, fuel discrimination and stereotyping. We must bear in mind that, when dealing with specific images and representations, it is not easy to differentiate between stereotypes, forms of discrimination and representations.

The participants associate the stereotype of pity with infantilisation, which can manifest itself in the lack of respect for the autonomy and agency of people with disabilities. In addition, they also relate the representation of the “poor thing” to a stereotype of weakness, lack of power and incompetence. Through viewing this supposed weakness, people without disabilities can perceive themselves as capable, useful and strong (Nario-Redmond, 2019). According to this idea, people with disabilities are often perceived as the *useful other*, who

are attributed group stereotypes that go against the traits of the abled-body ideal (Shakespeare, 2014).

During the sessions, the representation of drama because of an accident was discussed. Three of the groups have criticised a type of fiction which one participant summarises with the following plot: “They are people who have an accident, and the film revolves around this person as the protagonist, and that’s it” (group 4). In this group, it is reported that this disability is often presented as such a misfortune that it makes death preferable. This representation implies dehumanisation, as expressed by another person in the group: “If you want to kill yourself, you have the right to decide. But in this film, from the very beginning, they already associate the two ideas. Accident plus disability equals death” (group 4). Despite its harshness, it is common to associate disability with death, and many people with disabilities have to endure being told that it would be better to die than to live with this condition (Nario-Redmond, 2019). In his work, Shakespeare (2014) reflects extensively on the dehumanisation that leads people to consider as normal certain eugenic practices, such as sterilisation or embryo selection, which they would not tolerate for any other discriminated group.

The representation of overcoming adversity

Many of the participants agreed to point out that representing the person with a disability as a hero who has achieved great feats is probably the most common way in which people with disabilities appear in the media. In addition, they point out that this representation displeases them, because it is a source of prejudice and danger. The participants identify two of the three forms of representation of the *supercrip* defined by Grue (2015). On the one hand, they talk about the representation of the ordinary person with a disability performing everyday actions such as passing secondary education or buying bread. On the other hand, reference is made to the representation of a disabled person achieving extraordinary feats such as climbing a mountain or running a marathon. However, unlike Grue (2015), they do not identify superheroes, such as those from Marvel and DC Comics, as possible representations of disability.

They argue that these types of representations are dangerous, because they can lead to the normalisation of the exceptional. That is to say, that society ends up perceiving extraordinary situations and outcomes as if they were usual and expected. In particular, in group 1 they give the example of Àlex Roca, a disabled marathon runner. They argue that this figure generates expectations among people without disabilities: if an athlete with a specific functional impairment or limitation is able to achieve this feat, all people with similar disabilities should be able to do the same. We will now contrast this interpretation with our theoretical framework. Since this is the most common representation, the processes of objectification and anchoring turn it into a social representation and, through repetition, these expectations become demands (Jodelet, 1994). Grue (2015) states that functional limitation is perceived as

something solvable: "Through the combined forces of willpower and technological intervention, disabilities are presented as obstacles that can, and must, be overcome" (p. 209) [Own translation].

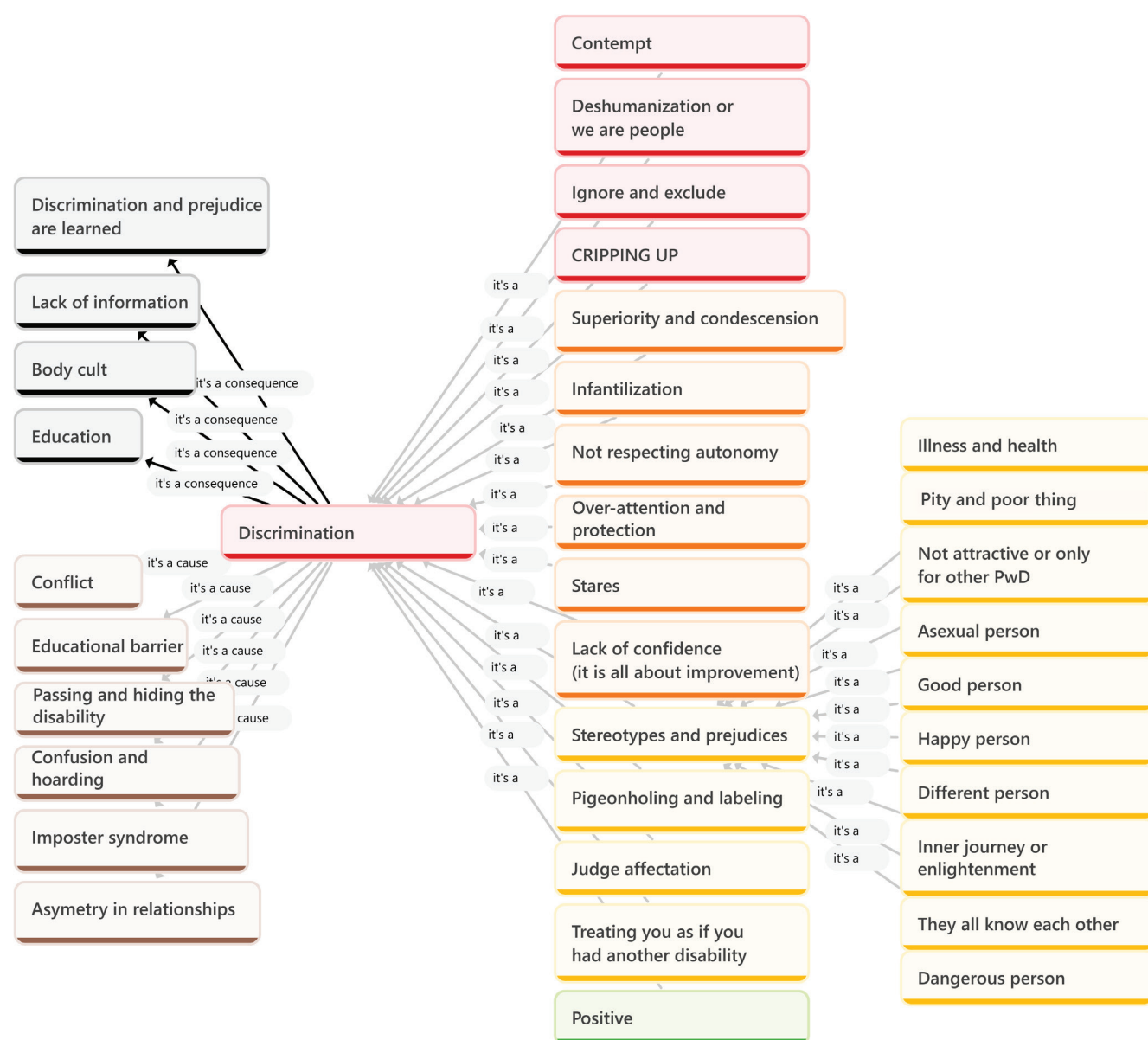
On the other hand, the focus groups have also highlighted three forms of discrimination associated with the representation of this athlete. First, the person is classified with very little information, based on diagnostic categories or appearances; secondly, the impairment is predicted without considering other factors such as age or socio-economic conditions, or without having consulted the person concerned, and, finally, the subject is required to fulfil the expectations of others.

In addition, these representations are accompanied by

narratives of personal development. A statement that is not necessarily true is often taken for granted: if you try hard, you can be healed. However, the participants complain that the opposite proposition ends up being assumed: if you are not healed, it's because you didn't try hard enough. Group 2 states that these assumptions forget the resources, supports and opportunities of each person and entail the danger of relativising the need for accessibility measures.

Group 1 reveals the instrumentality of this type of representation. They claim that the media are not interested in conveying the diversity of society in the form of its representations. This representation of the superheroine has the function of inspiring and indoctrinating people without disabilities. It is equivalent

Diagram 2. Forms of discrimination, stereotypes, causes and consequences



Source: Own work.

to what Grue (2016) defines as *inspiration porn*. Through these representations, hegemonic ideologies such as the culture of effort, individualism and meritocracy are reinforced (Nario-Redmond, 2019). The participants agree that this representation is the reverse of that of the “poor thing” and the lack of confidence. When a feat is achieved by a person who belongs to a group that society has classified as incapable, the inspirational effect of this improbable action is multiplied.

The responsibility of the media

When addressing the question of the extent to which the participants blame the media for spreading and maintaining prejudices and stereotypes, the unanimity and forcefulness with which they express themselves is surprising.

When the participants are asked about the responsibility of the media, they unanimously and forcefully express that the media should take full responsibility for the production and reproduction of the discrimination and stereotypes that they have described throughout the previous discussion. For example, in group 3, one person stated: “You just asked, what responsibility do they have? Well, I would place the entire responsibility on them, because there are no representative characters” (group 3).

In the previous paragraph we have referred to the overt or conscious attributions of responsibility. However, the manifestation of latent form can be even more significant, that is, the unconscious indictment of responsibility on the media. When talking about media representations of disability, participants tend to evoke personal experiences of discrimination that have no direct relation to the media. This fact highlights the difficulty of talking about forms of media representation without reflecting one’s own experience. This can be interpreted as an unconscious assumption that the represented and lived realities are closely related.

In this way, forms of discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes suffered by people with disabilities have appeared in the discussion groups and have been collected in Diagram 2.

Conclusions

The project has provided an answer to the four research questions formulated.

Firstly, the participants perceive that discrimination and stereotypes about the minority of which they are part have been caused by certain social representations.

Secondly, the existence of two hegemonic forms of representation of disability is recognised: the representation of pity or “the poor thing” and the representation of overcoming adversity or “the superhero”.

Thirdly, the invisibility of people with disabilities in the media is criticised and defined as a form of discrimination. The participants attach a lot of importance to presence in the media because they relate this with normalisation.

Fourthly, all focus groups clearly express that the media should

bear full responsibility for the dissemination and maintenance of ableism.

Finally, in order to overcome the discrimination suffered by people with disabilities, the participants maintain that it is necessary to increase their presence in the media and change current ableist media representations.

Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that the same stereotypes and prejudices that we want to mitigate are responsible for the lack of representation and the invisibility and the ableist representations. In this way, we face a vicious circle. To leave behind this impasse we need to resort to collective action with a determined and constant attitude that combines:

- on the one hand, self-representation on social media such as, for example, TikTok, YouTube and Instagram. These channels are essential to continue building an active minority;
- on the other, the Administration must be required to remove the barriers that hinder or prevent disabled people from participating in the media. It is necessary to guarantee the physical accessibility of the media, the availability of personal assistants at universities and that acting schools such as the Institut del Teatre have non-ableist access requirements. At the same time, we need to work hand in hand with professionals in the media so that they become aware of ableism and, thus, can be able to overcome media representations of disability focused on pity and overcoming obstacles, and can thus guarantee a non-stereotypical presence. One way would be participating, for example, in the Mesa per a la Diversitat en l'Audiovisual (Audiovisual Diversity Board).

In summary, this research study aims to use the prejudice-reducing potential of mediated contact to change current ableist social representations.

Finally, avenues for future research in this field will be pointed out.

Public media outlets have been mentioned on several occasions for their inadequate representation of people with disabilities, both in terms of the extent of this presence and also the way in which they are represented. These media outlets are subject to stricter public service obligations and it would be important to investigate what their regulatory responsibilities are and compare them to current programming.

One of the conclusions of the research study is that the self-representation of the group in social networks is essential to create an active minority, which enables people with disabilities to organise themselves to change the conditions that allow discrimination in order to eradicate it. For this reason, it is essential to know how this self-representation occurs and what opportunities and threats it entails.

Endnote

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The age of blob communication: trapped within the algorithmic mesh

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Abstract

The accelerated transformations of the hegemonic communicative and cultural model have rendered obsolete concepts that until now have been key, such as the culture of surveillance (Zuboff) or the network society (Castells). The critical examination of these digital transformations and the discussion of significant works from different currents of philosophy and sociology of culture have allowed us to identify a new hegemonic form of communication, which we have called blob communication, and which we have described as the infrastructure that challenges all human mediations in a mercurial mesh or rabbit hole supported by algorithms. This communication blob is the communication apparatus that sustains the culture and capitalism of containment. Based on this diagnosis, the article presents conceptual avenues for thinking about a kind of communication and journalism that can overcome the capitalism of containment and propose new ways of imagining and narrating human communities.

