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Risk, Crisis and Conflict Communication

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Introduction

We are pleased to present issue 48 of *Quaderns del CAC* which has devoted the monograph section to **Risk, Crisis, and Conflict Communication**. The exceptional circumstances of recent years comprising different types of events that have shaken the world, such as climate change, natural and industrial disasters, wars, political and social conflicts, pandemics, economic crises, and the forced displacement of people, amongst others, have aroused scientific interest from different disciplines in explaining the nature, origin, causes, and consequences of them.

Research on communication in this area has been extensive, especially in setting out what the role of communication is in these events. We live in a communication ecosystem in which the presence alongside each other of traditional, digital, and social media creates new dynamics and challenges for communication and culture, especially in terms of the management of crisis, risk, and conflict communication. In this issue we offer significant contributions that address various angles of the topics in question.

The Guest Writer article is from **Bernardo Diaz Nosty**, a journalist and researcher with an extensive career in academia at first the Complutense University of Madrid and then as a professor of journalism at the University of Malaga. He has devoted the last few years to a broad research project on female journalists in the Spanish Civil War. As a result of this project, he has recently published the book *Periodistas extranjeras en la Guerra Civil* [Foreign Female Journalists in the Civil War] (Renacimiento, 2022). This research has also delivered the article "Barcelona in the eyes of foreign journalists during the Spanish Civil War"**,** in which, as well as documenting the great number of these reporters, forgotten by historiography, who were active there, he analyses their work. The article shows how the work of female journalists differs from the stereotypes of the dominant narrative by also introducing the everyday suffering away from the front lines, descriptions of the bombardment of the civilian population, and war crimes which so resonate with us today. He centres his analysis on examining the works on Barcelona published by these journalists. Works that testify to this different manner of recounting events and trace the course of the city in the period prior to the end of the war.

Jordi Farré Coma offers an exceedingly timely conceptual systematisation at a time of blossoming interest in climate change, which demands close examination of the role of communication. In his article "Communicating climate change: from disaster to risk", he makes a transdisciplinary contribution that stresses the essential position of communication, whilst addressing the scope of the concepts of risk, crisis, disaster, and emergency in a comparison of the double issue of risk and communication in climate change. This work is an essential starting point for any research into risk communication, disaster communication, environmental communication, and climate change communication.

In "Is Peace Journalism Possible in Indian Journalism? Perceptions of a Select Few Indian Journalists", **C. S. H. N. Murthy** address the localisation of the concept of Peace Journalism in Indian journalism. The article contextualises the traditional practices of peace set out in ancient Indian spiritual texts and compares them with the views on peace journalism of a prominent group of journalists. The study highlights the differences in the Indian and Western concepts of Peace Journalism and asserts the impossibility of applying it in the Indian media ecosystem, despite the long tradition of peace and non-violence.

Jaume Doménech-Beltrán analyses the Spanish government's COVID-19 communication strategy from the perspective of crisis communication. In his article "Crisis communication and thematic transfer by the Spanish government during COVID-19", he analyses the content of the media appearances by the Technical Management Committee and the President of the Spanish Government in the early weeks of the State of Alarm. In comparing the results with the leading theories in risk communication he identifies deficiencies. The study also identifies the strong preference for certain themes over others and the differences between the range of topics covered by the Committee and the President. The work establishes that treating the pandemic as a war was one of the cornerstones of the Government's communication strategy.

Sergi Xaudiera studies the infodemic, the mass phenomenon of disinformation that was unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The article "Infodemic management in Catalonia during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic" focuses on the management of the problem in Catalonia where, as elsewhere around the world, it posed an added problem in the difficult fight against the virus. The article tracks the various aspects (detection, verification, response, and evaluation) that cause institutions objective difficulties in the fight against disinformation in the midst of a crisis of such magnitude.

Gemma Palà examines the role of journalists in the coverage of socio-political conflicts. In her article "The news production process in confluence with political and social conflicts. The case of TV3 journalists and Catalonia's pro-sovereignty process", she tackles the specific case of journalists in the Catalan public television broadcaster in relation to the pro-soverignty process using framing theory and production process theory. The article presents the findings gained from interviews with news directors and journalists on the different topics involved, such as access to sources, the plurality of actors, professional independence, the foregrounding of conflict, the criteria used for prioritisation, and narrative challenges.

The Articles section commences with the "Audiences and streamers on Twitch: consumption and production patterns in the Spanish-speaking world" study from **Adrián Padilla Molina and Celina Navarro.** Their article examines the impact of the Twitch platform which has become a highly efficient tool for capturing an audience using live user-generated content. The study analyses the activity of the Spanish-language streamer community and identifies penetration, consumption cycles, production cycles, and the differences between amateur and professional creators who garner the most interest from the public.

Joan Ferrés Prats, Alba Ambròs Pallarès, and Mònica Figueras Maz contribute to the field of media literacy in their article "EduMediaTest, a tool in the service of media competence. Project report, results and recommendations". The work presents a tool that has been designed to assess media literacy in students aged 14 to 18 and, additionally, is a training tool. The article collates results from seven European countries that validate the effectiveness of the tool. The piece also presents an in-depth look at the results from Catalonia and concludes with a series of recommendations for the European Commission.

Ariadna Santos, Marta Narberhaus, and Ariadna Fernández-Planells discuss the creation of Instagram content from a gender perspective in their article "Young People, Feminism and Self-representation on Instagram: challenges and recommendations". This piece analyses the self-representation practices of young women on Instagram whilst contrasting them with their feminist identity. The analysis reveals a series of contradictions between the feminist discourses of the young women in the study and the self-representation constructed by the content they create themselves.

The Articles section concludes with **Floriane Bardini**'s piece on the accessibility of audiovisual content. Her article "Audio description, subjectivity and film experience" presents the results from a reception study that assesses the effectiveness of three film audio description styles for people who have a visual impairment. The data certify that better results are achieved when interpretative audio description styles are used compared to the conventional audio description style.

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Barcelona in the eyes of foreign journalists during the Spanish Civil War

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Abstract
Historiography has significantly neglected the presence of foreign journalists in the Spanish Civil War, therefore ignoring an account of the conflict which includes nuances which are clearly differentiated from the dominant narrative. Nearly two hundred women, however, left testimony of their journey through the Iberian Peninsula, more interested in the effects of war than in the military culture. Most of them passed through Barcelona and focused, among other aspects, on life in the city, the aerial bombardment of the civilian population, the bloody events of May 1937 and the Republicans' departure for France.

Keywords
Women, Journalists, Barcelona, Civil War, Foreign Press.

Resum
La historiografia ha descuidat de manera significativa la presència de les periodistes estrangeres en la Guerra Civil, obviant per aquest motiu un relat del conflicte amb matisos clarament diferenciats de la narrativa dominant. Prop de dues-centes dones, no obstant això, van deixar testimoniatge del seu pas per la península Ibèrica, més interessades en els efectes de la guerra que en la cultura militar. La majoria d'elles van passar per Barcelona i es van fixar, entre altres aspectes, en la vida a la ciutat, els bombardejos aeris sobre la població civil, els successos sagnants de maig del 1937 i la sortida republicana cap a França.

Paraules clau
Dones, periodistes, Barcelona, Guerra Civil, premsa estrangera.

There were many more foreign journalists who travelled to Spain during the Civil War to report on the conflict. Anglo-Saxon historiography has limited their presence to a small number, made up mainly of British and Americans, even acknowledging that the confrontation had been the most mediatic in history up to that time. The mechanism through which the work of foreign journalists is limited to exceptional terms is similar to the predominance of the masculine in the contents of the very abundant bibliography on the war. The texts that include onomastic indexes allow us to see that, among the most reputable historians, the leading role of women barely accounts for between two and four percent of that which was documented.[1]

In a recent study[2] it was possible to verify, in documented form, with biographical profiles and basic hemerography, that 183 journalists, photojournalists, press collaborators and a few memoirists travelled to the country during the war and left written and photographic evidence of their experience. In many cases, their information and comments also fed shortwave radio broadcasts to Europe and America from both sides.

Even though a considerable number of foreign journalists have been identified, there is a more relevant fact in the investigation: the existence of a story which is different from that which was dominant. In other words, a historiographic filtering of the stories reported, in which the military operations, war machines and political debate are not so much looked at, rather the heart of the society, to the suffering of the most vulnerable, those on whom the singular humanitarian bankruptcy of the years 1936 to 1939 fell. Their chronicles and reports focused more on the daily suffering of the rear guards, where life was not only difficult, but also permanently at risk.

In the chronicles of foreign women, there is a singular concern for aspects that, seen 85 years later, refer to the now normal description of *war crimes*, alluding to practices such as the bombing of the defenceless civilian population, something unknown until then, which the Norwegian journalist Gerda Grepp (1907-1940) described as "vulgar murders".[3] The deceased did not carry weapons, nor uniforms, nor were they heroes. What is more, the image used until then against wars – endless rows of white crosses on battlefields – was now very different, according to the Swedish woman Barbro Alving (1909-1987), who discovered the new picture of the warlike anomaly in the morgues full of corpses of women and children.[4]

> *Limbs detached from torn bodies, headless, like in an anatomy class. On a higher table are two little boys, one a seven-year-old with his head smashed in, probably still with his trouser pockets full of all his things. Next to him, a coffin that is less than a metre long, of a six-month-old baby, killed by a blow or a fall, without blood, who still looks handsome. And the women! They lie in a long, uneven line,*

their clothes pulled up and their black hair sticking to the blood; one has a completely smashed face. You don't want to see any more and you want to scream loudly. A boy, covered in a bloody cloth, is missing his head. A young man, who retains all the southern beauty of his face, seems to be sleeping, lying down with his head to one side. And yet, the most dramatic thing is not the wounds, the mutilations and the blood. It is the tattered clothes of women who have nothing to do with war. Women who could be scrubbing the floor, doing the dishes, tending to a child, gossiping, nothing worthy of such a gruesome death.[5]

The culture of war is based on values of hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, despite the large presence of women journalists and alternative stories, this may be the reason why the historiographical sediment ignores or overshadows the role of women and that of other sectors of the population – the elderly and children – far from the dominant centrality. Even so, there was a female reading that focused on the effects, on the fatal consequences of the war on the entire population, which was, by far, compared to previous war scenarios, the one that gathered the largest number of women. A collective story, highly defined by the presence of journalists related, as a general rule, to the Republican postulates, compared to the very scarce numbers in the areas of the country dominated by the rebels.

