

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

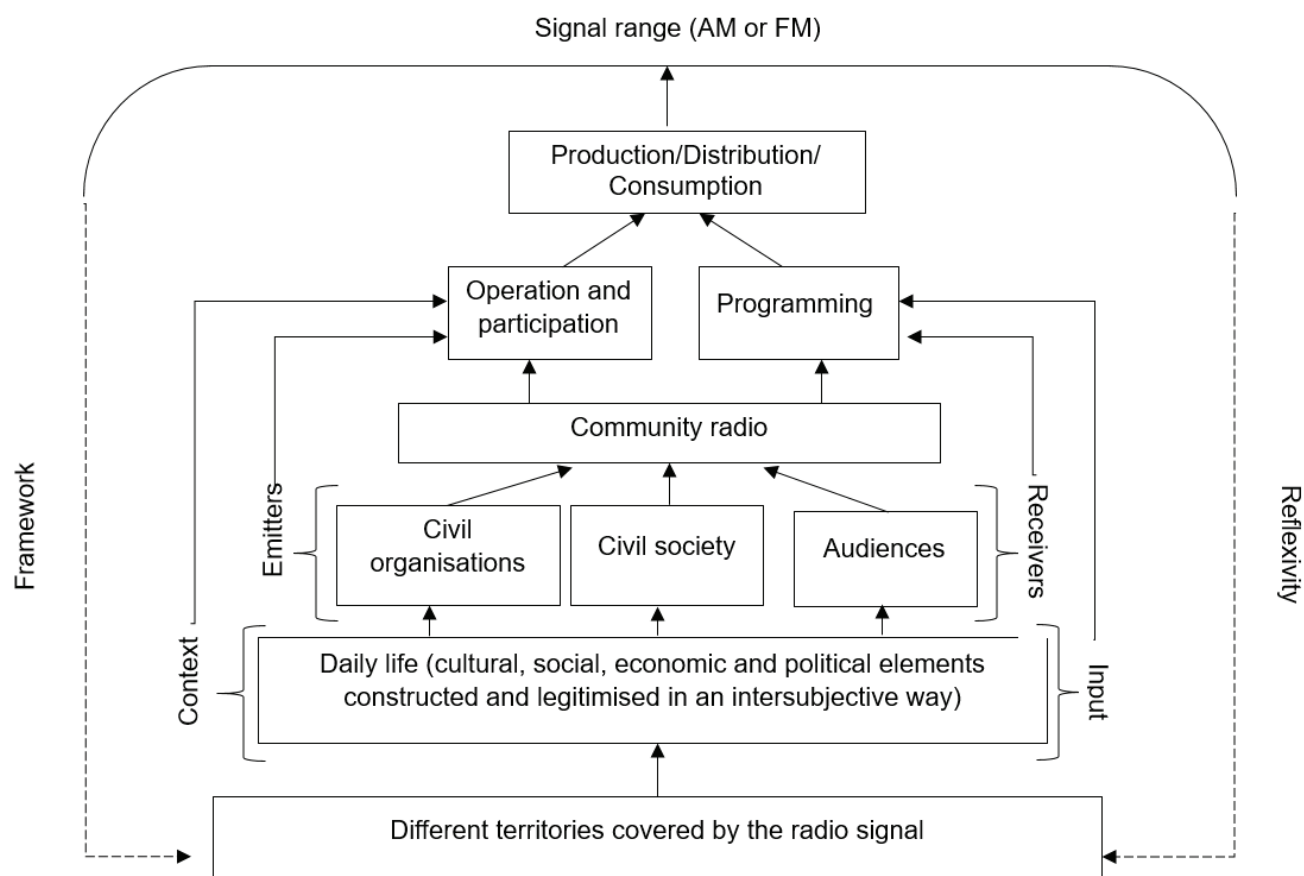
Being subaltern and counterhegemonic, community radio operates under a communication model that is disruptive to the centralised, unidirectional and vertical scheme that characterises private media (Wolf, 1987). Paying attention to the communication model is crucial as it allows us to see the horizontality 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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