Keywords

Blob communication, mercurial cage, algorithmic matrix, containment capitalism, hypersimulation, journalism, artificial intelligence.

Resum

Les transformacions accelerades del model comunicatiu i cultural hegemònic han deixat obsolets conceptes que fins avui havien estat capitals, com el de cultura de la vigilància (Zuboff) o el de societat-xarxa (Castells). L'examen crític d'aquestes transformacions digitals i la discussió de treballs significatius de diversos corrents de la filosofia i de la sociologia de la cultura ens han permès identificar una nova forma hegemònica de comunicació, que hem anomenat comunicació blob, i que hem descrit com la infraestructura que reté totes les mediacions humanes en una malla mercurial sostinguda per algoritmes. Aquesta comunicació blob és l'aparell comunicatiu que sosté la cultura i el capitalisme de la contenció. A partir d'aquest diagnòstic, l'article presenta eines conceptuals per pensar una mena de comunicació i de periodisme que pugui desbordar el capitalisme de la contenció i que proposi noves maneres d'imaginar i narrar les comunitats humanes.

Paraules clau

Comunicació blob, malla mercurial, matriu algorítmica, capitalisme de la contenció, hipersimulació, periodisme, intel·ligència artificial.

1. Introduction. Make the wish a possibility

The hopes we placed in network communication, and which Manuel Castells predicted like no other in *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996/2017), have vanished. Today, faced with the overwhelming logic of digital platforms, which some have described as the *goliath* of new media (Diresta, 2023), we verify with resignation that this paradigm, born in the decades of the 1980s and 90s thanks to the contributions of the Interpretative School (Watzlawick, Helmick and

Jackson, 1967/1985; Berger and Luckmann, 1966/2003; Blumer, 1969/1982; Bateson, 1979/2002) and cybernetics (Wiener, 1958/1998), is not yet done with the alienation and behaviourism of mass communication.¹

Then the Internet exploded like a supernova and content produced by anyone was able to reach large communities of users in a free and uncomplicated manner, node to node, in a web of information that would configure the so-called *global village* (McLuhan and Powers, 1995). The evolution of information technologies and microelectronics generalised the

domestic use of the computer and led to a specialisation of the mass media and the emergence of the blogosphere, a new digital space outside the hegemonic communicative institutions. These were no longer aimed at large audiences, but done in a much more segmented way, and still ultimately on a grand scale. In the days of the blogosphere, when almost everyone had a blog to make themselves known, be it on MySpace, Blogger, Tumblr or Fotolog, no one imagined the constraint of ideas that we would be subjected to in the 21st century.

As Mark Fisher (2018) wrote, capitalist realism has inevitably taken hold and we cannot claim that, despite the spread of the web as a form of hegemonic organisation for decades, we have abandoned hierarchies of control at large scale: we continue under the rule of the rich (D'Eramo, 2022), even more so than a few years ago. However, we are no longer part of the network grid, but are contained —retained— within a matrix driven by a very small oligopoly of technological companies (Lanier, 2018; Peirano, 2019), which have converged, first, in the so-called *surveillance capitalism* (Zuboff, 2020), and which are now causing a mutation from surveillance to containment, from the network to the mesh, as we aim to explain in this article.

In this sense, Zuboff, who at the end of the 80s anticipated the revolution that computers would cause in the workplace (Zuboff, 1982) and who at the beginning of the 21st century predicted the rise of digital capitalism and social networks (Zuboff, 2004), now laments the innocence with which she and many other intellectuals like Castells witnessed first-hand the mutation from classical Fordist capitalism to informational capitalism and, finally, to surveillance capitalism. The author insists that this surveillance capitalism “is not technology; it is a logic that imbues technology and commands it into action”. (Zuboff, 2020, p. 28). Since the actors who created network communication are the hegemonic powers of rampant capitalism, the architecture of the global grid has ended up taking the form of a mesh, as we will argue, where the main interests, as already pointed out by the authors of the Frankfurt School (Marcuse, 1954/1993; Adorno and Horkheimer, 1969/1998), are consumption and social control; its values are those of the morality of success, aggression and violence; and the projects are the accumulation of capital and the perpetual enrichment of a privileged minority over an increasingly poor majority.

In this way, the first generation Internet, whose architecture was built in the form of a grid with connection points, has now modified the very idea of network communication by authors such as Castells (1996/2017; 2006), Lévy (1997) or Mitchell (2003).

As Terranova (2004) states, in reality the Internet has become a space of connections without transformations, and for this reason the author wonders if the first-generation reticular Internet, which has been mutating its architecture thanks to the algorithm, especially since 2010, has not, in a certain way, exhausted the network communication as defined by authors such as Castells (2006). Indeed, Evgeny Morozov (2011) explains in *The Net Delusion* how the “Google Doctrine”, this

enthusiastic belief in the liberating power of the Internet that proclaims that big tech companies will join the global struggle for freedom, has not done more than ruin the public's ability to evaluate its policies, because it has exaggerated the positive role of technology companies and prevents them from being subject to public scrutiny.

This liberal faith is professed by senior officials of the United States administration from across the political spectrum, as Morozov himself recounts, and the mass media have happily contributed to spreading it. At the dawn of this new, much more restrictive kind of capitalism, which here we call *containment capitalism*, data is the prized commodity that the capitalist West is willing to obtain from private technology companies at any price to maintain hegemony, even when it goes against the freedoms it proclaims (Zuboff, 2020).

In the midst of platformisation (Srnicek 2018; Scolari, 2022), every day we see how the network communication that intended to lead us to the desired global village is perverted. In this article we will try to describe how this capitalism of containment, which we have explained as a sophistication of the informational capitalism of surveillance, is in fact forming a new kind of communication, which we call *blob communication*. And why *blob*? Because we are trapped living in a new universe, in a mercurial mesh, with no possibility of escape. The reticular nodes of the global network that were supposed to emancipate us have instead made us captives of a much more sophisticated control structure than we thought. We believe that this description that we will develop below is essential to understanding the inertias that drag us down in the field of sociology and the philosophy of culture and communication.

At the beginning of the era of containment capitalism, network communication ceased to be an opportunity to become a computational matrix, an algorithmic mesh that covers everything we can think and narrate. Where were those of us who believed that communication must be a radical encounter with otherness, when in Silicon Valley the foundations of this new type of much more enveloping communication were being laid? Why weren't we there to tell them how we think communication should be so that it avoids reproducing the evils of mass communication or generating new ones from the vices of network communication? And, above all, how can we help, now, to make the wish a possibility? Are we in time to reverse the inertias?

The third and fourth batch of critical theory (McLuhan, 1964/1996; Castells, 1996/2017; Terranova, 2004; Zuboff, 2020), as we have explained, will warn of the economic, social and political changes that motivate the passage of exploitation, alienation and inequality typical of Fordist capitalism to domination, precariousness and hegemony typical of surveillance capitalism. But we will use the most recent critical authors (Parisi, 2013; Sadin, 2017; Crawford, 2021) throughout this article. They have begun to describe how surveillance capitalism is being mutated by the latest computational advances in artificial intelligence, favouring the birth of a new

type of algorithmic communication. This new communication is being described, but still from the theoretical framework of surveillance and network communication, and thus is not being precisely characterised or distinctively named. In this article, we will venture to name it and characterise it. We believe that it is essential to spend time on this basic definition, because this is an article of a hermeneutic and theoretical nature, whose main contribution is to rethink, offer new frameworks for reflection and propose new forms of academic work that complement what has already been written or is being written in the discipline of communication and journalism.

2. Hypotheses, theoretical framework and methodology. The human helix

In the era of platforms, a new form of capitalism, which is an evolution of surveillance capitalism, rises as the hegemonic economic model. This new system does not seek to maintain social order, as it has done up until now, but to contain social chaos, and that is why we suggest naming it *containment capitalism*. Based on this diagnosis, we propose as hypotheses that:

- A. There is a new form of communication, in which mass communication, symbolic interactionism and network communication are intertwined, which is the algorithmic infrastructure necessary to make this new kind of capitalism work within a new narrative matrix.
- B. From this new matrix a new form of hegemonic culture is born, which is characterised by the replacement of the linear and segmented time of classical bourgeois society by a time without process; the configuration of a hypersimulated social space; the production of new languages and stories and new narratives that contain us; and the exaltation of an unprecedented egotism.

The aim of this article is to determine the characteristics of this new narrative matrix on one hand, and on the other hand, of this form of hegemonic culture, describe its operation, and propose operational concepts that allow us to reflect on them.

Therefore, this is a work of an eminently theoretical nature. It starts from hypotheses that derive from observation and knowledge of a new communicative and cultural scenario. These hypotheses, which have already been presented, need a methodological environment, which in this case is the prospecting of books and the emptying of bibliographic and documentary sources. The methodology that guides us is that of interdisciplinary comparatism, through which we adopt terms used by the sociology of culture and philosophy for the analysis of transformations in the field of communication and, more specifically, journalism.

More precisely, this exploration adopts the methodological form of a double spiral and allows us to explain these transformations in culture, communication and journalism. We have named our

methodological tool the *virtuous helicoid*. We believe that the hermeneutic road map it unfolds, with its conceptual universe, can help researchers outline reflections in all knowledge of the humanities, philosophy and sciences. In our case, in these pages we will use it to describe the characteristics of this new cultural and communicative matrix.

The theoretical framework of this article draws, on the one hand, from the heritage of the poststructuralist tradition, with thinkers such as Derrida or Foucault, as well as all those who in some way have been their disciples, such as *cyberpunk* or the authors of the Warwick School, such as Berardi, Morozov, Fisher, Sadin, Srnicek and Parisi, among many others. We cannot forget, either, the legacy of interactionism and the Palo Alto School, keys to understanding the interactions of cybernetics, and the work of the Critical School in communication studies, especially those of Manuel Castells around the network communication. Finally, we must cite the essential readings on critical economy and biopolitics by authors such as Arendt, Marcuse, Zuboff and Peirano.

As we have said, this exploration takes the form of a double spiral that we have dubbed the *virtuous helicoid*. Let us look at this in more detail, as it constitutes, from a methodological point of view, a first conceptual contribution of this work. A helix is the curve whose tangent turns on an axis and the helicoid is one of the three minimal surfaces, along with the plane and the catenoid, that occupy the universe in a unique and whimsical way. The most famous double helix is the sequence of deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA, the three-dimensional arrangement that links the genetic sequence of all living things, and was discovered by scientists Watson and Crick at the University of Cambridge between 1951 and 1953, based on the research of Wilkins and Franklin, and which earned them the Nobel Prize in 1962. As Watson himself (1968/1993) recalls in the essay that commemorates that fundamental discovery, “the sugar-phosphate backbones twist about on the outside with the flat hydrogen-bonded base pairs forming the core. Seen this way, the structure resembles a spiral staircase with the base pairs forming the steps” (p. 152). Let us imagine, then, that we have to think about and describe the DNA of humanity.

Culture and communication would make up the double helix shell that wraps the genetic consciousness of our societies. Culture and communication are anti-parallel, but complementary, and they intoxicate each other, protecting the chained sequence of base pairs that make up, first, memory, imagination, thought and affections; and, second, the mediations, the actions, the community links and the knowledge we are acquiring. We have to imagine that all human disciplines and, among them, of course, communication, which is the object of study of this article, unite these pairs of bases in a particular way, as links of hydrogen do in the sugar-phosphate chains described by Watson. This is how the steps of this spiral staircase that is humanity are combined and recombined and made up. In this way, while the first four bases appeal to the

sense of the subject; the second four have to do with a certain sense of communion with that which is radically 'other'.

In this article we also consider that the DNA of humanity grows and spreads within a reproductive cycle, that is, through a process of transmission and renewal of human quality, rather than within a productive cycle, as the industry has intended for a century and a half, and which uses the available resources in a rather sloppy way to obtain goods that satisfy human needs, always according to the dictates of the market economy. Precisely because the DNA of humanity inhabits this reproductive cycle, we can therefore consider that the assemblage that compacts, in the end, this humanity is the recognition that we can only grow if we live a political life, in the way that Arendt explains (1958/2005).