Barcelona through the feminine eye

Through the stories of these foreign women, you can follow the entire sequence of the war, from its beginnings to its final moments, including the Republican exodus and exile, as well as the beginnings of the dictatorship and repression. Barcelona is, without doubt, one of the central scenarios on which the chronicles and reports were based, and a vital step for most of the journalists who travelled to Spain between 1936 and 1939. Their experiences even served to allude to the old conflicts of national identity or simple exercises of contrast between Barcelona and Madrid. The American woman Janet Riesenfeld swung more towards the Catalan capital, "It doesn't matter how many modern improvements you put in this city [*Madrid*], because the people are still the same as they were in the eighteenth century. Barcelona seemed more American to me, more cosmopolitan".[6] Anita Brenner also expressed herself in this sense, finding a reason to explain a differentiating fact: "There is a lot of Jewish blood in Catalonia".[7]

Two dues, two ages, two classes, two philosophies battle for possession of Spain. Prosperous, energetic, industrialized Barcelona is at once the general headquarters and the symbol of the struggle against somber, hungry, hierarchic Madrid, and it is a struggle which divides each of the two and every other Spanish city, town, and village, within and against itself.[8]

The celebration in the Catalan capital of the People's Olympiad, shut down by the outbreak of war, attracted some journalists who, under the circumstances, became the first informants of the war. Such were the cases of the British woman Josephine [Jose] Shercliff of the *Daily Herald* [9] and the American woman Muriel Rukeyser of the London magazine *Life* and *Letters To-Day*.[10] The military coup surprised the Palmer family on holiday in Montgat. The young Aileen, who had joined the press office of the Olympiad, lived through the initial years of the military coup in Barcelona, where her mother, writer and journalist Nettie Palmer, went to look for her, with both reporting on the outbreak of the war in the Australian press.[11] Also in Barcelona was Clara Thalmann, a member of the Swiss swimming team at the Olympiad, who stayed in Barcelona to join the POUM (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification) forces and report on the beginning of a revolutionary process in Catalonia. "Not a single convent has been saved," she wrote, surprised by the very high number of traffic accidents in those first days of the conflict, due to the use of the seized cars by those who had never driven.[12]

Elisabeth Deeble,[13] a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* and, later, for *The Washington Post*, had lived in Barcelona for years. There was also the Swedish journalist Kajsa Rothman, a partner in a travel agency, and Austrian photojournalist Margarethe Michaelis, with an anarchist ideology, who had set up a small studio.[14] Also in the city were the American woman Megan Laird, the Polish woman Joanna Gintułt and, not far away, in Tossa de Mar, the British woman Nancy Johnstone. Laird bore witness to the start of the war in *The Atlantic Monthly*,[15] between July 19 and 26, from what she saw from the window of her flat on the fifth floor of Calle Lauria, on the corner of Calle Provenza. The identity of Joanna Gintułt is more unexpected, author of two chronicles in the Warsaw weekly *Wiadomości Literackie*, whose presence fades after their publication and the strong controversy they aroused in the conservative Polish press. Then there is the contribution of Nancy Johnstone, who ran a hotel establishment with the Scots man Archibald Johnstone, formerly deputy editor of the *London News Chronicle*, is significant. Her books on the war years are a prodigy of empathy with those who tried daily to maintain a spirit which was alien to the anomaly of war.

We were amazed to hear that we were trapped among wild Bolsheviks, who were howling outside our houses for our blood, while the rebels, tactfully called "insurgents" in The Times, were doing their best to come to our aid in time and save us from "something worse than death". […] What took us completely by surprise was that the serious press tacitly supported a military coup. It had never occurred to us that, if the right-wingers were the rebel coup plotters and the left-wing government was the legally elected one, the British Conservatives would say: "Long live the rebels!"[16]

Seventy journalists in 1936

Between mid-July and the end of 1936, some seventy foreign journalists, photojournalists and press collaborators passed through Barcelona. In the first days of the war, the French woman Marguerite Jouve (1903-1963)[17], Andrée Viollis (1870-1950) and photojournalist Hélène Roger-Viollet (1901-1985) arrived. Gerda Taro also arrived, sent by the French media, and three weeks after the outbreak of the war, British woman Nancy Cunard (1896-1965), who reported for the press in Europe and America. In the Parisian weekly *Regards*, she published a paper in which she confronted the information that appeared in some Parisian newspapers about religious persecution in Barcelona, and pointed out that it was necessary, to understand the causes, the weight of the Catholic Church in the country, and how it "not only instigated, but, in many cases, led the fascist revolt".[18] In August, the American woman Kitty Bowler (1908-1966), accredited by the Federated Press, travelled to Barcelona from the USSR, where she had had an affair with the controversial *New York Times* correspondent Walter Duranty. In September, the first visit of British Sylvia Townsend Warner (1893-1978) and Valentine Ackland (1906-1969) took place. In the second fortnight of October, the Norwegian Gerda Grepp (1907-1940) travelled to the Catalan capital, who wrote three chronicles from Barcelona for the newspaper *Arbeiderbladet*.[19] It was at that time that she also interviewed President Companys, "a very nice older man", who responded to her questions "in fluent French". Another prominent figure also arrived in October, British woman Kate Mangan (1904-1977), who felt the revolutionary social upheaval up close. She was caught up in a more aesthetic and gestural communication that conveyed vitality, since she understood neither Spanish nor Catalan. "Everyone seemed so strongly enthusiastic, and after learning about the rallies in Spain, those in other countries seemed terribly boring and routine".[20]

At the end of 1936, American veteran Anna Louise Strong (1885-1970), who had led the *Moscow Daily News* in the Soviet capital, also joined them. In Barcelona, she established a good relationship with Jaume Miravitlles, head of the Propaganda Commission of the Generalitat, who shared with her some key points about the complex Catalan reality, "Madrid wages wars; Barcelona, revolutions. A kind of division of labour that runs through a century of Spanish history".[21]

Militant journalism

It did not take long for journalists to travel to Barcelona seeking to support the information and propaganda tools of the different political forces. One of the first to arrive was British woman Mary Low (1912-2007), who joined the information activities of the POUM and the Propaganda Commission of the Generalitat, only to return to her country disappointed at the end of 1936. The revolution, according to her, was being hindered, even as far as its everyday aesthetics.

> *Nearly all the men were wearing ties again. The workman's overalls had largely disappeared off the streets. More and more elegantly dressed women were seen everywhere. […] Everyone had gradually given up wearing the militia uniform, for now it had become the uniform of the regular army which was being formed and we had not come here to fight in any bourgeois army.*[22]

The French-Peruvian Simone Kahn (1897-1980), who had been the wife of André Breton, also joined the POUM's information and propaganda activities; Austrian Katja Landau (1905-c.1975), who carried out very intense activity in the international secretariat;[23] English woman Mary Low (1912-2007); and the very young American Lois Cusick (1917-1985), who worked on the English-language programmes of the POUM's shortwave stations. She also wrote press releases in English for the Propaganda Commission, where she received ten pesetas a day, which she described as, "the first money I earned in my life".

Lois, who did not hide her enthusiasm for the historical experience of the revolution, with the workers and farmers who owned the factories and the land, noted the progressive loss of the first transformative impulses and the growing influence and control of the pro-Soviet communists. She was especially interested in the analysis of the collectivised economy and its reflection on everyday life, expressions that heralded, according to her, the beginning of an anti-authoritarian millennium.

In the anarchist ranks, in addition to the Austrian woman Michaelis, Hungarian Kati Horna (1912-2000), also an outstanding photojournalist, travelled to Barcelona. Also, the Scots woman Ethel MacDonald (1909-1960), who, in January 1937, joined the broadcasting division of the CNT-FAI (National Confederation of Labour-Iberian Anarchist Federation),[24] becoming one of the most widely heard voices in Europe and America regarding the conflict, with an audience that rewarded the beauty of her voice.[25]

The most celebrated anarchist, founder of the legendary magazine *Mother Earth*, was undoubtedly the veteran Emma Goldman (1869-1940) who was of Russian origin. She visited Barcelona on several occasions, took part in the broadcasts of Radio cnt-fai and represented the Mujeres Libres (Free Women) organisation in London.

Images of the arrival

In September 1936, on their first visit, British woman Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland were held for two days at the border for incomplete documentation, before continuing to Barcelona on a train painted in bright colours with the initials of the CNT.

> [At Barcelona] *our luggage gave a great deal of pleasure to a very young militiaman who was overseeing the customs.*

Valentine's pocket telescope interested him a great deal, he pronounced favourably on a tiny set of traveling tumblers. After examining everything in great detail, he made up his mind that Valentine's habit of traveling with a screwdriver denoted us as nice people, and packed us up again with great swiftness and dexterity.[26]

Kindness was not always present in the first meetings. The Norwegian woman Gerda Grepp refers to certain difficulties in arriving in the Catalan capital three months after the beginning of the conflict.

It is not easy to enter Spain. We found out when we arrived at the Barcelona aerodrome. We were met by a group of armed soldiers and taken to an office where they rudely checked all of our documents. It is quite reasonable that they try to prevent the entry of spies.[27]

Many of those who travelled to the war-torn country were unaware of Spain; it was sometimes imagined with a mixture of exotic character and gloomy appearance, so their arrival would involve the initial surprise that illustrated the context of their chronicles and writings, with frequent descriptions of the beauty of the landscapes and their empathy with the people.

The Russian woman Agnia Bartó (1906-1981), of the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, recorded her first impressions when passing the border city of Portbou, in July 1937: a transparent blue sky that seemed much higher than what she was used to seeing. "It was a special feeling of space and light". The children played on the beach near the sea, sunbathing and jumping over the waves. The women rested on the shore under the trees. "At noon, we heard muffled explosions in the distance. First, three; and then four more. I expected everyone to run for shelter, that the mothers would grab their children…". "Why aren't they taking their children? They are going to die!" she told her. The woman answered, "Where do you want me to take them? They can kill them anywhere".[28]

The British woman Helen Grant (1903-1992) travelled from the French border to Barcelona in a third-class train wagon, packed with farm workers who helped her with her luggage and offered her food – "A Spanish custom" – during the two-hour journey, and they burst into laughter and uproar when, drinking from a boot, she spilled the wine on her dress. In the Catalan capital, she discovered that the taxis were painted red and black with the initials CNT, and that the drivers did not accept tips as it was an inappropriate bourgeois custom in a time of revolutionary change. "Cafés full of people, trams, buses and taxis running smoothly, cinemas that were open…". Grant found a situation of normality with one exception: power outages at night because of the bombings.

Austrian Marie Langer recalls in her memoirs that she landed with her partner in Barcelona "without understanding much of what was happening there".

Never before, nor after, have I seen a city so happy, so full of music and enthusiasm, so excited as the Barcelona of that time. […] La Rambla looked like a party. Militiamen were seen everywhere, some still almost children, with fairly improvised uniforms and weapons.[29]

In September 1938, when the future of the Republic was darkening, the American Ione Robinson (1910-1989) travelled from Perpignan to Barcelona in an old Chevrolet, in the company of the Cantabrian illustrator Luis Quintanilla.

We stopped first on the outskirts of the city [Perpignan] to change my dollars into pesetas and to buy food. Two wooden boxes were filled with Italian salami, sardines, English cookies, etc. All the things that we, in America, would have selected for a picnic. […] It was a beautiful afternoon to be driving into a war! The air was filled with the odor of eucalyptus and pepper trees. There was not a sign of life anywhere in the mountains, and because of the stillness and the similarity of the vegetation to California, it seemed that I was going home and not into a war.[30]

Pictures of life in Barcelona

Despite the war, Barcelona maintained a large part of its social life. English woman Mary Low refers to the very frequent trips from the newspaper's office to numerous cafés, of which she listed the main ones, including Gran Oriente, Automatic, Euzkadi, Canaletas, American Bar, Café de las Ramblas and Moka. She wrote down their characteristics, ambience, the type of customers and service at a time when collectivisations were being imposed, where waiters no longer had a boss and "he is working now as you might be tapping a typewriter".

The Australian health worker and press contributor Agnes Hodgson (1906-1984) looked out over dozens of cafes, terraces, bakeries and restaurants, but not always with the desired tranquillity.

[We were] *sitting on the terrace of a café when, on the other side of the building, a bomb fell, with an infernal noise and a flash that lit up the sky. For a moment, panic set in. Some people started running, throwing their chairs to the ground. I went to the door of the establishment and a soldier told me, "Try to keep calm".*[31]

There are many images of the city that attract the gaze of those who arrive in the anomalous time of war. From the dawn of the uprising to life on the streets, in cafes and terraces, on transport, in the markets…

The French journalist Émilienne Morin (1901-1991), Durruti's companion, a year after the military coup in July 1936, recalled the atmosphere in Barcelona at the start of the war, when people did not yet show any great concern.

However, the threat was felt. And the trucks full of young anti-fascists, of fiercely determined soldiers, passed at full speed through the streets of Barcelona. Around three in the morning, trucks with assault guards were seen going to requisition the best stock in the armoires: rifles and pistols,

cartridges and boxes of gunpowder. When, at five in the morning, the firing of a cannon gave the alert signal, we only found, among the weaponry seized, hunting shotguns, women's pistols and other objects.[32]

The exceptional Erika Mann (1905-1969) discovered a city living in an apparent normality and, despite the shortcomings and deep urban wounds of the war, "we do not see frightened people". She found the regular Catalans, "relaxed, mostly looking good and cheerful", and the Catalan women "attractive and well-groomed". In addition to the damage caused by the bombing, she noted three changes: the large number of soldiers on the streets, the scant amount of traffic, and the dangerously crowded trams.

Travellers hang like bunches of grapes from the wagons: they go in front, behind, sitting on the buffers or clinging to the window frames. There are surely more than a hundred travelling on each one. Children and soldiers easily adapt to this instability. Women, the elderly and civil protection volunteers also use this transport. I've seen a man with a straw hat and a walking stick travel like this, with one leg pressed against a bar and the other in the air, grabbing the man in front of him with one arm and balancing himself with the other. It was a curious picture.[33]

Elena Garro's perception was very different, in the summer of 1937. "The number of crashed cars along the road was impressive. I asked why so many accidents were taking place. 'Look, comrade, it's that these comrades don't know how to drive, and they throw themselves like crazy into the cars, so naturally lots of accidents happen'".

It is difficult to forget the terrible impression that city made on me. It was as if a layer of lead was weighing down on it, burning lead, for it was very hot, too. The branches of the trees were broken, and the streets were almost deserted. The atmosphere was heavy, tragic; it scared me. I had never visited a city like that. They put us up at the Majestic Hotel, on Paseo de Gracia. I looked out the window, there were no victorious troops, there was just a very sad silence. I wanted to leave Spain right away. "I want to go home," I told Octavio Paz. He was indignant at my stupidity, saying, "I don't know why I brought you here!". I didn't know either, nor do I know to this day.[34]

Ione Robinson, also staying at the Majestic Hotel, observed the city from a distance similar to approaching a cliff-edge of the disaster, and which would later become an expression of empathy with the suffering of the people.

*I also saw the bombed Barrio Chino [*Chinatown*] (a sinister section of the city) and then I walked over the broken glass and rubbish of the market. Luis [*Quintanilla*] told me that rebel planes bombed the market in broad daylight, when it was crowded with women and children! When we returned to the Majestic, I had my first real taste of rations of this city. It is hard to describe what we ate today at noon. First we had a watery soup served in a cup which Luis called "Agua del Mediterráneo" [*Water of the Mediterranean*]; after that, a two-inch square of indescribable meat, a few lentils, and some strange greens (which tasted like grass)*.[35]

During this unfortunate experience at the luxurious hotel, Robinson met a dishevelled Russian journalist, apparently a correspondent for *Pravda*, who was obsequious and communicative.

I noticed a woman dressed in red, with bare legs and white sandals and a head of wild-looking hair, table-hopping with her arms full of food tins. I asked who she was, and without answering, the Daily Mail correspondent left our table and brought her back with him. He introduced me to this woman, who was a correspondent for the Russian newspaper, Pravda. He told her that I had just arrived from England and that I had quite a talk with Winston Churchill about Spain. The Pravda woman threw her head back and laughed loudly, saying she didn't give one hoot about Churchill or England. I was relieved by her answer; I didn't want to argue with this woman. When she left us, I watched her table-hopping, handing out dabs of butter and sardines to the Republicans. The correspondent smiled and said she had "the edge on the news, both from the front and behind the front". I didn't doubt it… with her tins of food.

The hotels appear regularly in the chronicles of the female foreigners. They were often the bubble inside which food and alcohol animated the meetings of journalists with their colleagues, and even distorted the sensation of reality.

We didn't know what we were doing there. We didn't feel like dancing, but now that we were there, we couldn't leave either. Everything seemed so unreal that, fed up with the reality as it was, we stayed pinned to our chairs. […] We knew that they would cut the motorway from Barcelona to Valencia and that loyal Spain would be divided. But we were still sitting in the Ritz ballroom, watching couples dance and diners feast, wondering when the next bombing would start, wondering if the fascists hadn't already taken Barcelona. And there we were celebrating in the Ritz ballroom.[36]

May 1937

One aspect that received most attention in the stories of the journalists were the bloody events of May 1937 in Barcelona, which confronted the forces of the left in debates and differences that revealed different approaches to war and revolution.

In May 1937, the American woman Josephine Herbst (1897-1969), who had a communist ideology, travelled to Barcelona, moved by the conviction that the fight against fascism, which she had seen closely in Germany and Italy, was an imperative for

the civilised nations, in order to avoid global catastrophe. She suffered a heavy disappointment in the Catalan capital however, when observing "Republicans fighting against Republicans and not against Franco". This aroused a critical response in her, and a break with party discipline. "Before I left Spain, the disintegration had begun with a squalid internecine brawl in Barcelona. I have never had much heart for party polemics and it was not for factionalism that I had come to Spain".[37]

Frenchwoman Émilienne Morin (1901-1991), director of the newspaper *Le Libertaire* and widow of Buenaventura Durruti, spoke out against those who put military action before other issues, thereby paralysing the social revolution initiated in response to the military coup. She therefore abandoned "the silence that we imposed on ourselves", out of respect for the anti-fascist front.

> *We can no longer tolerate seeing the CNT and the fai and, likewise, a large part of the UGT (General Union of Workers) insulted by those who, by any means – including the most despicable – try to assassinate them. Because there is no doubt about the true objective of the criminal offensive that is unleashed against us: to eliminate, from the political and social life of Spain, these organisations that are too revolutionary and intransigent.*[38]

Without doubt, the most influential journalist who intervened in the controversy was the Mexican Trotskyist Anita Brenner (1905-1974), whose denunciations in *The New York Times* and *The Nation* created friction with the editorial lines of New York publications. Distanced from the republican nucleus of the war, she became a leading analyst of dissent among the forces of the Spanish left.[39]

The Austrian woman Katja Landau (1905-c.1975), affiliated with the POUM, and a victim of the repression, testified how the May clash served to empty the prisons of a large part of "doctors, priests, lawyers, and big businessmen, political adversaries of the Republican regime" to make way for "workers, old Socialist Party members, syndicalists, anarchists, and POUM members".

> *Whereas real fascists were set at liberty, revolutionary anti-fascists were once more forced to go on hunger strike to protest against their arrest by the GPU and the torture they had endured.*[40]

One of the victims, the American woman Lois Cusick, was arrested and detained in a cheka in Puerta del Ángel, where she coincided with Katja Landau. "Fascist Spy Ring Uncovered in Barcelona", published *The New York Times*, with names and photographs.[41] The news served, however, to get her out of a critical situation. Brown Ransdell, editor of *The Courier-Journal* of Louisville, had known Lois since she was a child and moved to alert the American consul in Barcelona. On Thursday, July 1, she was released, along with Landau and both left Spain two days later.

Emma Goldman contributed to the international denunciation of a conflict that weakened republican expectations. She affirmed that the political persecution undertaken by "Stalin's henchmen" was no different from those practised in the USSR, for which reason she decided to raise her voice: "In justice to the thousands of our comrades in prison I have left behind. I will and must, speak out".[42]

The chronicles of Ethel MacDonald, from the CNT-FAI broadcasting tools, was possibly the first critical information about the events that went abroad. The information transmitted to Glasgow was reflected in at least two issues of the *Barcelona Bulletin*, published in the Scottish city on May 12 and 15. MacDonald was arrested and released weeks later, her voice no longer reaching an expectant audience.[43] MacDonald, after a second arrest and finding herself in danger, remained in hiding until she managed to flee to France in the second half of September. "I went to Spain full of hopes and dreams. It promised to be utopia realised. I return full of sadness, dulled by the tragedy I have seen," she told the hundreds of people waiting for her at the station in Glasgow.

Likewise, Swiss woman Clara Thalmann (1908-1987) bore testimony to the repression of anarchists and supporters of the poum, with whom she fought side by side. She was caught with her partner Pavel when they tried to leave Barcelona by boat to Marseille. Both were arrested, transferred to Valencia and imprisoned in separate cells. After frequent interrogations, Clara sang to Pavel in a Swiss dialect to give him information. Her confinement was not easy; she was next to a German prisoner whose husband had been murdered by the communists and "had an exacerbated hatred of all reds, prayed for hours in the cell for their annihilation and explicitly manifested her adoration for Hitler".[44]

It is a case similar to that of the Dutchwoman Antje Wiersma (1908-1975), who spent six weeks of uncertainty with Jan, her partner, until they were released. In her last chronicle in *De Socialist*, she denounced the aberration of the humiliating treatment inflicted on anti-fascist fighters, "It is part of our job to expose this shameful abuse of power. Freedom for all anti-fascist politicians in Spain!"

Another dissenting voice was that of Mexican journalist Blanca Lydia Trejo (1906-1970), assigned to the consulate of her country after the events in May, who wrote in the Catalan press while she lived in Barcelona, and changed her political orientation from communism towards a more libertarian position.

Continuous bombing

The greatest dramas of the female journalistic story were when the war deliberately hit the civilian population, turning it into the military objective of the foreign fascist aviation at the service of the rebels on a daily basis. It is difficult to find a single reference to the aircraft models or the type of ammunition used, but there are many details of their effects on people and daily life in the city. Taken at random, what follows are some brief snippets of

the feminine narrative, presented from the experience in the Catalan capital.

March 1937. Simone Téry gave an account of the first wave of attacks by the Italian aviation based in Mallorca, on Barcelona. They came with such intensity that, "the infamous Madrid bombings were nothing compared to them".

> *Eighteen massive bombings in two days. You need to see them to understand what the "all-out war" of the fascists, those champions of civilisation, is. If we let the heroic Spanish Republic be crushed, it is necessary to repeat and shout until the most cowardly and the most unconscious are convinced that we will experience this horror tomorrow in Paris. In Paris, Toulouse, Nice, Bordeaux, Lyon. […] [*The sirens*] began to wail with sadness. The power went out and the lift stopped working. I didn't know where the stairs were. Without my efficient torch I would not have got out of there. I had barely gone down two floors when the first shells exploded. […] I almost stepped on something terrible. It was a woman's foot in a small shoe. Beside her was a bouquet of white daffodils. All that was left of a girl on a spring day. I walked another hundred metres and backed away in horror. Every side of the street was filled with huge craters. There were not two houses demolished, but two blocks. Of the solid, modern six-story buildings, only a few metres of smouldering rubble remained, which firefighters sprayed to extinguish the fire. A shell that fell in the middle of the street had burst a pipe and the water was spurting out, filled with yellow mud*.[45]

October 1937. Attacks on the city intensify, especially on [the neighbourhood of] Barceloneta. Elena Garro, shortly before leaving the country, experienced with Octavio Paz the worst days of the four months of war that they spent in Spain. "We were hit by the most ferocious bombardment that the city had suffered up until then". Although I thought I was already immune to fear, "that night, huddled on the stairs of the Catalan hotel, seemed eternal and terrible to me. […] The bombs fell with an unusual noise, and we all had the conviction that there would be no relief".[46]

February 1938. The bombardments, particularly intense during the month of January, with some six hundred dead, frustrated the "emotional chronicle" that Lucien Vogel, director of *L'Œuvre*, had ordered Madeleine Jacob to write on the meeting of the Spanish Parliament in the monastery of Montserrat at the beginning of February. Back in Barcelona, an aerial bombardment wreaked death across the city. She then went to the hospital morgue and there she put forward a true emotional chronicle, formulated under the suffocating smell of phenol, the corpses and the smoke from the fires that were still active.