In this entanglement of communication and culture, as we show in the figure that closes this section, and which is shown in plan view, that is to say, from above, but which must be imagined as a three-dimensional spiral (see Figure I), there are still four hermeneutic coordinates —time, space, story and

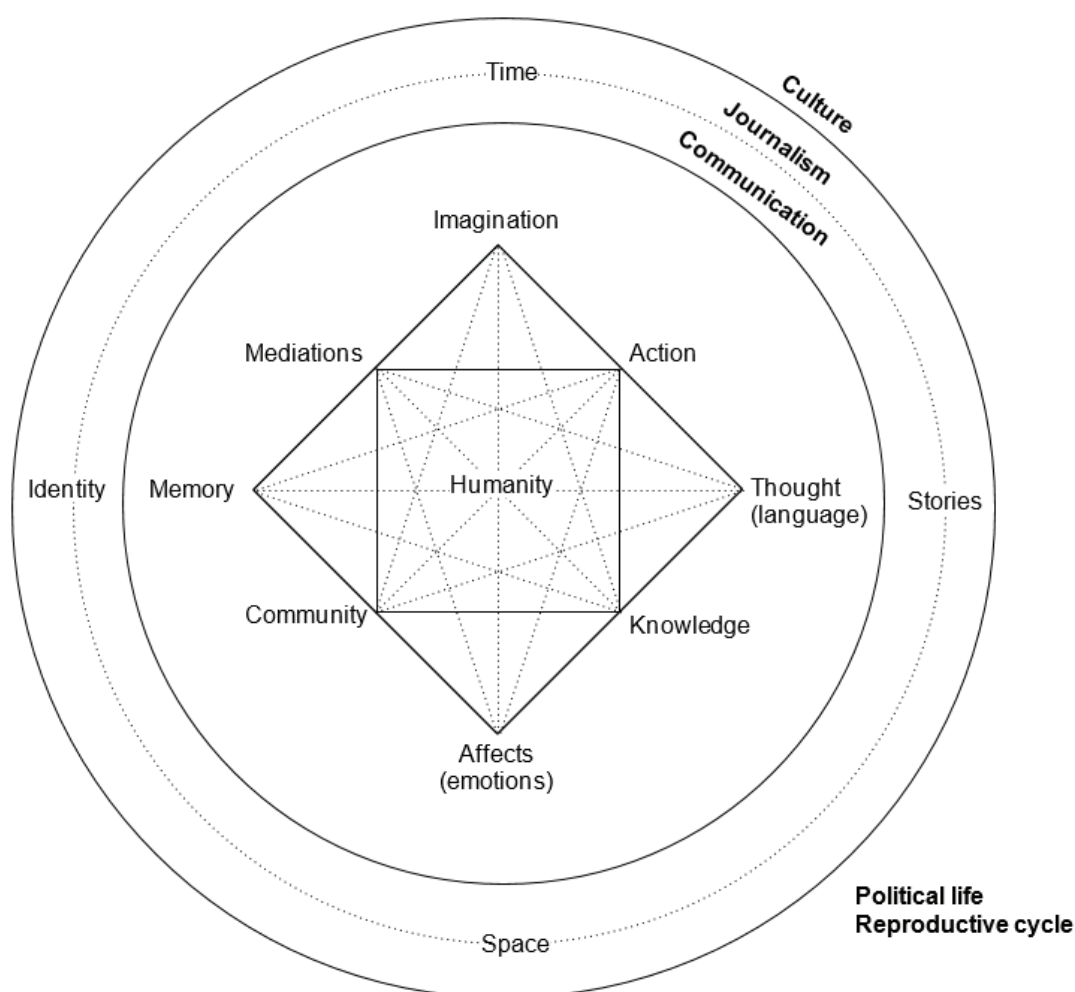
identity— to which we will return later, which will allow us to travel through what has been and is this double helix that envelops us and all the base pairs it protects.

3. Critical proposal and results. The era of blob communication

3.1 Conceptual contributions. The mercurial mesh that envelops us

The current architecture of the Internet is in the form of a mesh. It is a geometry without vertices that isolates citizens. The communication that derives from this architecture transmits a meta-story² —a set of stories— that imprisons with its narratives, precisely because all limits have been removed. We will call this the *communication blob*. To do this, we draw on the work of Sadin (2017) and Parisi (2013), who have theorised about the next-generation Internet in which we are immersed today —some technologists have dubbed it Web 2, to differentiate it from the

Figure 1. The virtuous helicoid: a hermeneutic for thought



Source: Own work.

first stage, and we can assume that we are actually already on our way to the so-called Web 3 (Moscow, 2017)—, and we will then return to Terranova (2004). We can therefore affirm that blob communication is the communication device where the behavioural alienation of mass communication, the contributions of Symbolic Interactionism and the nodular structure of network communication, are intertwined. The result is a membranous digital environment that envelops the individual in a virtual social reality that constrains them and that makes all human condition, transfer and common world impossible.

If the recent history of the Western tradition is based on acceleration, wrote Terranova, the emergence of network communication marked a limit, as if we had backed ourselves against a wall. For this reason, the simultaneity of arbitrary and banal actions has replaced, little by little, the succession of events—or has, in fact, hijacked the event, as we have already pointed out in previous works (Garde Cano, 2022)—, and the world has been reduced to a kind of unprecedented accident. In this article we argue that we live in a space of *hypersimulation* and in a *time without process* (Garde Cano and Vidal Castell, 2022), as we will try to explain below.

Thanks to Terranova (2004) we know that «the time of the network is “real time”: everything happens simultaneously and thus fatalistically with a kind of after-the-event sense of inevitability» (p. 43). Acceleration leads to simultaneity, simultaneity demands immediacy and immediacy makes everything seem to happen inevitably (Derrida, 1995). Crawford (2021) also relates this *time without process* to which the digital subjects us when he describes the visit he made to Amazon's *fulfilment centre* in Robbinsville, New Jersey, which was full of clocks. Berardi (2003) defines it with the term *cybertime* and Garcés refers to it as “posthumous time” (2017). We can affirm, therefore, that the capitalism of containment has ended up possessing the *continuous present* and prevents us from building any occasion, any possibility, because it forces us to conceive of the past and the future as antagonistic. In the capitalism of containment, of platforms, the eternal scrolling through social media is a good example of what we are trying to explain.

Based on this idea of inevitability due to the acceleration that governs us, Terranova (2014) dismantles the premises on which we had trusted that the network communication would organise the world in an orderly and diverse manner. He admits that even though this architecture has allowed alternative communities to gather, they are hermetic and exclusive to forums like 4Chan or the so-called Deep Web³. Likewise, he senses that the reticular, automating and simplifying architecture, with which the programmers imagined the first Internet, has made us fall into the classic trap that confuses time with space, duration with movement. Caught in this trap, the networked Internet has ceased to be the place where we meet, and is now the space where we isolate ourselves.

Terranova warns that these decentralising features of the Internet that inaugurated the network communication, and

that organised information with circular structures inspired by Symbolic Interactionism—from boards to rings, passing through nodes and fractals, structures that formed and warped within the reticule at convenience—were isolating us and, consequently, could lead us into a much more uncompromising world, rather than leading us to the global village that McLuhan and Powers (1995) envisioned. Terranova argues that, “the mass is not simply massaged by the medium, as Marshall McLuhan argued, but also segmented by the media”. (p. 147)

The author took the theses of Castells (1996/2017) on how network communication promoted the mass diversification of audiences and concludes, however, that “in a network culture, a mass is a transversal cut in the body of an informational milieu that never ceases to be microsegmented, highly differentiated and at the same time interconnected”. (2014, p. 150) This micro-segmentation, which differentiated and at the same time interconnected communities through information, has driven programmers to try new ways of retaining us within the networked reticule. For this reason, according to Berardi (2003), the colonisation of cyberspace has required the progressive expansion of electronic commerce, *fintech* and intranets. In the latest generation Internet or Web 2, predicts Berardi, we have gone from a decentralised system of frequencies that *connected* us to the network, to the oligopolistic control of a few suppliers.

Terranova (2004) defines information as the content of communication, obviously, but also as something less material. He argues that this immateriality of information has been amplified by technology. To the point of, in the era of blob communication, it has made possible an instantaneity and multiple distribution like never before. Information, which was conceived during surveillance capitalism as an object to be exchanged (Zuboff, 2020), as another commodity, in containment capitalism it becomes raw *content* that is sold and bought in unprecedented quantities thanks to algorithmic processes that go faster than human perception. If, in network communication, information was presented to us in a repetitive manner, as in the television loop, in blob communication the contents become viral in a reverberating way, the same as memes do.

In addition to this, if for two decades the first Internet had been a mostly passive exercise in front of computer screens, with mobile phones it becomes an incessant movement, and it remains to be seen whether it manages to overcome the tyranny of the screens and is able to move in an augmented reality (Mosco, 2017), as proposed by technological gurus with the so-called metaverse. Little by little, in the last decade these experiments of the first Internet have given birth to a new, much more sophisticated and intricate digital architecture, as Parisi (2013) explains, which will eventually shape the structure for the new blob communication.

This state-of-the-art digital mapping has been shaped in the image of a new trend in design and architecture, the so-called *blob architecture*, which is based on biology, morphogenesis and artificial intelligence to build buildings and objects with

curvilinear posthuman shapes —which we could even say are not human—. Examples are the Guggenheim in Bilbao or the Kunsthouse in Graz, described by neighbours as a “friendly alien”, The Sage in Gateshead, the Metropol Parasol in Seville or the Selfridge in Birmingham. In these buildings, the experience is one of great disorientation, which is why museums or shopping centres are often located there: the windows do not fulfil any human function, the corners are not useful for meetings, the slopes of the walls do not serve to shelter from the cold or to protect from the heat. Indeed, inside one feels alone in an alien immensity: there is no landscape to be seen and nothing invites you to stay there; space encapsulates individuals in the void.

With this referent in mind, Parisi (2013) describes the architecture of this latest Internet as a mesh woven from nodules that, unlike the network, envelops without holes, like a drop —blob— of mercury that engulfs, transforms and isolates any bond that develops within it. By contagion, it spreads without limits or form, creating its own architectures through algorithms, whose logics intoxicate everything that is human. The author explains that digital platforms have been able to merge the networked vision of the grid of first-order cybernetics, as described by Terranova (2004), with this biomorphic vision of blob architecture through mereotopology, a science thought by Alfred North Whitehead. In short, we have to imagine a mesh arranged in an elastic manner, like a veil that allows the contours to be glimpsed; like a membrane that defines units or objects, but at the same time is infinite; that extends, but at the same time contains.

Through this blob communication, digital platforms become the institutions of symbolic construction of the new digital culture (Lovink, 2023), with the ultimate promise of optimising the choices of their users and trading with the massive data they are capable of storing, of containing. As Wiener (2021) recalls in the essay in which she reconstructs her experience as a worker in several Silicon Valley start-ups that sell big data management infrastructures, with these algorithms companies hope to gather more users to increase their data volume, and consequently increase their income. Some authors, from orthodox Marxism, such as Cancela (2023), have hypothesised about the possibility of using the capabilities of digital platforms for the common good, when they suggest that nation states can appropriate data centres or create truly free software. Scolari (2022) also proposes using the infrastructure of the platform for emancipation.

Wiener, like other critical technologists and journalists, such as Lanier (2018) or Peirano (2019), abounds on the interests of digital platforms, and the start-ups that provide them with the technology necessary to start these algorithmic processes: they all seek to eliminate quantitative biases, improve recipient selection systems and statistics, measure their effectiveness, prioritise impact, make investments profitable and promote accelerated growth, among others. The journalist also warns that, to manage these algorithmic infrastructures, workers have unlimited access to their clients’ databases, what they

colloquially call *God mode*, a privileged position that is not questioned by the industry.

Within these structures, says Parisi (2014), algorithms are no longer just a tool to accomplish tasks, but are the constructive and abstract material that gives meaning to the elastic mesh, realities defined in data that process endless probabilities. Sadin (2017) points out that algorithms make possible a multi-architecture and multi-platform flexibility that allows free circulation throughout the mesh, and predispose artificial intelligences to cooperate with each other. These agents essentially make up a kind of “artificial society” (p. 113).