> *In the morgue at the Hospital Clínico I saw around two hundred corpses thrown on the floor, kept cool with a hose. It was all there. Children caught while playing, women from the town, some snatched from life while asleep. [...] But in this communal storage space, where there was the twisted body of a baby, an old man who was literally crushed and a young girl in a nightdress with her hands crossed over her belly, I could not take my eyes off a little girl of four or five years old, with her knickers slightly falling down and felt slippers on her feet, who only smiled from the good side of her chubby, rosy face, because the other side was torn apart, with her eye protruding from her cheek…*[47]

March 1938. A month of successive attacks and more than a thousand deaths. The Belgian Marthe Camilia Huysmans focused intently on daily life in Barcelona, its markets and its prices, without losing sight of a constant that marked the differentiating facts of the conflict: the bombing of the civilian population. A city which was difficult to feed, whose normal population of one million inhabitants, had passed, in 1938, with the influx of refugees, "to at least three million", including the suburbs.[48]

> *Tonight I visited the city. And tonight the same happened as all those other nights in which the bombs, the anti-aircraft guns and falling rubble are heard. The huge blocks of houses that become graves for some, and for others, for those who survive, who groan and cry in crypts where they are buried alive, have collapsed. The clarity of the night illuminates the disaster.*[49]

Back in Barcelona, Simone Téry gave an account of the low flights of death, the weariness of the population and the progressive deterioration of living conditions. In the trade union weekly *Messidor*, she wrote of the harsh experience of visiting a morgue overflowing with the humanitarian ruin of the war. She sought to reflect with her readers, transferring onto them her look, her breath and her touch, the dramatic impact she felt when she went down to the morgue.

> *We are all responsible. That is why today it is necessary for you to have the courage to see with me what we could have avoided. See it to be able to draw enough strength from this ghastly spectacle, to make new disasters impossible.*
>
> *When I was little, if I saw a drop of blood, or just the thought of a wound, I would pass out. And yet I have gone there [to the morgue] for you. Now, I will take you by the hand. Come down these stone steps with me. Come inside with me.*
>
> *Take your handkerchief, put it over your nose, and over your mouth. You will have to put up with this somewhat sweet, disgusting smell coming from that black door; enter inside without fainting – this smell of death, a breath of death upon you that clings, sticky, to your skin, and penetrates to the bottom of your lungs. […] We passed in front of them [*the corpses*], without stopping. We don't have much time and there are so many that we aren't able to look at all of them*.
>
> *The tension builds throughout a story of her approaching this infernal underground, when the journalist collapses – "my head is spinning" – and takes a break.*

I can't keep looking at those torn up feet, those bloody abdomens, those stripped bodies, those legs covered in wounds, in a chaos of torn, tattered clothing stained with mud and blood.[50]

May 1938. Germaine Decaris (1899-1955), during the bombing of Granollers, when more than 220 people died, and of which Winifred Bates left graphic testimony, created a piece that appealed to the conscience of the French, trying to make its readers put themselves in the shoes of the Spaniards, in the face of what she described as the second Guernica. Eight low flying planes wreaked death among the women who, with their children, were shopping in the market, destroying more than fifty buildings in the centre of the city.

September 1938. Danish woman Lise Lindbæk (1905-1961), a journalist for the Norwegian newspaper *Dagbladet*, reported on "intentional attacks" by Italian aviation, serving the rebels, on the civilian population of Barcelona.[51]

October 1938. British woman Rose Smith (1891-1985), of the *Daily Worker*, travels to Barcelona when republican hopes were beginning to wane. After a night of repeated raids, Italian bombers launched an attack at half past six in the morning, as workers headed for the factories and women went to the shops and markets for their daily food.

More than a hundred people lay injured and twenty had died. Some of those reported missing will never be found again, because fascist bombs have obliterated all traces of them. Dozens of homes have been destroyed. Families are engaged in a desperate effort to recover their scattered and buried belongings.[52]

November 1938. Star journalist Martha Gellhorn, and partner of Hemingway, wrote one of her best articles on the war –"The Third Winter Is the Hardest"– which was not published by *Collier's*.

In Barcelona, it was the perfect bombing weather. The cafés along Las Ramblas were crowded. There was nothing much to drink; a sweet fizzy potion called "orangeade" and a horrible liquid supposed to be sherry. There was, of course, nothing to eat. Everyone was out enjoying the cold afternoon sunlight. No bombers had come over for at least two hours. The flower stalls looked bright and pretty along the promenade. "The flowers are all sold, Señores. For the funerals of those who were killed in the eleven o'clock bombing".[53]

Also in that late month of the conflict, French veteran Andrée Viollis returned to Catalonia to play Russian roulette where the civilian population, the target of aerial bombardment, took their chances every day.

What happens? Suddenly, the few lights [of the hotel] go out. […] The sinister roar of the sirens sounds long. I run up the marble staircase and up the endless floors to a colleague's room at the top (the lift hasn't worked in a while!). […] The planes arrive from the sea, hidden among the clouds at four or five thousand metres and, suddenly, like birds of prey, after circling overhead, they swoop down on the city. It's impossible to avoid them, unless you are underground. Better, then, to give yourself over to chance. That's what most people in Barcelona do.[54]

Until the last moment, the air attacks, from which other towns in Catalonia were not spared, punished the city, and continued as the exodus of the people filled the roads towards the French border.

February 1939. French woman Édith Thomas wrote about the women and children who arrived in the neighbouring country, with testimonies of the physical and psychological suffering of those who did not usually appear among the victims, a qualification reserved for the dead, even though they were the ones facing the consequences of war. A child from Terrassa, with a trembling voice from the memory of the horror and using childish language, offered his testimony. "Along the way, the planes bombed us. The whole road was filled with dead people". The journalist wondered, "How will we manage to erase from these children's minds the shock caused by corpses in the ditches at the roadside?".

Contrast in perspective

The collective account of the foreigners who passed through Barcelona recovers the perspective from the Republican side. Only two journalists who travelled to the Catalan capital were in the Franco zone. The American woman Virginia Cowles (1910-1983), accredited by *The New York Times*, and the French woman Clara Candiani (1902-1996), from *La République*.

During her time in Barcelona, Cowles attended a bullfight at La Monumental, expressing her displeasure; a condemnation that other foreign women also expressed in their writings during the war years.

I had never seen a bull-fight before and the sight of a bull pawing the ground with the blood streaming down his sides was nauseating to me. Most of the time I couldn't look. The small, dark Spaniard next to me complained loudly, but not for the same reason.[55]

In the middle of 1938, Candiani made her third trip to Spain. On this visit, unlike the previous ones, she went to the area controlled by Franco's troops, where she travelled widely. Her impression was not satisfactory. Some time later, she went to Barcelona for ten days, recalling that her status as a Catholic made her condemn what was said about the Republicans in the ever-expanding land of the rebels.

The Christian state that claims to be the rebellious Spain, falsifies with tragic criminal cynicism the reality of the Republican Spain and those who have been faithful to the law are presented, without exception, as monsters with sadistic instincts.[56]

The reporting on the war was decreasing as other fronts opened up in Europe promising a large-scale confrontation, as the foreign members of the International Brigades left Spain. At the end of 1938, Rose Smith (1891-1985) from the *Daily Worker* arrived in Barcelona, and her focus was on the children on the streets, misery and the abandonment of minors as the Christmas holidays approached, at the same time as promoting financial aid from the British.[57]

Reporting on the final few months, she describes the tragedy of the departure of the Republicans towards France and the hardships that they suffered in the refugee camps, which some journalists also suffered, because few lived through the entry of the Francoist troops into Barcelona. Muriel McDiarmid (1900-date unknown), author of the *Franco in Barcelona*[58] publication, was an exception. She drew up a living testimony of the fall of the city and of the first weeks of the new regime.

> *Thousands of people lined the streets to see the soldiers. A number of them appeared excited, though most seemed only relieved that the bombing had finally stopped. […] Groups of young girls ran wildly up and down Paseo de Gracia and Diagonal, cheering, surrounding anyone they saw who looked important. […] Vans with loudspeakers broadcast fascist slogans and military marches. In the poorer streets of Barceloneta and in those close to the Cathedral, people did not appear to be so happy. There, I could calmly survey the tremendous damage caused by the bombs over the past week*.[59]

Towards a long and apparent normality

The suffering of the people was mistaken for a respite.[60] The anomaly of the war had erased the memory of normalcy.[61] Months earlier, a trip by English woman Lorna Wood (1905-c.1975) to Perpignan with her husband, also a journalist, after not having left Barcelona for some time, allowed her to discover the differentiating elements of life in an environment of peace. The normality of the French border city took the couple back to the feelings of a bygone era, starting with the lighting, which "was turned on".

> *It also gave us a fantastic feeling to see the women in their autumn headwear. What had happened to me in Spain? It made me wonder, who does not love fashion? You never really know how extraordinary hats are until you live in a place where they don't wear them. […] Meanwhile, however, we looked at the shops full of food, the abundance of bread, the people dining in the restaurants, not voraciously, but with the quieter enjoyment of the well-fed. […] The vision of hunger is an image that remains etched in my mind. "So", my husband said, "tomorrow we'll go shopping". We walked back to the hotel through the fairground and watched the children on the brightly lit Ferris wheels and tried our hand at the pellet gun. There were one or two telegrams waiting for us [at the hotel]... "Can you bring me three tins of milk?" "Could you kindly get me half a kilo of coffee?" We went to bed to get back our energy for the next day's shopping. All night I dreamed of bombs. "That must have been the lobster", I thought.* [62]

Notes

1. Hugh Thomas, for example, refers to nineteen women of the approximately 750 names that appear in the index, where only Dolores Ibárruri stands out, with twenty-two references, and Federica Montseny, with seven (calculated from the expanded edition of Thomas, H. (1961). *The Spanish Civil War*. Eyre & Spottiswoode). In the latest available edition (The Folio Society, 2014), of the approximately 2,200 names referred to, only 53 correspond to women, that is, 2.4 percent, with the exceptional presence of Dolores Ibárruri (62 references) and Federica Montseny (18)..
2. Díaz Nosty, B. (2022). *Periodistas extranjeras en la Guerra Civil.* Renacimiento.
3. "Madrid-bombardementet er ikke krig, det er mord" [The Madrid bombings are not a war, but a murder], *Arbeiderbladet,* Oslo, December 16, 1936. https://bit.ly/3TzOdHP
4. "Kvinnor och barn på bårhus — en mardröm. Kan lukta blod. Bombat Madrid ger beviset" [Women and children in morgues: a nightmare. You can smell the blood. Madrid is ready for the bombings], *Dagens Nyheter,* , Stockholm, December 13, 1936.
5. "Spania-nytt på norsk" [Spanish News in Norwegian], *Arbeiderbladet,* Oslo, December 16, 1936.
6. Riesenfeld, J. (1938). *Dancer in Madrid.* Harrap, p. 111.
7. "A visit to Barcelona. Jews in the city of the Catalans", *The Zionist Record,* Cape Town, January 12, 1934.
8. "Behind Spain's conflict: The basic issues. Deep Divisions Cut Across All Parts of the Nation; of these Barcelona and Madrid Stand as the Symbols", *The New York Times,* October 14, 1934. https://nyti.ms/3VGUeEB
9. "On Sunday [July 19] I was woken up by a rifle shot. From my hotel I saw people running through the square. Behind a tram, police and workers with red armbands were on their knees, shooting. When they stopped, they would run to a café on the other side of the avenue, quickly grab a cup of something and eat a sandwich, then immediately return to their posts" ("Eye-witness tells what has happened in Barcelona", *Daily Herald,* London, June 24, 1936).
10. The frustrated reporting of the Popular Olympiad was transformed into a story of perceptions about the uncertainty of the outbreak of war – "Barcelona 1937" (London, autumn 1937) – which was also reflected in New York's *New Masses* (September 1, 1936).
11. Nettie's testimonies, forwarded from London, appeared in Melbourne's *The Argus* and were reproduced in other

newspapers. ("Spanish days", August 8 and 15, 1936; "Cannon and machine guns. Barcelona's grim awakening", August 14, 1936).

12. ""In one hospital alone, there were 30 deaths due to traffic accidents, because people drove like crazy, with others who opted to keep their weapons on the roof of small cars, or in the car boots or wherever there was room. […] The square is full of wrecked cars" (Thalmann, C., & Thalmann, P. (2020). *Viviendo la Revolución del 36.* Barcelona. Descontrol, p. 57).

13. Established in Barcelona in the twenties, she spoke Spanish and Catalan.

14. Grete [Margarethe] Michaelis contributed to Barcelona's image of strong modernity through her photographs in publications that were the avant-garde of modernity, even though her position in Catalan society was tenuous. Ennis, H. (2005). *Margaret Michaelis. Love, loss and photography.* National Gallery of Australia p. 108.

15. Also published in a serial in the *Winona Republican-Herald*, excerpts from which were published in the *Reader's Digest.*

16. Johnstone, N. (2013). *Hotel in Spain.* Clapton Press Limited, p. 251.

17. Survivor of the plane crash in which Vu magazine editor Lucien Vogel and other passengers suffered injuries of undisclosed prognosis. Jouve took charge of editing the special issue on Spain.

18. "Dans Barcelona en fièvre. Des églises à l'Hotel Ritz", Paris, August 27, 1936. Beginning in the autumn of 1938, her most moving accounts appeared in *The Guardian*, where she also reported on the mass departure of Republicans to the south of France in early 1939.

19. "Spaniabrev I: Barcelona"*, Arbeiderbladet,* Oslo, October 20, 1936. After this first chronicle, she issued two more from Barcelona (October 21 and 22).

20. Mangan, K. (2020). *Never more alive. Inside the Spanish Republic.* The Clapton Press, p. 43.

21. Strong, A. L. (1937). *Spain in arms.* Henry Holt, p. 69.

22. Low, M., & Brea, J. (1937). *Red Spanish notebook. The first six months of the Revolution and the Civil War.* Secker & Warburg, p. 216-217. A book praised by George Orwell.

23. Together with her partner Kurt, she coordinated the foreign journalists and writers attached to the organisation, which had a wide broadcasting reach, headed by the newspaper *La Batalla*, and attended the German-language broadcasts of Radio POUM. Katja wrote about the role of women in the revolutionary process initiated in Catalonia, prostitution, abortion and homosexuality and was part of the women's secretariat of the party (SFPOUM), which edited *Emancipación* in 1937 (Lugschitz, R. (2016). *Pressebüro und Zensur im Spanischen Bürger*innenkrieg: Reporterinnen zwischen Journalismus, Propaganda und* Überwachung*.* [Press office and censorship in the Spanish civil war. Reporters between journalism, propaganda and control], *ÖZG, 27*(3), 160-171. https://doi.org/10.25365/oezg-2016-27-3-8).

24. Every night, at 10.30pm, she spoke on the ECN-1 Radio CNT-FAI Barcelona station, on 42.88m shortwave and 222.55m medium wave, as announced by the working-class press in Scotland and in other regions of the United Kingdom. People wrote to the CNT-FAI headquarters (Avenida Durruti, 32 and 33), congratulating her and giving her encouragement. The weekly newspaper *Bellshill Speaker* published her speeches (March 12, 19 and 26, and April 2, 9 and 16, 1937) and the USM published the separate *Save Spain. Act! radio speeches by Ethel MacDonald* (Glasgow, May 1, 1937), simultaneously with the first issue of *News from Spain*, edited by Guy Aldred "CNT, FAI and Youth Movement (Anarchist and POUM)".

25. *The Glasgow Herald* reported that "A prominent news editor in Hollywood says that he has received hundreds of letters concerning Ethel MacDonald, stating that the writers, in all parts of the USA and Canada, enjoyed her announcements and talks from Barcelona radio, not because they agreed with what she said, but because they thought she had the finest radio speaking voice they had ever Heard". (taken from *Spartacus Educational.* https://bit.ly/3CLkdIK).

26. "Catalonia in Civil War", *New Masses,* New York, November 24, 1936. https://bit.ly/3DyXF7X

27. "Spaniabrev I: Barcelona"*, Arbeiderbladet,* Oslo, October 20, 1936. After this first commentary she wrote two more from Barcelona (October 21 and 22). https://bit.ly/3SiCwnM

28. Text taken from *V revolyutsionnoy Ispanii* [In revolutionary Spain], taken from the compilation website of the author's work. https://bit.ly/3sdkA3z.

29. Langer, M. (1984). *Memoria, historia y diálogo psicoanalítico.* Folios Eds., p. 60.

30. Robinson, I. (1946). *A wall to paint on*. Dutton*,* p. 323.

31. Hodgson, A. (2006). *The Last Mile to Huesca: An Australian Nurse in the Spanish Civil War.* University of New South Wales, 1988.

32. "Souvenirs: L'enfantement d'une révolution", *La Libertaire,* Paris, September 25, 1936.

33. "Reisebrief aus Spanien", *Neue Volks-Zeitung*, New York, July 16, 1938.

34. Garro, E. (1992). *Memorias de España 1937.* Siglo XXI, p. 13.

35. Robinson, I. (1946). *A wall to paint on.* Dutton, p. 327.

36. Johnstone, N. (2022). *Hotel in Spain.* Clapton Press Limited.

37. "The Starched Blue Sky of Spain", *The Noble Savage,* January 1960, no. 1, World Publishing Co., p. 79-80.

38. "Le complot contre la révolution espagnole", *Le Libertaire,* Paris, May 20, 1937.

39. At the beginning of 1937, The Nation withdrew her

accreditation (San José Vázquez, E. "Anita Brenner, corresponsal de prensa en España" [Anita Brenner, press correspondent in Spain]. In: González, J. R. et al. (Eds.). (2016). T*estimonios del desastre. Periodistas y escritores en los campos de batalla* (Trea, p. 235). "If in her recent conflictive relations with the editors of The Nation, her disagreements with the weekly's star envoy, Louis Fischer, an outspoken supporter of Stalinism at the time, had prevailed, she also had problems with the editorial line of the New York Times regarding the Spanish situation, in her criticism of its correspondent Frank L. Kluckhohn" *(ibid.).*

40. Landau, K. (2007). *Los verdugos de la revolución española, 1937-1938.* Sepha, p. 51.

41. Orr, L. (Lois Cusick). "The May days and my arrest". In: Horh, G-R. (Ed.). (2009). *Letters from Barcelona. An American woman in Revolution and Civil War.* Palgrave, p. 190-191.

42. Emma Goldman, "Political Persecution in Republican Spain", *Spain and the World,* London, December 10, 1937.

43. The Scottish press followed the mysterious disappearance of the "radio girl" daily (*The Scotsman*, Edinburgh, August 4, 1937).

44. *Ibid.,* p. 155. The news of the arrest in the Swiss press and the determined support of the prestigious Belgian socialist Louis de Brouckère before his co-religionist Julián Zugazagoitia, the Spanish Minister of the Interior, facilitated the release of the Thalmanns in mid-September and their departure from Spain.

45. "Les heures tragiques de Barcelone sous les bombes", *Regards,* March 31, 1937. The article is also dated ten days before, March 21.

46. *Op. cit,* p. 116.

47. "Images d'Espagne. Une democratie qui ne se laissera pas étrangler", *L'Œuvre,* Paris, February 18, 1938.

48. "Tooneelen uit het leven te Barcelona" [Scenes of life in Barcelona], *Vooruit,* Ghent, March 15, 1938.

49. "Barcelona onder de verschrikking van de luchtbombardementen" [Barcelona under the horror of aerial bombardment], *Vooruit,* Ghent, March 23, 1938.

50. "Devant les morts de Barcelone", *Messidor,* Paris, April 1, 1938.

51. "Overlagte overfall på det civil folk. Dramatiks luftkamp over Barcelona" [Premeditated attack on the civilian population. Dramatic aerial duel above Barcelona]. *Dagbladet*, Oslo, September 2, 1938.

52. "Rose Smith Sees Bombers Smash Homes", *Daily Worker,* London, October 24, 1938.

53. Collected as "The Third Winter" in her book *The Face of War* (Gelhorn, M. (1956). Simon and Schuster, p. 37-50). Collier's had asked her to turn focus from Spain onto Czechoslovakia.

54. "Barcelone douloureuse", *Ce Soir,* Paris, November 5, 1938.

55. Cowles, V. (2010). *Looking for Trouble. The Classic Memoir of a Trailblazing War Correspondent.* Modern Library

56. "I, a fervent Catholic, declare that from the microphone in Barcelona I can speak as a true Christian, and in the one in Seville I cannot, because from there they shout, 'We pray for the extermination of the reds, in the name of God and the Homeland!'" ("Terrible acusación de una escritora católica francesa" [Terrible accusation of a French Catholic writer]. *Ayuda*, Madrid, October 2, 1938). https://bit.ly/3Ny2YJv.
In 1939, Clara Candiani married Josep Maria Trias Peitx (1900-1979), whom she met during the war when he was Secretary General of the Democratic Union of Catalonia, and who later helped develop the refugee committee helping Spaniards in France, through humanitarian assistance and the promotion of jobs, which was the way to free them from confinement in the labour camps..

57. "Children find peace, but need food", *Daily Worker,* London, November 16, 1938; "Food shortages take heavy toll on children's lives", *ibid.,* December 1, 1939; "British seamen give food to children", *ibid.,* November 29, 1938; "Everyone can fight fascism with food", *ibid.,* December 3, 1938.

58. London: United Editorial Ltd., 1939. The publication, 28 pages long, appears without a name, despite its authorship being known with certainty. Priscilla Scott-Ellis (1916-1983) entered Barcelona in her luxurious car accompanying Franco's troops (Scott-Ellis, P. (1995). *Diary of the Spanish Civil War.* Michael Russell Publishing Ltd).

59. *Ibid.,* p. 8.

60. Madeleine Jacob, "Le calvaire d'un peuple", *Messidor,* Paris, February 3, 1939.

61. After the war, in the summer of 1939, the German woman Carmen Bud (1911-2011), who had spent the war in Spain, arrived in Barcelona with a false passport, and gave an account of the dramatic reality of the country, although for this she had to salute, with restrained refusal, raising her arm in the fascist manner ("Vikulaun fyrir 1 kíló af kjöti! Fólklð verður að selja húsgðgn sín til pess að geta fengið sér matarbita. Ástandið á Spáni eftir sigur Francos" [A kilo of meat costs a week's wages! People sell their furniture to get food. The situation in Spain after Franco's victory], *Alþýðublaðið,* Reykjavik, August 5, 1939.

62. "Going shopping", *The Manchester Guardian,* December 13, 1938.

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Communicating climate change: from disaster to risk

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Abstract
Climate change is a risk and a transdisciplinary, pragmatic and constitutive communication phenomenon. From risk to crisis or emergency to disaster, this article offers a critical overview, given the explosion of this issue among and between communities of social scientists. Focused on the dilemmas in risk and environmental communication or disaster risk reduction, climate change communication is suggested as a point of confluence, a key to turning knowledge into action. Ideas communicated about climate change become the means of anticipating and expressing the future in our present.