Blob communication, therefore, is the symbolic instance that platform capitalism (Srnicsek, 2018) builds to simulate communicative mediations without them actually being so. Wiener also explains how the basis of the business of these technological companies is a vicarious form of interaction or participation (2021, p. 53). The mesh allows exchanges in heterogeneous, decentralised, dynamic and evolutionary sections. For this reason, living within these architectures ends up being perceived as organic. We tour the “friendly alien”, whose story leads us to believe that, thanks to him, we are part of the media narrative of cyberspace; what’s more, we are contributing to creating it. In this way, the subject, within these structures, is an ego (Žižek, 2014), and not an individual who is part of the community. This architecture makes you feel unique at the same time as isolating you, and every narrative is then self-referential, which causes ego-attunement and egophony. That is why we talk about *mercurial egotism*.

And that is why we also talk about mesh. Inside, the nodes that share information flows do so mainly to isolate the population through mediations that are used only for consumption and social control. The hegemonic mediations within this structure do not, therefore, serve to build accounts of diversity, tolerance or recognition of the other, but are created to consolidate homogeneous, polarised and narcissistic accounts, which some authors have come to call a *cage of mirrors*, because they set up self-referential narratives that see the other only as distorted reflections of oneself. We also find other concepts that have made a fortune explaining this isolation, such as the echo chambers described by Sunstein (2001) based on the essay *Being Digital* by Negroponte (1995) and the bubble filters theorised by Pariser (2011).

There is then, as the authors of the critical theory of communication agree, a dissolution of the borders between human life and synthetic life, which transcends the barriers of time and space. We now know that this physical-virtual fusion will be the origin of the diseases of self-perception that proliferate today and of a lack of recognition of otherness that has led us to the polarisation of discourses, what some authors call “totalism” (Duch and Chillón, 2016), and the destruction of the agoras, the social contract and the principle of tolerance. Several years earlier, recall Duch and Chillón, Marcuse (1954/1993) had already warned of this totalitarian drift of advanced industrial society: “By virtue of the way in which it

has organised its technological base, contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian". (p. 33)

Algorithmic sophistication will be the last key to this totalism. As Peirano (2019) explains, the power of collection, data storage and processing speed make it possible to assess in real time a large number of parameters, to establish accurate maps of ongoing situations, to suggest solutions prescribed by power or to make decisions based on criteria determined by random factors. Infrastructures, Sadin (2017) says, which are both physical and digital, and which regulate the general operation of complex units aimed at guaranteeing a greater degree of security and optimisation, classification and distribution; "megastructures administered mostly by electronic protocols that act with us and instead of us, product of their aptitudes for surveillance, deduction and initiative". (p. 67)

In fact, these megastructures will inspire the birth of blockchains⁴, with which their creators and followers have wanted to believe that they were inaugurating a new age of the Internet, the awaited Web 3, in which the totalising logics of the second generation Internet would be surpassed. As the *New York Times* explains in an interactive publication about the crypto world (Roose, 2022), if Web 1 was the age of static websites, HTML code and JavaScript, and Web 2 is characterised by the appearance of the platforms and social networks that are nourished by the creation of digital content by their users through smartphones, Web 3 would combine the first cybernetic infrastructures with this vicarious participation that promotes Web 2 through augmented reality applications, to drive a decentralised cooperative movement through collective data systems, shared ownership between developers and users, and encrypted transmission chains, which would enable secure and anonymised transactions like those employed by the cryptocurrency, NFT, and other token communities.⁵

However, it is not at all clear whether blockchain technology, born for the supposedly free exchange between users without the intermediation of platforms, will be the technology that allows the emancipation of communities. Neither is it clear whether it is the ultimate tool that has just strengthened the containment of the few over the majority in a hypersimulated world and in a third generation of the Internet, as predicted by technology gurus Andreessen and Horowitz (2021) through their venture capital platform.

Today we know that these thousand programmers who worked in a network for an open source were not hegemonic enough for there not to be a few thousand more working, not so freely (Lanier, 2018), to create what are today the main platforms and which have ended up forming a new communicative scenario. Now we know that they also did not have enough humanistic knowledge to fully understand the ethical implications of channelling a large part of human mediations through algorithms, through mathematical codes that respond only to economic interests. The blockchain community, although born with the hope of subverting the logics of power promoted by Web 2, is beginning to look dangerously similar to those other hermetic and exclusionary communities

that Terranova (2014) described in network communication. Instead of a popular tool within the reach of anyone without knowledge of software and hardware, the blockchain seems more like the perfect infrastructure for the decentralised, but ultimately despotic world that artificial intelligence presents.

We use the concept of *mercurial mesh* precisely because we cannot escape it, because it is a cage of magnitude which is no longer global, as Castells pointed out about the communication of networks, but infinite: it has colonised everything, because all life has gone on to function within this architecture. Within the mercurial mesh, artificial intelligences are virtually eternal, with a horizon as open as any number sequence. For this reason, they live trapped in a *continuous or immediate present*, where events no longer happen in well-defined fragments or sequences, but are multidimensional —combinations are endlessly juxtaposed, sometimes in unpredictable ways— and, for this reason, it is hard for us to find the words to narrate them.

Precisely because the digital membrane encompasses the entire human world and beyond, the feeling we have inside it is of a false freedom, because we do not see the limits, even if for us they do exist. This mesh is like a spherical bubble, a kind of algorithmic orb, and therefore has no vertices to break the geometry; to fight it we can only go through it: we are Alice beyond the black mirror.

Crawford (2021) recalls that this network is only possible on the basis of big data and cloud computing: the proliferating data magmas are hosted in servers or data centres spread across the planet. Sadin (2017) also senses that "the will to make an 'encrypted copy' of each fragment of the world continues to intensify, erecting a kind of duplication, virtually in the course of consumption, of all the fragments of the real under the format of binary codes" (p. 77), what in this article and in previous texts we call *hypersimulation* (Garde Cano, 2022). Consequently, the author claims that this immeasurable volume of data *de facto* inhibits all human and manual understanding, and takes for granted that it can only be processed through deductive systems. The data hosted by cloud computing —with this dimension, the *cloud*, almost celestial in nature— can only be visited by robots, mediators between the subjects and the world, in server farms distributed around the planet. "And it is the data that appear now as the instance of decisive interference" (Sadin, 2017, p. 81). Perhaps this space of narrative and symbolic exploration, until now exclusively human, is the only thing that journalism that wants to make sense has left.

3.2 Glossary. Elastic, reverberant, encrypted

At the end of this conceptual exploration, and in order to make the contributions very clear, in this glossary we gather the set of neologisms that we have used to match the current cultural and communicative context. We would like them to draw a map of hope for future reflections. We want them to describe an outpouring of journalism in the context of what we have named *blob communication* and *containment capitalism*.

Table 1. Three views on communication

	Mass communication	Network communication	Blob communication
Time	Lineal	Reticular	Encrypted
	Production	Automatisation	Optimisation
	Expires	Repetitive	Echoing
	Concentration	Dispersion	Retention
	Visual	Tactile	Meta-sensorial
Space	Centre	Nodes	Mesh
	Imposition	Interconnection	Interaction
	Partial	Global	Infinite
	Rigidity	Flexibility	Elasticity
	Verticality	Polycentrism	Blockchain
	Analogue	Digital	Virtual
Story	Product	Information	Data
	Sequentiality	Hypertextuality	Algorithm
	Soliloquy	Homophony	Egophony
	Passive	Reactive	Egosyntonic
	Submits	Monitors	Contains
Identity	Mass	Audience	Users
	Institutions	Media	Platforms
	Uniformisation	Polarisation	Isolation
	Competition	Cooperation	Manipulation
	Apathetic	Disagreeable	Asocial
	Imposition	Vigilance	Contention

Source: Own work.

4. Discussion and conclusions. Towards an ecology of doubt

The critical examination and discussion of significant works from various streams of philosophy and the sociology of culture have allowed us to identify a new hegemonic form of communication, which we have called *blob communication*, and which we have described as the infrastructure that retains all human mediations in a mercurial mesh sustained by algorithms, dedicated to tracing the processes of communication to contain contingency, tyrannise choices and hijack the discursive symbolic event.

Blob communication and containment culture are the two intertwined helixes that make up the containment capitalism in which we live. This culture of containment is defined through the four coordinates that we have defined in the methodology: a time without process, hypersimulation, the algorithmic orb and mercurial egotism.

The *time without process* is the time of containment: it does not run out, it does not make concessions, it only serves for privatisation and apathy. Containment capitalism has ended up possessing the continuous present and it prevents us from building any occasion, any possibility, because it forces us to conceive of the past and the future as antagonistic, and not as a confluence of energies in transformation in the here and now.

The space that this blob communication builds has the structure of a mercurial mesh and contains all human mediations by means of algorithms. In this mercurial mesh, there is only what we have called *hypersimulation*. The latest form of hypersimulation that the technological gurus have proposed is the so-called *metaverse*. For this hypersimulation to be complete, it must be persistent, that is to say, it does not end or restart; it must have a massive scale and enveloping technology; it must organise a digital economy within itself that sustains it —the blockchain seems to respond to this demand—. In this way, a narrative

matrix is formed based on stories and self-referential narratives. This algorithmic orb is the stuff of which the mercurial mesh of blob communication is made. The language that shapes it are the algorithms.

Consequently, the identity of the subjects is destructured and what we call *mercurial egotism* is born, the new ideology of containment capitalism, which has replaced modern individualism. The mercurial ego is the cold, insipid and merciless projection of the individual who does not seek any fusion with the collective, but expresses itself in the corrupted fable of Narcissus. This is how an interconnected and hypermobile humanity has been born which, from now on, will be hybridised with artificial intelligence systems. In hypersimulation, the ego is exalted in such a way that it forces us to act on impulse, with hedonism and megalomania. This is why we feel an extreme isolation that leads us to mistrust and, finally, to the absence of empathy that dehumanises and reifies others, which is why we end up relating to them with violence. Mercurial egotism leads us to take refuge in fantasy and to seek constant stimulation. This extreme isolation finally leads us to egoism, that is to say, to feeling that we cannot change anything, which forces us to lead a parasitic lifestyle.

The contributions made in this article aim to open a space for debate. The cultural and communicative context in which we live has dismembered human communities. At the same time, the industrial journalism of the conventional media is unable to fulfil the function of symbolic structure and generation of collective meaning. For this reason, in this article we argue that there must be a kind of journalism within blob communication that is capable of surpassing containment capitalism and proposing new ways of imagining and narrating human communities. We believe it is time to imagine this other-journalism (Vidal Castell, Garde Cano and Ventura-Pocino, 2023) which is capable of surpassing blob communication.

Endnote

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Notes

1. Some authors have argued that not all mass communication has been alienating and behaviourist (Marín and Tresserras, 1994). Although we accept this nuance, we accept the criticism of mass communication made by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948/1986) from the perspective of functionalism when they talk about the *narcotic dysfunction* that the media causes on the masses or the postulates of the School of Frankfurt by authors such as Adorno and Horkheimer (1969/1998) when they talk about the *atrophy of the imagination* in the public.

2. Stories pulsate within narratives and these narratives are nourished by the repertoire of stories as principles of meaning. The stories are available to the being as cultural baggage, in which it lives and manifests itself, as implicit ideological principles. At the same time, we will call the set of stories that make up the symbolic substrate of a community, and that are conveyed through the narratives, meta-stories (Gayà Morlà, Rizo García and Vidal Castell, 2022).
3. The term *Deep Web*, as expressed by the *New York Times* (Wright, 2009), is attributed to computer scientist Mike Bergman and describes a deep, invisible or hidden Internet, the content of which is not indexed by conventional search engines like Google. Although the Deep Web should not be a space only for crimes, the fact that it escapes the control of search engines, means it has turned into a space where networks of child pornography, terrorism and espionage, drug trafficking and all kinds of alternative economic exchanges to hegemonic financial institutions, like cryptocurrencies breed.
4. Blockchains are structures of transactions between users in the digital market, which are stored in the so-called blocks—we should imagine them as safes that are stacked on top of each other and that contain the data of each of the exchanges which have been validated and encrypted at a given time thanks to the mining work developed by digital miners using hardware that is assembled and installed in ventilated and isolated spaces such as garages—. These miners are often computer scientists and amateur programmers who activate, all together and around the world, the necessary technological force—the mining rigs are a set of graphics cards and processors—to channel these transactions in exchange for rewards, be they commissions or cryptocurrencies directly. Usually, these miners organise themselves into teams to provide each other with technical support and achieve bigger rewards.
5. A *token* is the value given to an object or thing within a specific community. For example, casino chips are tokens, which have a value that can be exchanged with a currency, but only within the same betting house. In computing, tokens are identifiers used to encrypt and protect digital data. There are several types of tokens: utility, payment, and also currency. Cryptocurrencies are essentially tokens that operate as digital currencies with their own blockchain. NFTs are non-fungible tokens, i.e. digital identifiers that give value to unique artistic and intellectual creations, and are bought and sold via a blockchain.