Keywords
Communication, Risk, Environment, Climate Change, Disaster.

Resum
El canvi climàtic és un risc i un fenomen transdisciplinari de comunicació, pragmàtic i constitutiu. Des del risc fins a la crisi o des de l'emergència fins al desastre, es proposa un balanç crític davant l'explosió d'aquesta temàtica entre les comunitats de científics socials. A partir dels dilemes en la comunicació de risc, ambiental o la reducció del risc de desastre, s'aposta per la comunicació del canvi climàtic com a punt de confluència, clau per a la conversió del coneixement en acció. Les idees comunicades sobre el canvi climàtic esdevenen el mitjà d'anticipació i d'expressió del futur en el nostre present.

Paraules clau
Comunicació, risc, medi ambient, canvi climàtic, desastre.

The acceleration of the global risk society

One of sociology's main missions is to project a diagnosis of our time. The global climate risk is leading us to apocalyptic catastrophism (Beck, 2015: 79) in a high-speed society that is engendering different forms of alienation (Rosa, 2013). A climate crisis with anthropic causes yet uncertain consequences is situating us in a future-facing horizon, even as we—ironically—accumulate more technical and scientific knowledge in the present. Relating this social acceleration and climate emergency with mental suffering is pushing humanity to a dead-end (Petersen, 2021). We have to seek a kind of socially cathartic 'emancipatory catastrophe', as Beck (2016: 115-118) recently underscored, while Rosa proposes the concept of resonance in a relationship with the world in which the solution to the muteness of nature becomes central in what it can tell us (Rosa, 2019: 348-362). In our successful modernisation, the escalation of collateral effects is radically transforming us in light of the emerging ecological risks, shifting the social sciences and their conceptualisation (Beck & Rosa, 2022).

Likewise, Latour reflects on the disorientation of not knowing how to land or put our feet on the ground. Since the 2015 Paris Agreement on the climate, the instability of our situation on the planet is forcing us into a new understanding of the space where we are, accepting 'the New Climate Regime' where Earth becomes a new non-human actor with political entity, with the power to act and react against human action (Latour, 2019). This human occupation of Earth should make us wonder: How do we occupy a territory if this territory itself is actually occupying us? This space has become dynamic, agential and cyclical from the cellular to the cosmic level. The 'Earth' pole of attraction is defining a new geopolitical orientation in which the prefix 'geo-' becomes substantivised.

In this accelerated metamorphosis, the main communicative tasks underway are motivation and direction, consolidation and support, orientation and guidance, in a more dialogic, reciprocal way instead of being primarily educational and informative (Moser, 2019). The transition from risk to crisis is tipping us towards disaster and the certification of the climate emergency[1] (McHugh et al., 2021). These mutations reveal the collateral effects stemming from this wicked problem[2] which appears to be a tipping point.[3] Human life is already immersed in the new discursive and cultural spaces that have been created by the idea of climate change, expressed in language, symbolism, narratives and arguments (Hulme, 2017), with communication and risk in their most complete sense.

The ground-breaking objectives of this cross-disciplinary conceptual revision are first to rethink the fragmentation and gaps among disciplines, and secondly to underscore the centrality of communication as a concept and communicating risk as a process. The purpose of this contrast is to learn how communication and risk have reflexively been incorporated into Communication of Climate Change (CCC) for inter-disciplines like Risk Communication (RC), Environmental Communication (EC) and Disaster Risk Communication (DRC). This conceptualisation examines risk and crisis, disaster and emergency, and then returns to the substantification of risk and communication in a privileged, innovative observation point for renewed knowledge of climate change.

(In) Disciplines and fields of (re) knowledge

In the past two decades plunged into the Anthropocene,[4] all the axes of social organisation have been shaken up in a transition from the risk society (Chernilo, 2021) to planetary emergency (Hackett, 2018), which is endangering sustainability and pushing us towards disaster. A reflective, critical and urgent response is needed. A communicative perspective needs to view communication as a science which requires the same levels of support and scientific attention to be done well as other disciplines receive (Lindenfeld et al., 2014: 125). Moser (2019) calls for a decalogue of these tasks as 'transformative communication' of climate change, while wondering what the unique contribution of a communication expert might be. Her proposal addresses communicators: find the curiosity to connect with people, feel responsible for forming part of an 'us' and strengthen dialogue by taking a committed stance.

The advent of climate change on the public agenda has grown exponentially, carrying with it concepts and disciplines. If we view risk as a means of governing the future, with crisis, disaster and emergency as the urgent threats today, CCC requires that a transversal response be prioritised. Its weaknesses have to be turned into strengths in order to overcome the geographic biases, theoretical restrictions and methodological limitations (Agin & Karlsson, 2021). Framing analysis has been the approach used the most in CCC (Schäfer & O'Neill, 2017); this variation in the conceptual frameworks contributes to civic, scientific and political awareness capable of transforming the future in the present. It has also been the most common methodological choice in RC (Nisbet, 2015) and EC (Nisbet et al., 2015). The media clearly have enormous power to connect with people, introduce terms into the agenda, name them and frame them (Kunelius & Roosvall, 2021: 10).

Climate change has precipitated the process of communicating it, both quantitatively and qualitative: its purpose, scope or extent, in debates on the subjects of study and disciplines, in the forms of knowledge and challenges. The leap has been taken from mitigation to adaptation, from scientific consensus to the co-production of meanings, from empathetic messages to harsher ones, from strategic communication to civic engagement and social movements. The goal has been to find integrative answers beyond media coverage or the language used (Nerlich et al., 2010). After all, the forms of recounting and explaining climate change are not enough; we have to shift into action (De Meyer et al., 2021) to the extent of considering unifying a strategic narrative to achieve it (Bushell et al., 2017) or incorporating others ones, such as those of health or climate services, to promote more meaningful, close-up knowledge among audiences (Farré et al., 2019). This is just like in the model of public engagement thanks to the interactive potentialities of the media (Rajanen, 2021) or the attempts to integrate EC (Lindenfeld et al., 2012) and RC into the science of sustainability, where perceptions, uncertainty and communication shape our relations with the environment (Smithberger, 2021).

Risk and Environmental Communication: from risk to crisis

In 1970s, the subfield of RC was viewed as a part of risk analysis. Conflicts on nuclear energy and chemical risks gave way to an entire body of literature to bring expert knowledge to lay audiences, which for some time was geared at correcting the public's erroneous and irrational perceptions. However, the evolution of RC turned it into a much more participative quest focused on the social dimensions of the conflicts and political processes of risk. To confirm this transformation, we can cite the example of the transition from its early formulation focused on practically improving the effectiveness of risk communication (NRC, 1989) to the formulation highlighting informed decisions in a democratic society as the keys to understanding risk (NRC, 1996). When the risk becomes systemic, a sociocultural construct, the importance of engaging communities via governance, dialogue and deliberation becomes a priority (Renn et al., 2011; Pidgeon, 2021).

The genealogy of the concept of risk can be traced back to the proposal of a premodern cultural history of risk (Mairal, 2020), in which we were pressed to imagine the future. In this conceptual journey, risk appears as the offspring of the globalisation processes that grapple with the challenge of dominating distant territories on the other side of the immense blank spaces of deserts and oceans. Now this empty space to be domesticated is *Earth* itself. Mairal shows how the way of explaining risk was associated with the press and journalistic style in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, and that it appeared as a narrative resource long before it became the result of the law on probabilities (2020: 240-241). Even though it is not a new challenge for risk studies, it is expressed in and by communication (Zinn & Müller, 2022: 10; Horlick-Jones & Farré, 2010). We researchers should ask what we can offer that is differentially different (Berger, 2010).

The communicative shift in RC is illustrated in the metamodel

of communities and mediations of Gonzalo and Farré (2011: 125-133), where *risk communication communities* take part in the production, circulation and reception of risk, attributing it meaning distinctively. In the transition from the media to mediatisation, the multiple mediations to which institutions, experts, the media themselves and audiences are subjected are expressed in the meanings of the environment. Media and journalistic research have to deal with this complexity from discursive, interdisciplinary, internationalisation and practical challenges (Olausson & Berglez, 2014). In precarious times, the absence of the environment and sustainability as priority issues in communicative research in the era of mediatisation has become unsustainable (Christensen & Nilsson, 2018; Kannengießer et al., 2021). EC is defined as the study and practice of pragmatic, constitutive means of expression that define and confront our ecological relations with the world. Pragmatic communication means instrumental communication; it is used to do something such as educate, alert or persuade. The goal is to convince the audience and influence their behaviour, attitudes or practices. Likewise, constitutive communication is defined in an active sense, playing a dynamic role in what we believe or whom we trust and what matters to us (Pezzullo, 2017). RC and EC dovetail in incorporating climate change as a core issue in their research agendas, as shown in the two reference journals *Risk Analysis* and *Enviromental Communication*.

In *Risk Analysis*, which was launched in 1980, one can trace the transformation of the concept of risk through the revision of RC according to messengers, attributes of the message and audiences (Balog-Way et al., 2020) until identifying its current state: new themes yet with continuity; polyhedral approach without dominant formulas; intense, complex debate on concepts like trust, transparency and uncertainty;[5] and finally 'perseverance' (Kasperson, 2014) as a basic processual value that cannot be considered shut. In *Environmental Communication*, which was created in 2007, the field is institutionalised (Akerlof et al., 2022) with the seminal article by Cox (2007), which defines EC as a discipline in crisis with a non-negotiable ethical burden,[6] completing the leap from an embryonic common future (Brundland, 1987) to this inescapable journey that we have to take to reach sustainability (NRC, 1999). In both RC and EC, the formula chosen to classify the communication research dovetails in segmenting the process classically into senders, messages and receivers (Rickard, 2019) or into production, content and social implications (Hansen, 2011). Similarly, Moser (2010) chooses these essential segments in the communication process applied to CCC. The coincidence in dissatisfaction with the partial results underscores the need to connect it to the entire communication process.

EC, which was defined by Cox as a discipline in crisis, will have a hard time breaking away from the pragmatic dogmas geared at instrumental communication aimed implicitly at 'resolving the crisis'. A pragmatic perspective fails when considering the forms whereby communicating risks transforms the social meanings, relations and power dynamics related to the environment. As Rickard (2019: 3) reports, Pezzullo and Cox (2016) subsume CR as a field of research within EC. This synthesis between risk and crisis converges in the definition of the pragmatic and constitutive functions of communication, which should coexist convergently in light of climate change,[7] with new ambitions for communication research.[8]

Disaster Risk Communication

Natural disasters have ceased being so by either anthropic action or omission. The higher frequency of disasters and the need to lower their risk converge in the Sendai Framework (2015), the most elaborate formulation for responding on multiple scales. This interdisciplinary proposal promotes the community engagement, and institutions have to work in an integrated fashion (Donovan et al., 2019). It views disaster as a severe disruption in the functioning of a community which surpasses its ability to respond to it with its own resources, where linear transmission is insufficient and lacks the capacity to capture singularities. Calls for convergence are repeated in the underpinnings of this field (Peek et al., 2020), and the conceptualisation of communication is once again the object of bias and simplification. However, a holistic understanding of the problem pushes for the engagement of the affected communities from the very start of the process. 'Emergency' marks the turn towards impactful, urgent phenomena, where unpredictability becomes defining in the reduction of disasters but is understood in a more integral fashion from 'prospective risk management' in order to avoid and prevent them (Esquivel, 2021).

RC is crucial in lowering the risk of disaster (Volenzo et al. 2019) in that it implies anticipation and response to potential threats. In order for this process to be effective, institutional trust and community and media engagement are needed, in addition to integrated communication in the messages, which should be appropriate in time and form in both transmission and reception (Fakhruddin, 2020). This focus on building integrative models capable of encompassing the diversity of communicative intervention actions in situations of risk, crisis and emergency are a paradigmatic example of the instrumental vision in the form of alerts and messages of protection and evacuations or recommendations. Reynolds and Seeger (2005) discern between risk and crisis communication according to the goals, scope and forms of intervention, but they suggest a connected, interdependent working communication model (Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication, CERC). Pragmatic communicative immersion necessitates reviving a constitutive vision in which the RC process participates more democratically in the co-production of knowledge, which is essential for DRC (Donovan et al., 2019).

DRC has historically been dominated by the transfer of information in a single direction, from the authorities to the public, more than an interactive flow of information (Bradley et al., 2014). The difficulties of the evaluation, design and

effectiveness of these interventions are quite high because of the specificities of the disasters, the confusion of the responses or the complexity of the recovery actions. The communicative relationship established with communities is key in breaking with misunderstandings of the measures agreed upon. Despite the organisational efforts to include situated knowledge in the reconstruction phase, those in charge tend to choose technical solutions, even if the local communities co-produce decisions, inscribing them in the communicative processes (Opdyke et al., 2016).

This shift leads concepts to emerge like disaster communities (Matthews & Thorsen, 2020), meaning subjects, *disaster communication communities*. The local media and local journalism take on a prominent role when adaptively intervening in the communicative dynamics and social interconnections that emerge from the dangers, vulnerabilities and inequalities that are driving the disaster. As an on-the-ground field, DRC has reinforced the importance of action in light of extreme weather phenomena. In this scenario, communities play a transformative role, turning the disasters into opportunities by lowering their risk. Good communication saves lives through communities with greater resilience; however, the conversion towards action does not respond to simple recipes in which communication is merely a toolkit. Lavell notes that lowering risk is one thing, and avoiding it is another (Esquivel, 2021: 254). Corrective, reactive or compensatory management are insufficient if we consider risk as central and therefore how to avoid its construction in the future. This requires prospective management geared at impeding or preventing it more than at lowering the existing risk.

The process of merging communication and risk with the climate crisis and emergency is coupled with the conceptual transformation of disaster risk management, which works towards preventive, anticipatory actions focused less on disasters. In this mutation, CCC faces the transdisciplinary and conceptual challenge of reversing the direction by making risk prevail over disaster while strengthening resilience, equity and community integration actions.

Communication of Climate Change: from disaster to risk

The effectiveness of measures to get citizens engaged and the way to inform them in a plain, meaningful way based on expertise in decision-making has been a priority. However, since the second decade of this century, this vision focused on mitigation, education or persuasion has shifted towards an approach that is much more focused on getting the public engaged and adapting to the impacts. Moser (2016) optimistically reinterprets the advances in CCC which have successfully coped with many of the shortcomings through greater professionalisation and sophistication, thus reformulating her pessimistic diagnosis in Moser (2010). Regardless, the science of climate communication is dealing with the processual nature of communicative practice, changes in technologies (Pearce et al., 2019; León et al., 2021) and the lack of societal engagement, while activating communication in all phases of the process so that the two processes can cease being a disconnected problem (Moser & Pike, 2015). A single formula that is effective for all audiences does not exist, and segmenting them when guiding or instructing them is not sufficient. The debate has to be revitalised based on difference to maintain public engagement with truly living science, not controlled by the agents who are part of the problem. Carvalho et al. (2021) reflect critically on this while highlighting the processes of constructing meaning, sociocultural contexts, relational dynamics and issues associated with power.[9]

Craig's (1999) metamodel is applied to CCC in an inspiring way by Ballantyne (2016), who states that communication has been inadequately theorised in climate research (Kumpu, 2022). As an ontological entity beyond epistemological and methodological discussions, communication enriches and actively intervenes in the partial debates that have prevailed in the social research on climate change.[10] The constitutive shift considers other ways much more closely aligned with its complexity, yet also with communication as a concept and process. Smith and Lindenfeld (2014) suggest the cross-disciplinary integration of media studies to contribute to resolving the dilemmas of EC and CCC. Researchers have to not only get involved in the media contents and effects but also promote social learning that can drive the transition to sustainability. They have to set out to generate solutions by taking part in cross-disciplinary teams to participate in deciding what information is communicated, why and with what impact. This added value positions them in a broader working context where scientists, journalists and public decision-makers act as true interlocutors to reorient the questions about the media and what ends they are pursuing.

From disaster to risk, CCC is geared at the praxis of everything that matters to people. The upcoming transformation depends on what the community of communication experts can do in the midst of an unavoidable crossroads: strengthening the constitutive ambition of their conceptual approach, and the cross-disciplinary integration and ethical responsibility of their proposals, in convergence with EC's call:

> *Scholars, teachers and professionals have the duty to educate, question, critically evaluate, or otherwise speak in appropriate forums when social/symbolic representations of 'environment', knowledge claims or other communication practices are constrained or suborned for harmful or unsustainable policies towards human communities and the natural world. Relatedly, we have a responsibility through our work to identify and recommend practices that fulfil the first normative tenet: to enhance the ability of society to respond appropriately to environmental signals relevant to the well-being of both human civilization and natural biological systems.*
>
> (Cox 2007:16, cited in Pezzullo 2017)

Communication research has a great deal to contribute

to this ongoing conversation. Even though it cannot do it alone, it has to be steadfast in what it can offer, while also showing curiosity towards what other fields can contribute. It is a complex problem that has to be tackled in a network with multiple connections, in which people's participation and ideas outside academia, poised to interact, are prioritised (Sprain et al. 2010). When environment and climate change cease being issues of experts and come to affect all political and everyday spheres, communication practices have to be shielded in their primacy both in the mediated circulation of narratives and in the production of solution-oriented social knowledge. Communication research with its modalities of access and influence over the public is shifting towards a dialogic positioning with other academic disciplines and society. In the conversion of knowledge into action, as the science of sustainability is necessitating, the ideas communicated about climate change become of a means of expression of the future in our present.

Notes

1. 'Climate emergency' is an expression that was first promoted in *The Guardian* in 2019 in the guise of recommendations to help journalists to be scientifically accurate and to better communicate complex, urgent environmental topics to readers. Since then, it has become a symbol of the impetus for mobilisation. Acknowledged as the word of the year by the Oxford Dictionary in 2019, it has been included in many political declarations. With the hopes of relaunching climate action for global governance, it has been interpreted in many different ways according to perceptions, interests and values. Hulme (2019) questions its effects: there is no going back now, and its grassroots effectiveness may strip it of meaning while challenging attention to the SDGs, which are now the heart of climate emergency policies.
2. A 'wicked problem' is a complex, intractable natural phenomenon without an obvious solution characterised by a large dose of uncertainty, controversy and scepticism, and with limited citizen engagement.
3. 'Tipping point' is a widely used metaphor to drastically alert the public about the irreversibility or danger of climate change while highlighting the impossibility of going back. Despite this, its overuse means that it has been used quite differently by scientists and journalists depending on their communicative purposes: as a specific alert, a theoretical concept, a dramatic resource or a generic cry for radical social change (van der Hel et al. 2018).
4. This era was defined by the Nobel prize-winner in Chemistry, Crutzen (2002:23). For a media and communicative approach to the Anthropocene in a radicalised environment of mediatisation in the construction of both sense and meaning, see Bergillos (2020; 2021). For a more historical and philosophical vision of the effects in the social sciences, see Charbonnier (2017).
5. Another transversal concept to be considered in intrinsic interconnection with communication is public engagement and all its derivations and degrees of application. In fact, this has become a priority topic of research in recent years. Wibeck (2014) offers a systematic review of the scholarly literature on communication and public engagement geared at environmental education. From a more political standpoint, see Carvalho et al. (2017). The conceptual discussion of civic engagement as an ultimate goal and priority challenge once again clashes with the pragmatic or constitutive approach, where instead of being mere receivers of messages, citizens should actively integrate in learning, consensus, action and the generation of knowledge (Brulle 2010; Pearce et al 2015).
6. The ethical responsibilities of EC researchers with regard to ecological degradation make them a group committed to grapple with the greatest challenge of our time (Joosse et al 2020).
7. 'To deal with these challenges at society level, which often entail addressing environmental risks and for human health, the science of sustainability has emerged in the past two decades as a research process geared at solutions in which multiple stakeholders, from experts in thematic areas to members of the lay public, create knowledge designed to inform and support action, as well as to maintain socioecological health' (Rickard 2019: 9).
8. 'Research adopting a ritual view of communication tends to be less interested in questions of influence, asking more specific questions about the pervasive and ubiquitous role media play in the ways society's institutions function, as well as in the way people structure and give meaning to their everyday lives' (Deuze 2021: 9).
9. 'Rather than an individual process, engagement with climate change is viewed as tied to social and material interactions, whereby meanings are shaped and challenged collectively. In addition, rather than positioning people as consumers (of products and ideas) and spectators (of politics), we are interested in anti-essentialist understandings of their agency as citizens in civic places. We posit that people's understandings of climate change, as well as of their positionality and potential agency in relation to climate change, are *constituted* in their communication. Likewise, civic action is largely *performed* through communication practices' (Carvalho et al. 2021:2).
10. Carvalho et al. (2021) claim that much of the research on climate change in the social sciences has been surprisingly a-social, focusing on individually themes rather than on the social level. This makes the link between research in CCC and action geared at civic participation more necessary than ever.

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Is Peace Journalism Possible in Indian Journalism? Perceptions of a Select Few Indian Journalists

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Abstract

The present study is the first ever attempt to discern if peace journalism, by far the most well-known in media studies for being largely devoted to media portrayals of external conflicts between nations, could be applied to the Indian media in the context of expanding Indian journalism since globalization. The study is also the first ever approach to shed light on India's past ethos, drawn from its spiritual texts and discourses, and to delineate the long history of Indian journalism (Murthy, 2010; 2017) which constantly violated the practice of peace advocated in the ancient Indian spiritual texts. Adopting a multi-perspectival approach combining both hermeneutics and discourse methods as applicable to interviews, the study elicited answers to an unstructured questionnaire from some prominent Southern journalists. The findings suggest that the Indian journalists' view of 'peace journalism', contrary to how it was understood to sound in the West, is not relevant to Indian journalism by scope, definition, and extent.

Keywords

Peace Journalism, Conflict Promotion, Sensationalism and Hype, Market-driven Journalism, Indian Journalism, Mindful Journalism, Media Culture, Newsroom Cultures.

Resum

Aquest estudi és un primer intent de destriar si el periodisme de pau*, el més conegut de lluny en els estudis dels mitjans de comunicació, ja que està dedicat sobretot a les representacions mediàtiques dels conflictes externs entre nacions, es podria aplicar als mitjans de comunicació indis en el context de l'expansió del periodisme indi des de la globalització. També és una primera aproximació per abocar llum sobre l'*ethos *de l'Índia en el passat, extret dels seus textos i discursos espirituals, i dibuixar la llarga història del periodisme indi, que transgredeix constantment la pràctica de la pau preconitzada en els antics textos espirituals indis. L'estudi adopta un enfocament multiperspectiva que combina tant l'hermenèutica com els mètodes del discurs aplicables a les entrevistes, per tal d'obtenir respostes a partir d'un qüestionari no estructurat a alguns periodistes destacats del sud de l'Índia. Els resultats suggereixen que la visió dels periodistes indis sobre el* periodisme de pau*, al contrari del que es creia a Occident, no és rellevant per al periodisme indi, tant pel seu abast com per la seva definició.*

Paraules clau

Periodisme de pau, promoció de conflictes, sensacionalisme, periodisme orientat al mercat, periodisme indi, periodisme conscient, cultura dels mitjans, cultures de les sales de premsa.