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The embodiment of postmemory: encounters with a family's past in the films of Chantal Akerman

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Abstract

Chantal Akerman felt that Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975) was about loss, about nostalgia for the lost ritual of the home. It could be said that, through her films, the director was searching for the truth of the family past that she had never experienced first-hand, but whose imprints she could feel on her body as the daughter of Holocaust survivors. Postmemory is embodied in the director and her films through the transmission of the concentrationary universe in the family unit. At the same time, the things we see can trigger the memories and subjectivities of the viewer that relate the various situations that are encountered. To address these points, I will take a close look at some particularly revealing moments in Akerman's films and apply aesthetic thinking, as well as examining the works of certain feminist theorists from recent decades who have shown a special interest in the body's role in the spectator's experience.

Keywords

Gender studies, Chantal Akerman, Jeanne Dielman, Embodied memory, Postmemory.

Resum

Chantal Akerman apreciava que Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975) tractava sobre la pèrdua, sobre la nostàlgia del ritual perdut a la llar. Es podria dir que la directora, amb el seu cinema, buscava la veritat del passat familiar que no va arribar a conèixer directament, però les petjades del qual sent en el seu cos com a filla de Supervivents de l'Holocaust. La postmemòria es materialitza en el cos de la directora i en les seves pel·lícules a partir de la transmissió de l'univers concentracionari al nucli familiar; al mateix temps, el que es mostra pot activar les memòries i les subjectivitats de la persona espectadora en relació amb les diverses realitats oposades. Per abordar aquestes qüestions faré un recorregut per alguns moments especialment reveladors del cinema d'Akerman i em recolzaré en el pensament estètic, així com en algunes teòriques feministes de les últimes dècades especialment interessades pel cos en l'experiència espectral.

Paraules clau

Estudis de gènere, Chantal Akerman, Jeanne Dielman, Memòria encarnada, Postmemòria.

Introduction

Making people feel the unspeakable was at the centre of some of the artistic movements that emerged during the post-war period after the Second World War, in an attempt to preserve the memory and prevent something similar to Auschwitz from ever happening again. Despite the fact that human beings keep repeating such traumatic events in other forms, artistic approaches that allow us to reflect on time and memory also endure or emerge. Chantal Akerman's films are thus capable of stirring a sensory experience that draws our attention to what

would otherwise go unnoticed. The imprint of her family's past as the daughter of Holocaust survivors and the feeling of not belonging pervade the personal exploration that forms the basis of her films. Born in Belgium into a Polish family, she mainly worked in Brussels, Paris and New York, but also made films in other locations such as the Eastern Bloc, Israel and Mexico, as well as spending time in the Middle East.

Her films take on a ritualised quality that connects to her childhood memories, serving as a kind of aesthetic substitute or replacement for the Jewish rituals seen and experienced in her home (Moreno Pellejero, 2023). But they are also a way of

connecting her with the other of herself, which she explores and listens to from her nomadic perspective and which connect with the experiences of various people suffering from present-day conflicts, whom she encounters in the process of making some of her films that are more akin to documentaries. Postmemory is embodied in the director and her films through the transmission of the concentrationary universe in the family unit. At the same time, the things that are shown can trigger the memories and subjectivities of the viewer, connecting with the director's own concerns and with a variety of situations.

I interpret concentrationary as referring to the consequences of the Holocaust that are manifested in everyday life but seemingly go unnoticed, as noted by Griselda Pollock and Maxim Silverman (Pollock and Silverman, 2015: XIII-XIX).¹ Thus, theorists had regarded concentrationary imaginaries as being those images that reflect the normalisation of the past associated with concentration camps or finding the traumatic in the seemingly ordinary. This could be illustrated through certain defamiliarisation techniques in film and the arts that would elicit an interpretation of terror in viewers.

Walter Benjamin referred to the *aura* of an artwork as the unique manifestation of a remoteness, however close at hand, the capacity of art to convey an experience in a unique place and time to the viewer. (Benjamin [1936] 2000: 22). Such thinking was to influence Theodor Adorno when he pondered how art could speak after Auschwitz (Adorno [1966] 1984: 361). Arguably, it was about finding a way to reinvent art. For Adorno, this reinvention could only be achieved by eliciting feelings, without words, without resorting to the explicit; something that, like Benjamin, he found even before Shoah in the work of writers like Marcel Proust or, later, in the theatre of Samuel Beckett, in whose plays nothing ever seemed to happen. In the work of those pioneering artists, the dialogue was maintained between the spectator and the art in an unrepeatable experience (Adorno, 2009). Pollock and Silverman recapture Adorno's paradox that it is only through art that a voice can be found, a voice that expresses the suffering of barbarism (Pollock & Silverman, 2015: XVI).

Akerman would choose to show the little things that accompany a family past linked to trauma, steering clear of sensationalist imagery, adopting the rejection of the idolatry of images, inherent in Jewish thinking (Akerman and Godard [1979/1980] 2020). A way of constructing films about which the author says she has no visual memory, only an emotional one: "I don't remember exact shots, only what they evoked for me" (Akerman and Brenez, 2011). As if she created her films based on feelings, rather than on images or scripts; feelings that stem from her experiences and personal exploration.² Ana Aitana Fernández and Sergi Sánchez referred to the concept of the *symptom* in the sense expressed by Georges Didi-Huberman, as "the essence of the tensions that occur in filmed intimacy", and they saw the link between the symptom of History and intimate spaces as a political gesture. A link between intimacy and history, which in Akerman's films lies in the trauma of the

Holocaust (Sánchez and Fernández, 2016: 84).

In this vein, according to Marianne Hirsch, symptoms would also be the result of the familial and bodily transmission of the traumatic past within a space. Hirsch coined the term *postmemory* for the *living connection* that the children of Holocaust survivors and their peers are able to feel with the memories of the previous generation. She reflects on the aesthetic possibilities after the Holocaust and explores how to continue telling the stories of the victims or how the children of the survivors - she was a daughter herself - bear the consequences of crimes they did not witness; how trauma is remembered by people with no physical experience of it (Hirsch [2012] 2021: 14, 29). Postmemory implies not having experienced the traumatic event first-hand and a generational transfer from the people who did experience it, which sets it apart from one's own, individual memories, which are also shaped by the groups to which we belong.³

In this article, I will take a close look at some particularly revealing moments in Akerman's films in the search of the family past and apply aesthetic thinking and the ideas on memory that emerged after the Second World War. I will also examine the works of certain feminist theorists who in recent decades have paid special attention to the bodily experience of spectators. The aim is to explore these links and ability of Akerman's films to elicit feelings without explicitly saying or showing anything. I will connect the traumatic event that marked Akerman's life and films with others from the present, in particular exile. The director connects and identifies with these traumatic events in her films and does so from a personal perspective. While deterritorialisation implies a displacement from one territory to another, according to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, it also leads to an expansion of bodies - inherent to the nomadic subjects that I will discuss - where bodies meet and merge with others, forming new connections and destabilising fixed structures (Deleuze & Guattari [1980] 2002; Braidotti [1994] 2000).

I will begin by examining the concentrationary universe of *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (C. Akerman, 1975), I will see how the past manifests itself in the present through embodied memory in *Demain on déménage* (2004), or how this postmemory of an event that the director has not experienced herself but which she carries in her body can be linked to conflicts such as that faced by Mexicans who cross the border into the United States clandestinely in *De l'autre côté* (2002). This would also be present when Akerman traced her Polish roots in the countries of the East after the fall of the Berlin Wall in *D'Est* (1993), when she filmed the racial problems of the American South in *Sud* (1999), or when the problems of the Middle East pervade the mixed feelings provoked by Israel in *Là-bas* (2006) - this theme was also present in a project on the three monotheisms that she did not complete. She said that she felt at home in Palestine and recalled that in Syria she had learned to overcome the fear of orientalism that had been instilled in her as a Jew.

The concentrationary

When Akerman talks about Jeanne Dielman, she stresses the importance of her search for lost rituals and Jewish heritage, from which her and Jeanne's anxiety stemmed. In "The Pajama Interview" with Nicole Brenez, Chantal says that after the loss of her paternal grandfather, she wanted her mother to keep the tradition of the Sabbath and light the candles as is customary at the beginning and end of this day of the week, devoted to rest and prayer (Akerman & Brenez, 2011). *Jeanne Dielman* was born out of a desire to connect with this and understand her mother's silences, containing moments in which the presence of the Holocaust is explicitly manifested. The director also portrays the seclusion of the female lead, a woman who repeatedly performs household chores throughout the three days of her life that are shown in the film. A film that was made by a team of women in the 1970s to claim that they were capable of exercising any cinema-related profession.

The first of the three days of Jeanne Dielman's life begins in a kitchen. A wide shot shows a space in which a table practically occupies the centre of the frame. On the left side, we can see Jeanne, a middle-aged woman, boiling water on a cooker. We do not see a close-up of her face, and her gestures are reminiscent of an automaton, rigorously carrying out household chores. Yet the contained movements of her body are in contrast to the seamless way in which Jeanne is performing her household chores (Picture 1). This could echo the discrepancy between the feeling of emptiness in real lives and the romanticised image of perfect mothers and wives that appeared in American magazines and the media fifteen years after the end of World War II, as noted by Betty Friedan ([1963] 2009: 47). This theorist compared the way American women in the 1950s and 1960s adapted to being "simple housewives" with the dehumanisation of prisoners in camps, who were forced to abandon their own interests and to perform endless, monotonous tasks following

Picture 1. Jeanne Dielman doing housework in the first shot of *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce*



Source: *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (C. Akerman, 1975).

the rhythm of machines or the needs of other people (Friedan [1963] 2009: 368-369).

While we are watching Jeanne Dielman in the kitchen, we hear a doorbell ring. Then, Jeanne unbuttons her apron and dries her hands. She then moves out of the frame and leaves the kitchen, but not before switching off the light in the room. After she leaves, the frontal shot of the room remains, now with the light off, while we hear a door open, followed by the off-camera voice of a man and Jeanne greeting each other. The shot remains in the kitchen, concealing something that we sense from what we hear, without knowing exactly what it might be. We then see them enter Jeanne's bedroom from the hallway, where the static camera remains as darkness falls, until they both leave the room (Picture 2).

Picture 2. Jeanne leaving the bedroom and switching on the hall light, alongside the man we had seen enter with her in the static shot



Source: *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (C. Akerman, 1975).

After Jeanne says goodbye to the man, she returns to the kitchen, where she had left potatoes boiling in a pot, and we watch as she finishes preparing them for dinner: firstly checking that they are ready and that the cooker can be turned off and then placing them in a bain-marie, after draining them. This process is shown in a static, frontal shot that lasts for about 1 minute and 23 seconds, the time spanning Jeanne's daily activity and experienced by the viewer. The robot-like stiffness of her body and repetitiveness of Jeanne's daily gestures and movements bring to mind the repetitiveness of the concentration camps. Marguerite Duras recalled death on a mass scale, the seriality of human beings' names being lost and replaced by numbers (Duras, 1985). Jeanne Dielman's robot-like gestures and contained movements are in turn linked to the self-control that would be expected of a mother and housewife in the Jewish tradition, which become evident in the repetition of everyday actions with small variables that punctuate the film's slowly evolving plot.

Every night, Jeanne has a brief conversation with her son before going to bed (Picture 3). The first time, he asks his mother how she met his father, as he has just read the word

Picture 3. Every night Jeanne has a nightly conversation with her son

Source: *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (C. Akerman, 1975).

“miracle” and it reminds him that his aunt Fernande always said it was a miracle that she had met Jack. Jeanne replies: “yes, he came in 1944 to liberate us”. Jeanne’s story continues: “They tossed chewing gum and chocolates at us, and we threw flowers to them. I met your father after the Americans had left. I was living with my aunts, because my parents were dead”. Jeanne seems to be trying to play down her words and does not dwell on them, although there is some tension in her face.

The Liberation to which Jeanne refers is reminiscent of an incident that Akerman described to Brenez. She remarked that her mother was interned in a concentration camp when she was 15 years old, manufacturing battle supplies. An elderly woman looked after her aunts and mother and would save them some bread to keep them alive. During the death march, when the Nazis saw that they were flanked by the Americans and Russians, they emptied the camps and made the prisoners walk barefoot, or with paper wrapped around their feet. Her mother fainted and her aunts helped her by chewing her food so she could eat. Finally, they were saved by French soldiers who overheard them speaking French, lent them their coats and took them to the Bremen Bridge on the American side. They accompanied them to the hospital and fed them bite by bite, which saved them, as many people died because they started eating too quickly (Akerman and Brenez, 2011). Akerman likens this incident with a passage from Maurice Blanchot’s *The Infinite Conversation* ([1969] 2008), in which the thinker sees the world as a huge graveyard, a counterpoint to the beauty and heroism of nomadism. Akerman then goes on to question the need for heroism (Akerman and Brenez, 2011).

This double prison, i.e. the camps and the one Jeanne has subsequently created for herself as a woman, is conveyed by Akerman through the character’s restrained gestures and the virtual absence of speech, the kind of prison inhabited by the family women from her mother’s generation. Her mother had a number on her arm, but she never spoke of it. Akerman, however, recalled dreaming every night about the camps and

Hitler seated in a big chair, when she was only three years old (Akerman and Kasman, 2015). Hirsch observed that daughters identifying with their mothers had led second-generation artists to seek ways to pass on the physical memory of trauma without harming themselves or retraumatising the memory (Hirsch [2012] 2021: 127). Akerman felt that she had to talk about it because her mother would not say anything, she felt that she had to bear that testimony for her. However, the director recounted that on one occasion, when she presented her film *La Folie Almayer* (2011) in Mexico, after the screening, her mother had told her that while she had her films, she, Natalia, only had Auschwitz. This made her realise that her mother alone could speak about this and, if she had decided not to, then so be it (Akerman and Kasman, 2015).

The past in the present

In Akerman’s search for her family past, you can sense something of the Proustian reminiscences that run through the ritualised form of Proust’s writing of which Akerman is a great student and interpreter. In such reminiscences, something of the present evokes the past which manifests itself, in a different form, in the random moment of remembrance. In one of his courses, Gilles Deleuze refers to *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927) and regards reminiscences as contaminations of instants at separate intervals, where moments from the distant past and the present can collide, regardless of the time distance that separates them (Deleuze, 1983). Evocations of the past can be seen in the connections that emerge between the images captured by Akerman and her family’s past. In turn, the memory evoked by Proust’s madeleine led to the creation of a succession of stories, reminiscences that shaped his work *In Search of Lost Time*, just as Akerman was in search of family time, some of which she did not experience herself, but which helped to shape her present.⁴

This could be seen in the same vein as Didi-Huberman’s interpretation of time and history in Benjamin’s dialectical image. An image that makes things visible and, at the same time, dazzles, for «its possible appearance shows the essential form of the possible link between the Now (instant, lightning) and the Past Time (latency, fossil), a link whose traces will be preserved by the Future (tension, desire). In this sense, Benjamin defines the image as “dialectics at a standstill”» (Benjamin [1982] 2005; Didi-Huberman [2000] 2006: 152). A standstill that Didi-Huberman regards as a caesura, where there is a momentary stillness in the course of the unfolding movement (Didi-Huberman [2000] 2006). Benjaminian time was in turn influenced by Proustian involuntary memory; Proust’s madeleine that evokes his childhood in the present, which in the future is added to Didi-Huberman’s interpretation on the path to the conception of anachronistic time, in which such traces will follow.

Giving her mother a voice through film is also one of Akerman’s great quests. In *Demain on déménage* there is a particularly sad moment when mother and daughter are moved by the discovery

and sight of the journal or *Tagebuch* that the grandmother, called Tosca or Tocha in fiction and Sidonie in real life, wrote in 1920. The mother reads an extract in which the grandmother, murdered in Auschwitz at the age of forty, refers to herself as a woman. She reads, feeling touched, and when she finds her self-portrait in the pages of the journal, she remembers how magnificent her mother, once an artist, was (Picture 4). The boundaries between fiction and reality are blurred by a narrative that mixes elements of a more classical tradition, such as the use of close-ups, with elements frequently found in the filmmaker's work, such as the sustained period of time while the journal is discovered.

Picture 4. An intimate moment between Charlotte and her mother upon finding the journal of her grandmother who died at Auschwitz



Source: *Demain on déménage* (C. Akerman, 2004). Courtesy Les Poissons Volants.

In her essay *Le frigidaire est vide. On peut le remplir*, Akerman transcribes her mother's translation into French of the Polish words found in her grandmother's original journal:

"I am a woman! Therefore, I cannot express all my desires and thoughts out loud. I can only suffer in secret. So, to you, my journal, I would at least like to be able to tell you some of my thoughts, my desires, my sufferings and my joys, and I am sure that you will never betray me, as you are my only confidant!" (Akerman, 2004: 68).

With great emotion, Akerman described how her mother had finally shed a tear when she saw this film, identifying with the character played by Aurore Clément (Akerman, 2004: 73). Drawing on Bracha Ettinger's notion of art as a "transport-station of trauma", Pollock regards the grandmother's journal in the film as a medium that connects with the mother's trauma and helps to transform the traces imprinted on her after the catastrophe (Pollock, 2013: 218; Ettinger, 2020: 330). In the installation entitled *Marcher à côté de mes lacets dans une frigidaire vide* (2004) images of the conversation between Chantal and her mother Natalia about the *Tagebuch* are projected on a double screen, which editor Claire Atherton interprets, from the grandmother's point of view, as a conversation between daughter

and granddaughter through the mother, when Akerman hands the journal to Natalia, asking her to read it and translate it from Polish (Atherton and Roma, 2023: 16).

The conversation was recorded as part of the *making of Demain on déménage* and it was edited by Atherton. They then showed it on two old black and white televisions and filmed it again, seeking to capture the breath of the image. They then constructed a triptych by adding a tulle, onto which the grandmother's paintings and the beginning of the journal were projected (Picture 5), followed by a short letter from Natalia to her mother asking her to protect her, to which Chantal and her sister Sylvaine replied with a letter to their mother written in Polish (Atherton and Roma, 2023: 16). In both *Demain on déménage* and the installation entitled *Marcher à côté de mes lacets dans une frigidaire vide*, Akerman creates a way station to release the mother's trauma, at least momentarily.

Picture 5. Intimate moment between Chantal and her mother with her grandmother's journal



Source: *Marcher à côté de mes lacets dans une frigidaire vide* (C. Akerman, 2004). Fondation Chantal Akerman and Marian Goodman Gallery.

Laura U. Marks revisits Henri Bergson in *Matter and Memory* to explore the idea that memory, both cultural and individual, can draw on the senses and be enacted in bodily sensations in a physical and mental process that requires the participation of the viewer in "attentive recognition" of what they are seeing on the screen (Marks, 2000: 123-124). Memories are inscribed on objects, evoking the physical experience of the senses associated with them (Marks, 2000: 201). In Akerman's film, the grandmother's *Tagebuch* moves towards a haptic experience of the characters, as do the senses. The smell of a flat visited by Charlotte, to be used as a studio, reminds her of Poland; conversely, the smell of the house she is moving out of with her mother evokes the past and memories of nature in a young pregnant woman who is interested in buying it. The smell of the burnt chicken prepared by her mother that night makes Charlotte unable to eat it, as it evokes the memory of the grandmother she has never known, memories and nature; and the smell of the house that the mother and daughter visit in the countryside evokes sadness in Charlotte (Moreno Pellejero, 2023: 267).

For Marks, smells are evidence that the memory process is both cerebral and emotional, something she especially associates with the smell of spices in some Middle Eastern films (Marks, 2000: 125). According to this theorist, smells are associated with different cultures, which the memory mimics, recognises and recreates when it sees them recalled in a film (Marks, 2000: 125). This sense of smell may be elicited in viewers of Akerman's film during the dinner scene in the living room by the thickness of the smoke in the shot of the burnt chicken. Something that would awaken the "embodied memory" in the senses described by Marks, a memory that does not belong to a single individual, but is cultural (Marks, 2000: XIII-XIV). The collectivity of memory is reflected when the old man showing Charlotte the study - a place where she is seeking peace and quiet to write - smells Poland, as does Charlotte (Picture 6).

Picture 6. The smell of a studio reminds Charlotte of Poland



Source: *Demain on déménage* (C. Akerman, 2004). Courtesy Les Poissons Volants.

This embodied memory can be likened with Hirsch's emphasis on the corporeal and psychic effects of postmemory wounds (Hirsch [2012] 2021: 57-58). This thinker feels the sense of trauma symbolised by the mark on the skin of the victims of the Holocaust. A mark that a second-generation daughter might feel on her own skin as she identifies with her mother (Hirsch [2012] 2021: 45). These marks could be inscribed in the bodily experience of the daughters of survivors, much as Charlotte recalls the smell of Poland without ever having experienced it herself. The historian Pierre Nora saw memory as something that is embodied in living groups and is in constant movement, like a blurred memory (Nora [1984] 2008: 200). By this, Nora meant "places of memory" in a material, symbolic and functional sense that could encompass a variety of elements (Nora [1984] 2008: 33).

In *Demain on déménage*, the journal, spaces and smells that are associated with the family past could be regarded as places of memory. Places of memory in the director's innermost being, much as the Proustian madeleine was for the writer. Two distant moments are united by the evocative or accelerating element – to use Deleuze's word (Deleuze, 1983) –, which shifts between the present moment and the past instant, in a tangible, formal

leap in the internal time of the characters who, in turn, set in motion the internal time of Akerman's mother in the memory of the past, which now becomes, albeit differently, present in her own experience.

Proximity mapping

Based on her own life and experiences related to her family's past, Akerman establishes a relationship of proximity in her encounters with others, through the distance from which she captures the people filmed in her wide shots over prolonged periods of time. Catherine Russell applied the notion of *autoethnographies* to experimental films that are based on a first-person perspective, and which can form part of microcultures, historical processes or broader social issues (Russell, 1999). This theorist linked autoethnography with the way in which filmmakers capture the first-person experience of the otherness of reality, creating works that can form part of the cultural memory of a particular moment in history (Russell, 1999; Moreno Pellejero, 2021: 54).

Jan and Adeila Assmann studied this cultural memory, a memory that focuses on fixed points in the past and is preserved through rituals, festivals, or myths –and in this case films– helping to form a collective identity through which cultural practices are preserved (Assmann, J. [1992] 2011). In turn, this memory engages with individual memory, in which the boundaries between the inside and outside of the mind are blurred, where the body reinforces memories through the power of affect (Assmann, A. [1999] 2021). In Akerman's films, the cultural and collective memory of other people is constructed from a first-person perspective in order to connect with the other self. Otherness is reversed in Akerman's first-person approach, engendering a respectful understanding of the person being portrayed and his or her experiences, usually associated with the deterritorialisation with which the director identified.

As an ethnographer, Akerman rekindles a kind of involuntary Proustian memory that she has not experienced first-hand, but which she feels in her body as the daughter of survivors. In *De l'autre côté*, the gap formed by the fence separating the United States from Mexico, filmed in sideways tracking shots, or the night-time surveillance of a Border Patrol camera monitoring clandestine Mexican immigrants crossing the desert at night, are in stark contrast to the hospitality of the Mexican families who welcome Akerman into their home (Picture 7). A mother who has lost her son (Picture 8), another who has not heard from his brother since he crossed to the other side, or the man who lost his son after the paid guide abandoned his group in the desert. On the US side, a local couple believes that Mexicans bring smallpox with them.

Theorist Anita Leandro recalls that in the summer of 2002 the Israeli government erected a 700 km barrier in the West Bank under the pretext of curbing terrorist attacks in Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory, which was the same year that

Picture 7. The Border Patrol camera monitors illegal migrants from Mexico crossing the desert on their way to the United States



Source: *De l'autre côté* (C. Akerman, 2002).

Picture 8. A Mexican mother describes losing her son when he crossed into the United States



Source: *De l'autre côté* (C. Akerman, 2002).

Akerman filmed the US-Mexico border in the middle of the desert between Agua Prieta and Douglas. The researcher associates the two borders with Akerman's diametrically opposed stance to Zionist geopolitics and its drive for territorial expansion (Leandro, 2018). While filming the wall at night in *De l'autre côté*, Akerman and her crew came across a group of eight people crossing the desert after being abandoned by their guide; the team provided them with accommodation, food and drink. One scene shows the group eating together; at that moment, a man thanks them for their kind gesture and reads out something he has written about the reasons why someone might decide to cross the border clandestinely (Picture 9).

Like Emmanuel Levinas, the director places herself on the side of otherness, regarding the other as the face for which something can be given without imposing oneself, with the face being the place where the human essence can be reclaimed (Levinas [1961] 2002: 232). We are brought closer to these people by the prolonged periods she spends capturing their faces. This

Picture 9. A man from a group trying to cross the border reads about why a person might decide to cross it



Source: *De l'autre côté* (C. Akerman, 2002).

proximity is also reflected in the distance created by the wide shots that respect their privacy, taking us, the spectators, to an alien place where we can listen to the stories of the people we encounter. (Moreno Pellejero, 2024: 183). Other here means someone other than the director or the viewer, and a subject for him or herself; likewise the other is also in the filmmaker herself or in the viewers from an external point of view, while they are subjects for themselves.

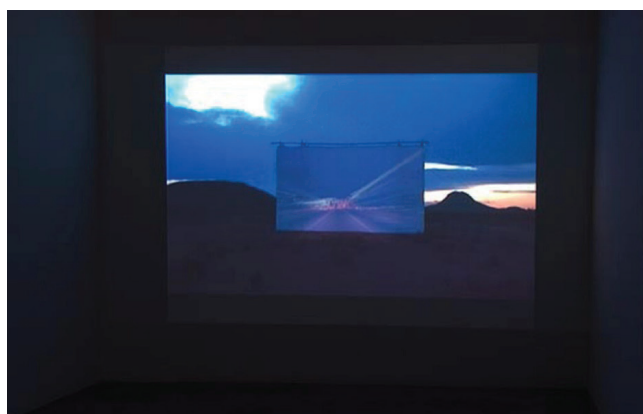
At the end of the film, a frontal tracking shot of a highway shows the road to Los Angeles from inside a car, while Sonia Wieder-Atherton's cello and Akerman's voiceover tell the story of David and his mother, who left for the United States, the former in search of the latter. The footage from the Border Patrol's camera monitoring Mexicans crossing into the United States and the final shot of the road are both reused in Akerman's installation entitled *Une voix dans le désert* (2002). The director set up a ten-metre screen between American and Mexican mountains on the border in the Arizona desert, where she projected these images, one on the front and the other on the back, depending on the side of the border from which the screen was being viewed.

The screening took place outdoors for 8 hours and 8 nights, where Akerman's narration alternated successively between Spanish and English with a strong French accent. As the sequences and readings are repeated, time marches on in the Arizona desert in which the installation stands, shifting from the darkness of night, to the dawn, to the light of early morning; creating an impressionistic work in real time for anyone who stands before this ephemeral piece, the sharpness of the image fading as the day unfolds. While in the opening images shot from the car, the road looks like a crossing that joins the two sides of the border and recedes into the background of the desert, as the image blurs with the first rays of sunlight, the white screen becomes clearer and the wall, where the stories of the Mexican families have been lost, grows ever more present. The Mexican border may be redolent of other present-day walls and conflicts.

Once filmed, this footage was included in the installation entitled *From the Other Side* (2002), which consisted of three

pieces: the first was a video monitor showing the final sequence of the film, the second consisted of eighteen monitors showing various shots from the film, and the third was a recording of the large-screen projection of *Une voix dans le désert* (Picture 10). Rosi Braidotti had used the concept of *nomadic subjects* to refer to subjects who were able to expand their thinking in the affirmation and recognition of their identities and differences (Braidotti [1994] 2000).

Picture 10. A screen in the desert showing the road to Los Angeles while Akerman's voiceover tells the story of a family in the installation *Une voix dans le désert* (2002)



Source: Third piece of *From the Other Side* (C. Akerman, 2002). Fondation Chantal Akerman and Marian Goodman Gallery.

Nomadic subjects emphasise the need for action, at the various levels of identity, of subjectivity and of differences (Braidotti [1994] 2000: 189-202). The nomadic subject implies a shifting and expanding capacity to “become”, in constant change. This thinker recognises the movement of nomadic subjects by affirming the positive nature of difference, in its multiplicity and continuous transformation, relinquishing fixed identities “in favour of a flow of multiple becomings” (Braidotti [1994] 2000: 131). The movement and expansion of nomadic subjects is also present in Akerman's personal cinema, in her searches for her family's past or in the affirmation of her sexuality, and also in her prominent position as a female filmmaker. Like the nomadic subjects theorised by Braidotti, Akerman is in a constant state of movement and expansion, connecting her to the people she encounters in her films about exiles and, in turn, to her viewers through her films.

A physiological postmemory that becomes collective

It could be said that Akerman's films are the materialisation of the postmemory of what the director feels in her body and is seeking to understand, that which has been transmitted to her through the gestures of the women she has seen in her childhood, the objects, the silences, the spaces and smells she encounters and which evoke that past that manifests itself in her present. That past can become the concentrationary or the movement of deterritorialisation that we, the people on the other side of the screen, can live from our own experiences.

Influenced by Bergson's ideas and reflections on the subject, and by psychological and philosophical experiments in the early 19th century that considered vision to be a physiological effect whose perception would be subjective in nature, predating the interest in “embodied spectatorship” or “haptic visuality”, Marks believes that memory materialises in the senses (Bergson [1896] 1949: 109; Marks, 2000: 123). The senses are awakened in Akerman's films by the extended shots as we observe Jeanne Dielman's mechanical and restrained gestures as she carries out household chores, by the grandmother's journal and the smells in *Demain on déménage*, or by the stories told in *De l'autre côté*. These elements are woven into Akerman's films, achieving a ritual-form, capable of awakening a physical memory from the past, not only the past that the director has experienced, but also the past that she has not lived first-hand, but which is latent in her present, much as it will be in her future. The ritual-form of her films creates a medium that stirs the physiological memories of her audience, which are evoked by what is shown on the screen and how it relates to our own life experiences, generating a kind of collective and subjective postmemory at the same time.

Marks relates the evocation of the senses triggered by memory to the concept of *mimesis*; however, rather than viewing it as imitation in the manner of the Greek philosophers, she is closer to Benjamin's way of thinking, seeing it as something that awakens the material presence of the other, in a relationship of indexicality –related to a state of affairs– rather than in an iconic relationship –based on similarity– (Marks, 2000: 115). By this, Benjamin is referring to the capacity of nature and, especially, of human beings to produce similarities, as occurs in the mimetic behaviour that the philosopher observes in children's play, where the child not only imitates other people, but can also imitate a train or a windmill (Benjamin [1933] 2007: 213-214).

Marks' interest in *mimesis* is also influenced by Bergson, who believed that through the repetition of certain brain phenomena, old perceptions could be prolonged, leading to the possibility of memories returning in the present moment (Bergson [1896] 1949: 254), and by Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* ([1946] 1996), for whom *mimesis* requires a response and a dynamic relationship between the listener or reader and the story or text; so every time the story is retold, the senses recreate it in the body of the listener/reader (Marks, 2000: 111-116). Thus, *mimesis* is linked to the representation of the detail of an object in such a way that it can transmit a sensation that transcends the screen and enters the viewer's body, who remembers the bodily sensation produced by what he or she is seeing and recognises, reawakening that sensation through a physical memory, which Marks particularly associates with the experience of touch (Marks, 2000: 111-115). This notion of *mimesis* being linked to the flow of the senses and memories in a dynamic movement creates a new experience for spectators when viewing the film –with *mimesis* no longer regarded as a mere copy of reality–.

This physical experience of memory is in line with the

postmemory of the second generation of survivors theorised by Hirsch ([2012] 2021). In what she calls “memory structures”, Hirsch argues that people less directly affected by trauma can connect with the postmemory generation. (Hirsch [2012] 2021: 66). Second-generation literature, art, autobiographies or testimonies may seek to depict “the lasting effects of what it means to live closely with the grief, depression and dissociation experienced by survivors of impending historical trauma”, which may be further explored through a series of mediating structures and connect with people who are not themselves part of the second generation (Hirsch [2012] 2021: 61, 64).

Akerman's films can thus serve as a kind of place of memory, to borrow Nora's term ([1984] 2008: 33), both for people who have a family link to the trauma of the Shoah and for those who are touched by it because it affects the community in which they live, even if they have not suffered it themselves. In turn, these places allow the spotlight to be shone on spaces commonly forgotten by scholars of history, thinking or memory structures that are often “masculinised”. Here, domestic spaces and the commonplace also become enclaves of memory that stem from that which is private and are inscribed in Akerman's films and their ritual forms through which experiences are transmitted to the viewers. For viewers who keep watching Akerman's films, things that are not visible to the naked eye can become visible, connecting with the traumatic past for a moment in the present; showing us a sensitive perspective that is also political in its relationship of proximity through the distance that is created from the people who we see; in the physical experience that awakens the memory of our own experiences, what we can identify with or the encounter with the diversity of ourselves.

Endnote

This research was awarded first prize in the 35th CAC Awards for research in audiovisual communication.

Notes

1. Pollock and Silverman used the term *concentrationary* put forward by Jean Cayrol, a surrealist poet and political deportee to Mauthausen, to refer to a new art form born out of the experiences in concentration camps. They explored it again in the project *Concentrationary Memories* and the *Politics of Representation*, with which they set out to rethink the relationship between different aesthetic and political movements that emerged after the Second World War, when images of the German concentration camps surfaced and the testimonies of some of the survivors were uncovered. Theorists also note that the term *concentrationary* was coined by David Rousset, a political deportee from Buchenwald, who examined the system of the *concentrationary universe*, something that Hannah Arendt further explored in her analysis of the “demon” in 1951, one of the after-effects of that universe. They also drew on the work of Giorgio Agamben and Paul Virilio, who suggested that the camp and the war were matrices of post-war society, whose cultural forms and subjectivities were symptomatic of the concentrationary imaginary. See Pollock, G. and Silverman, M. (2015). *Concentrationary Imaginaries: Tracing Totalitarian Violence in Popular Culture*. London, New York. I. B. Tauris, pp. XIII-XIX.
2. Studies on Akerman's films link memory to the experience of family trauma and the director's Jewish origins, without going so far as to explore the question of memory and postmemory. The monographs by Iyonna Margulies (1996), Veronica Pravadelli (2000) and Renata Otero (2007) stand out. Additionally, the theorist Griselda Pollock (2013) links memory with objects and the possibilities provided by art to connect with trauma, which she observes in Akerman's *Demain on déménage* (2004). For her part, Anita Leandro (2017) highlighted the Belgian director's ability to create her own memory through her films. Similarly, in a comparative analysis between *Demain on déménage* and the installation entitled *Marcher à côté de ses lacets dans un frigidaire vide*, produced by Akerman in 2004, the researcher Maud Jacquin (2004) highlights the porosity of the narrative in both works, which transforms the dominant conceptions of storytelling, identity and memory.
3. Maurice Halbwachs ([1968] 2004) saw collective memory as a social phenomenon, since individual memory and memories based on individual experiences are influenced by the teaching received from the groups to which we belong, to which we may be linked by family, religion, social class or a particular community. This in turn helps to build people's identity, culture and history. Meanwhile, Paul Ricoeur ([2000] 2003) questioned how something that is absent is represented in the present. In an effort to answer this question, he observes abuses of memory through commemorations that impose remembrance. He also explores the threefold attribution of memory: “to self, to close relations, and to distant others” (p. 193). In this context, the theorist postulates a politics of just memory based on responsible and ethical remembrance, and also considers the possibility of an eventual right to be forgotten.
4. At a conference where she was invited to talk about Proust's influence on her films, Akerman recalled how her cousin always talked about Proust whenever she visited the family in Brussels. Akerman first read Proust at the age of 15, initially reading “The Prisoner”, volume 5 of *In Search of Lost Time* (Proust [1927] 1980). Reading this had a profound impact on her, as it introduced her to the world of homosexuality and class relations at a time when she was unable to talk about it.

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Herta Herzog y “La experiencia prestada”. La fundación de los estudios de comunicación y audiencias

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The Memory of communicative research: Herta Herzog and the origins

It is no coincidence that the “Comunicación y género” collection, from Comunicación Social Ediciones y Publicaciones, begins with a volume dedicated to Herta Herzog. The title, *Herta Herzog y “La experiencia prestada”. La fundación de los estudios de comunicación y audiencias*, edited by Leonarda García-Jiménez, Amparo Huertas-Bailén and Teresa Vera-Balanza in 2023, reflects the editors’ objective: to incorporate women researchers into the canon from which they have been erased. To fix an injustice that, in the words of Teresa Vera, must be faced up, reinforcing the subject, which, in addition to restoring due recognition, “nourishes the genealogies” (p. 67), “generates models and grants tradition and authority to the entire collective” (p. 67). The success of this volume is, therefore, to bridge a gap, a systematic unstitching that the androcentric publishing industry applies by default, and to recover the trail of a pivotal figure in communication studies.

This is the first translation into Spanish of the article “On Borrowed Experience. An Analysis of Listening to Daytime Sketches” (1941), which establishes the theory of uses and gratifications, one of the most fertile approaches to communication. In addition, this is the first complete work dedicated to the pioneer Herta Herzog in Spanish language. Even though – or precisely because of this – in life, Herzog “crossed all geographical and epistemic borders”, “her figure however does not withstand the passing of the years and ends up disappearing from reference books and manuals, something that is common in the cases of women researchers” (p. 75), as Leonarda García points out. Although in her lifetime, Herta Herzog enjoyed some recognition for her work, seen “as a milestone among members of the Bureau of Applied Social

Research at Columbia University” (p. 95) –formerly the Office of Radio Research (ORR) at Princeton University–, she achieved academic and professional success – “becoming the ‘most powerful woman in American advertising’” (p. 10) – and even won an award – the Market Research Council Hall of Fame –, her ambition in the theoretical approaches and her brilliant observation and listening skills were not enough to give her a place in the history of communication theory. Completing her first doctoral thesis (1933) in a new field, audience analysis, was not enough to keep her in the canon. Neither was it enough that she had published the first formulation of the theory of uses and gratifications, opening the path that would mark “the canon of communication research in the following decades” (p. 60). Or that she led the first mass experiment (2,700 surveys) in Austria. Or that she articulated quantitative research with qualitative research, giving priority to in-depth interviews and focus groups; or that she went into the kitchens of American housewives to place them as research subjects and ask them about their radio preferences. Or that, essentially, she altered the way of approaching research, moving from who to why, at the dawn of a new discipline. The lack of recognition that she already experienced in life, with her colleagues, contributed to this. Hadley Cantril ignored her as the author of the classic *The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic* (1940), Paul Lazarsfeld accused her of appropriating an idea supposedly from Cantril, Robert Merton was credited with creating the focus group; turning Herta Herzog into a “researcher silenced and subsumed by other –male– leaderships” (p. 58).

Amparo Huertas wonders in the biographical chapter, “what she would have said about what was written” (p. 51). Herzog did not leave autobiographical texts. But an interview, translated in this volume, conducted by the professor of Communication at the University of Delaware, Elizabeth Perse, together with

a biographical note signed by her stepdaughter Lotte Bailyn, also published in this book, provides us with valuable data for a glimpse into Herzog's attitude towards his erasure and that of her female colleagues.

Already in the 1930s, the ORR in Princeton had more than thirty researchers on its team; however, despite their participation in the projects, the articles appeared without their names. We have mentioned the case of Cantril-Herzog, but the case of Cantril-Gaudet, in the same study, was also talked about. Another "competent and trustworthy" woman (p. 45) deleted as the author of a study she had done. Or that of Lazarsfeld-Jahoda. With some ambivalence, Herzog's colleagues recognised her responsibility and creativity. As Huertas recalls, Lazarsfeld himself places her as "a member of the management team [of ORR and Bureau] from the first years (2001: 273)" (p. 45) and they chose her work, *The borrowed experience* translated here, as the insignia of the ORR, being a turning point, and the spearhead of its new methodology.

Herzog's reaction was not to focus on herself, as she said herself to Perse, "I'm not that interested in myself yet" (p. 172). Herzog preferred to focus on her interlocutors, "brilliant people" (p. 52) of the time, but also ordinary people. Perhaps for the same reason that she did not claim to be a feminist, she also did not consider herself "a good team coordinator" (p. 46). Herzog focused on remembering experiences and not positions. This volume takes on the task of restoring her memory, contrasting her memories and legacy with that of her colleagues. The result is a work in which readers will be able to read in Herzog what she herself did not see, paraphrasing Leonarda García, who rightly places emphasis on the invitation made by the self-proclaimed "social psychologist" (p. 188) to the subalterns, in a milestone of cultural studies: "Herzog reads in these women [the American housewives who listen to radio dramas, whom she made subjects of her research] what they themselves do not see" (p. 80).

In short, this collective essay sheds light on the founding moment of communication studies, within the nascent sociology and psychology, to offer a remastered overview of the interdisciplinarity of a group environment, in which women also mattered. With an explicit feminist perspective, writing from a situated position, the authors of this polyphonic volume stitch together the loose, blurred, erased points of a particularly fruitful period. To illuminate the paths and lines of continuity that, only through a relational construction of experience, will allow us to advance as a discipline; far from making a figure exceptional, rather, reinforcing the patriarchal perspective that only allows the chosen ones, rare, tireless and self-sacrificing specimens, to remain.

Like this text, Herzog is not an exception, but rather – as Esperanza Herrero points out – "the result of a continued and persistent research effort" (p. 99). In coherence with this, this book builds a bridge between the author, her work and her receptions, to illustrate the "richness of –her– creative and intellectual process" (p. 99), thus filling the triple void that for

more than half a century made the author, the work and their joint history disappear. Restoring her place in the necessary dialogue of the discipline. With her voice, Herzog bequeaths us the voices of the ordinary women of her generation and helps us understand their motivations in their interaction with the media, notably with the newly established radio. Opening fissures to the correlative assignment of sexes and spaces. The public is introduced into the kitchens of housewives and, based on the three types of gratifications proposed, Herzog predisposes us to listen. With the reparation of the author's exclusion also comes that of the women locked in private spaces. With Herzog, and as she herself did in her retirement, we return to the origin, thus gathering new tools for current challenges.

*Cómo dar una buena clase.**Estrategias, experiencias didácticas y desafíos emocionales*

Salvador Gómez & José Cabeza

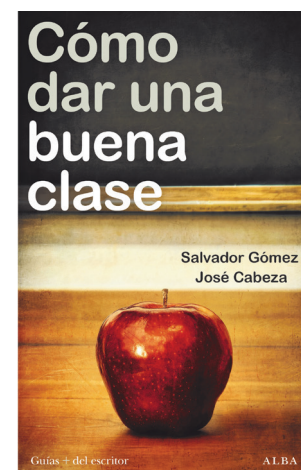
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Contributing to teaching

Knowledge is power and, among many other things, this Baconian dictum forms the basis for the authority of teachers who share their expertise in subjects with students who are craving stimulation. In the past, university students revered professors who distinguished themselves by meticulously preparing their lectures, not confusing the desire to encourage with a desire to entertain, irony with mockery, or assertiveness with authoritarianism. However, in today's society, these boundaries seem to be blurred and teachers are often more afraid of being labelled as arrogant than as buffoons under the harsh lens of surveys. Without question, there is a large grey area between these extreme styles, but nevertheless, it never hurts to have a helpful guide to broaden your knowledge and to reassert the kind of teacher you are (or want to be). And if such a guide just so happens to also be an enjoyable read, encouraging you to reflect - without feeling sorry for yourself or beating yourself up - with anecdotes and advice on how to keep sight of the things that matter, then it is an essential resource.

The book entitled *Cómo dar una buena clase* (How to teach a good class), written by professors Salvador Gómez and José Cabeza, rescues the *castaway* teachers and brings them back onto dry land with apt words and chapters headed by passages from the novel *Robinson Crusoe*. It does not provide any recipes for successfully educating the graduates of tomorrow, but it does guide the reader in engaging in much needed and, at times, solitary reflection. "That is no small thing" (p.19), the authors remark on this point, steering clear of the stilted tone widely found in many such publications. Thus, this offering by Gómez and Cabeza transcends the strictly academic, uniting colleagues from all disciplines by that most human of instincts: doubt; continuously questioning oneself. Against this backdrop,

it is understandable that right from the off, in the introduction to the book, fundamental questions are posed like "what are classes for?", "how do you teach a good class?", and, above all, "what do you need to teach a good class?". Needless to say, answers are not immediately apparent, but you begin to grasp them as you realise the importance of humility, planning, well-focused leadership and resisting the temptation to turn every opportunity to be heard into a "black hole of concepts" (p. 60).

One thing made clear in this essay published by Alba is that, even if we abandon the traditional lecture format, it is difficult to hold the attention of students in a sea of screens. Not even the storytelling techniques painstakingly studied by people who attend all manner of courses on innovation in teaching are an infallible formula or a guarantee of success (if this can be measured without paying attention to the misleading number of passes in a subject), regardless of the fact that shining the spotlight on storytelling helps to highlight the resources that we teachers have to connect with our audiences. "Are you going to contribute something to us?", the authors tell us a student asked during a class presentation. And although the protagonist of this story would soon discover that the question was only motivated by a selfish desire to have the subject notes in advance, the young woman stirred the professor's emotions briefly, prompting him to remind the golden rule that you should strive to ensure that "students are better going out than they were coming in (...) And, of course, you must improve too" (p. 40).

Two authors wrote the book that is the subject of this review, but they show a unity of style, purpose and perspectives on the most important aspects of the fundamental task of teaching. This is not to say that Gómez and Cabeza feel the same way about the various topics that they discuss, and this is perhaps one of the most appealing aspects of the book. For example, the authors disagree on how permissive to be with students who

try to enter the classroom when the lesson has already begun, and although they do not settle the issue of who is right in their reasoning or who puts forward the best arguments (this is not the aim), this dilemma is a perfect illustration of how preparing a lesson involves making certain individual decisions, being consistent with oneself and learning from experience as we learn the value of prolonged silences to hush any murmurings while delivering an explanation. We simply have to be aware of what works for us at any given moment and try to change the things that do not work, because justified reaffirmation of some of the traditional methods we follow is not the same as chalk-stained conformism.

The 150-plus pages cover a wide range of topics, from the use of irony as a resource to recounting anecdotes that provide a glimpse of - and help to downplay - occasional moments of weariness or despair. At no point, however, does it appear that this writing process is the product of two voices venting their feelings, but rather of long, fruitful and relaxed conversations between two professional colleagues. Thus, this book has little or nothing in common with a self-help guide, despite the fact that many of the headings serve to motivate and inspire, even including emotional reflections that provide the reader with a reassuring dose of understanding. Far from being seeking to strengthen and boost self-esteem, this book, which is highly recommended, encourages self-analysis when it decries, among other practices, the irresponsibility of prioritising the audience's entertainment over their education, due to "the supposed uselessness of lectures and burnout they cause" (p.99). Is there a need for innovation? Of course, but it must be meaningful.

Finally, in the section entitled "After many classes...", the book celebrates the much-maligned ability to be caring in teaching. Through 20 tips to avoid "upset" in the classroom, a healing approach is suggested with insights that remind us that, although the teacher's authority is diminished outside the physical boundaries of the classroom, his or her responsibility exceeds those boundaries. This, fortunately, "is also nice" (p. 155), and thanks to Gómez y Cabeza's frank approach, words that should become a mantra for teachers have now been committed to paper. Go ahead and read it.

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