Introduction

Peace journalism is all about contributing news to a sustainable, coexistent, and mutually inclusive society. Contribution to peace happens in several ways depending on the orientation of a country's topography and culture both within and without. For instance, under its ancient spirituality and its philosophical traditions, India is a peace-loving country that has given birth to peace apostles such as Goutam Buddha (563/480 BCE) and Mahatma Gandhi (2 October 1869–30 January 1948). Both these leaders have inspired several other leaders in subsequent generations to emulate the path of peace and non-violence. Yet, much violence reverberated across India both before and after the Partition for several reasons.

India, as a nation-state, is a much-disputed fact by postcolonial scholars (Linz & Stepan, 1996, for a nation-state debate thesis). These scholars argue that several marauders have invaded the country over several centuries, weaning away each time a part of what is notionally described as *Akhand Bharat* (Grand India) by the traditional and conservative think tanks of India. While violence from across borders was/is an undeniable fact, it is also true that India, the so-called *Akhand Bharat*, was/is never peaceful within its notional *Akhand Bharat* territories (Tharoor, 2016).

During pre-colonial times also, India, which was a compendium of hundreds of tiny nations, was a witness to continuous wars and conflicts between smaller and larger kingdoms. Despite numerous Indian philosophical and epic texts emphasising

the value of nonviolence and discouraging violence against humankind, Indian history bears rich testimony to incessant violence rather than the practice of nonviolence. Texts like Kautilya's (4th c. BCE) *Arthasastra* (Science of Economics) and Vishnu Sarma's (3rd c. BCE) *Panchatantra* (Five Strategies to Win) offered some peace models that contribute to a "sustainable peace", which in other words today can be construed as the earliest discourse of peace in the literature as well as in later forms of media communication.

In the present article, the author first offers a brief description of the Indian *ethos*, strongly advocating the need for peace in every sphere of Indian life. Secondly, the author moves on to the paradoxical role that the media have been continuously performing, both as perpetrators of conflicts as well as mediators of their resolutions since colonial times. It is this unique media strategy, very singular to India, which problematizes the whole relevance of peace journalism to Indian media. The author lays out that, in the process, the media could not eschew their market-driven journalistic ambitions, as argued by Sunanda Datta Ray (2000), Ajit Bhattacharjea (2000), and Sevanti Ninan (1995), which have become phenomenal in post-privatisation and globalisation (Murthy, 2010; Murthy et al., 2010; Murthy, 2017; 2018a). Thirdly, the author offers the views of highly regarded panellists for regional and national television channels on the possibility of Indian media taking recourse to peace journalism, contrary to their present practice of portraying every issue, major or minor, local or regional or national, as *a'la* war that could be viewed as a 'construct' or a '*tamasha*' (a funny spectacle or a melodrama) on the small screen. Lastly, the article has a critical discussion of why peace journalism is not yet a reality in India, which was once a symbol of peace.

Peace Discourse in India

Ahimsa (non-violence) means 'no injury' to self or others. It includes actions, verbal abuse, and thoughts filled with vengeance or revenge. Classical Hindu texts like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* debate the principles of *Ahimsa* when one is faced with war and situations requiring self-defence. Historical Indian literature has in this way contributed to modern theories of just war and self-defence (Chapple, 1990). The discussions between Lord Krishna and the Kauravas, Vidura and Dhritarashtra, and Vidura and Pandavas in the *Mahabharata* dwelt at length on the "sustainability of peace" as a matter of state policy. Similar discussions between Sugriva and Rama, Angad and Ravana, and Hanuman and Ravana in the great epic *Ramayana* offered ample material for developing a "theory of peace journalism" relevant to Indian as well as universal contexts. The essence of the *Upanishads,* the end of the *Vedas* known as *Vedanta*, is centred on *Ahimsa*. Walli's (1974) comprehensive study gives an overview of the whole idea of *Ahimsa.*

Even in the *Gita* (which is a compendium of 108 *Upanishads*), Lord Krishna offers Arjuna a vivid description of the gains of non-violence and truth as essential principles of human life for sustainable peace, besides material and spiritual development. That does not mean to say that conflict could be forever absent, but it (the *Gita*) rather advises us on how to handle conflict management in terms of fighting for the 'truth' (Chapple, 1990; Tharu, 2020). It is here Buddhism differs slightly from the perception of Hinduism. Buddhism recommends absolute tolerance. Eminent scholars in India contend that Buddhism is an offshoot of Hinduism, though some may differ with this view.

Unfortunately, the importance of 'peace' as an ideal way of life always contrasts with the concurrent existence of perpetual 'violence' in India. Thus, the recurrent violence because of wars and conflicts between and among Indian kingdoms before the invasion by foreigners has rendered 'peace' an immensely scarce commodity (Tharoor, 2016). However, this is not a feature just at the State level. Individuals, social groups of various kinds, and then 'the State' itself—all have added to the conflicts on one or another of the issues that were taken advantage of both by the mighty Indian kings as well as foreigners. From the 17th to the 19th centuries, Indian kings such as Harshavardhana (590-647 CE), Allauddin Khilji (1296-1316 CE), and Akbar united India under a single empire.

In his latest work—*An Era of Darkness: The British Empire*—, Tharoor (2016) offers a lucid description of how this phenomenon led to the establishment of the British Empire in India. In the name of peace and stability, a series of wars have torn the countries of the subcontinent apart and turned the people who lived there into slaves for invaders from North Asia, West Asia, and the West. All of these annexations and kingdom restructurings resulted in heavy bloodshed and a massive loss of human life at a time when Buddhism, a religion strongly committed to nonviolence, was reigning at its peak in both India and Asia (Gombrich, 2006). This is the irony of India, which has laid the foundations for peace since times immemorial.

During colonial times, it was very hard to find even traces of terms such as 'peace' and 'non-violence' that lasted for over 200 years (Tharoor, 2016: 5-6; Durant, 1930: 7). Durant wrote in his famous work *The Case of India* that "when, in 1803, the invading British besieged the Fort at Agra, and their cannon struck near the beautiful Khass Mahal, or Hall of Private Audience, the Hindus surrendered at once, lest one of the most perfect creations of the human hand should be ruined like Rheims. Who were then more civilized?" (p. 6-7). The British built an empire driven by promoting conflicts between tiny nations, with military aid and support from the East India Company (Tharoor, 2016: 6). Tharoor writes: "In the hundred years after [*the War of*] Plassey, the East India Company, with an army of 260,000 men at the start of the nineteenth century and the backing of the British government and Parliament (many of whose members were shareholders in the enterprise), extended its control over most of India" (2016: 5–6).

Contrary to what most people think, Indian media, which first appeared in the 18th century in India in the form we know them

today, grew stronger and more important during the freedom struggle against British imperialism, and this trend continued into the post-colonial era. Tharoor (2016) writes: "Apologists for Britain, and many critics, tend to give the Empire credit for introducing the concept of the free press to India, starting the first newspapers and promoting a consciousness of the rights a free citizen was entitled to enjoy" (Tharoor, 2016: 95).

During colonial rule and afterwards, the Indian media did somersaults on issues like caste, region, religion, and politics, repeatedly bringing the country to the edge of a crisis while pretending to have salvaged it. They never lost sight of their market priorities, however (Murthy, 2010). For example, Ninan and Chattarji (2013) provide an invaluable detailed version of caste to regional conflicts promoted by the media. In many instances, the media act as perpetrators of conflicts as well as agents of 'conflict resolution' between various partners of conflict (such as the Centre and State, ruling and opposition parties, gender struggles, communal violence, family conflicts, etc.). This questionable role of the media has never been the subject of discussion or study in the classroom.

The author argues that the liberalisation of the media economy led to new ways for owners to align and grow. "This resulted in the formation of new monopolies, leading to monopoly capitalism in which journalists must rework the ethics and values of their profession" (Murthy, 2018a: 91). It automatically converted newsrooms into 'war rooms', as outlined above, in the last decade.

The narrative of the 'peace discourse in India' in the foreground is essential, as Western audiences do not know that the 'peace journalism' that Professor Johan Galtung has churned out is a 'synthesis' of Eastern philosophy that combined Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Hinduism (Gunaratne et al., 2015). Nor do Indian journalists know it. Had they known it, the findings of their responses would have been different. While Vijay Darda (2020), a special correspondent for *The Indian Express* welcomed the introduction of 'peace journalism' into Indian media, Sasi Nair, the editor of *VIDURA* (a monthly journal of the reputed Hindu group of newspapers Chennai) would have not have raised doubts about its suitability for Indian media.

There is another reason for the mention of 'Indian peace discourse'. At the beginning of this new millennium, three scholars of Sri Lankan origin, who began their early careers as journalists, did pathbreaking work in relating Buddhist ideas to journalism and mass communication. They are Dissanayake (1983), Gunaratne (2007), and Seneviratne (2012). Mark Pearson from Australia described their work as Mindful Journalism. It dealt with the relationship of the principles of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism to journalism and mass communication. Though both Galtung (1985) and Gunaratne et al. (2015) veered around Buddhism to produce a different but balanced version of conflict resolution journalism, they could not avoid coining two different schools of journalism that disapproved of the present pursuit of aggressive and violent journalism. Peace journalism is also known by various names but precludes 'mindful journalism'. Surprisingly, Gandhi has been a key reference point in many works by Galtung (1955; 1985).

Literature survey

As mentioned in the foregoing, Johan Galtung (1985), an academic from Norway (which does not have any history of peace traditions like India had) originally conceived the concept of 'peace journalism' from the four Eastern philosophies as an ideal mode of reporting for the mainstream press in areas of conflict. According to him, Buddhism is such that no one can use it to justify direct and structural violence, war, and exploitation. He has simply applied the principles of these philosophies and religions to the journalism and mass communication fields, beginning with his widely known study on 'the structure of foreign news' in the mid-1960s (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). His peace research eventually culminated in the advocacy of a new approach to journalism called 'peace journalism' (PJ), in sharp contrast to 'war journalism' (WJ) or the current forms of West-centric journalism.

Galtung (1985) argued that Buddhism has tremendous potential as a source for pursuing 'peace' politics to a large extent untapped. At the same time, he pointed out that Buddhism has an inherent weakness in tolerating highly violent systems. Though Galtung recognised the focus of Buddhism on the improvement of 'self', he overlooked supplementing his peace journalism with the mental cultivation that Buddhism very much advocated (Gunaratne et al., 2015: 8). The reason is that Galtung developed his 'peace journalism' from the religion of Buddhism, while Gunratne et al.'s 'mindful journalism' emanated from the core philosophy of Buddhism comprising 15 principles (Gunatrane, 2007, 2009).

According to Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), 'peace journalism' is when editors and reporters make choices—of what stories to report and how to report them—that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict (p. 5). Lynch (2014) argued that the "agency" available to journalists—the freedom to choose what to write—is constrained by the structures in which they work. However, journalism itself is a structure, and one to be reckoned with (p. 3). Lynch draws heavily on Dov Shinar's work, the Galtung-inspired five-point model with emphasis on exploring the background to a story, giving voice to all parties, coming to creative conflict resolution, exposing lies on all sides, and drawing attention to peace stories and post-war developments (Ottensen, 2014: 382-385).

Galtung argued in 2006 that journalists should look into the causes of conflicts instead of just reporting on what happens during them (Falk, 2008). Scholars in this area identify four important characteristics of peace journalism: it is (i) conflict-oriented; (ii) truth-oriented; (iii) people-oriented; and (iv) solution-oriented. The advocates of peace journalism argue that

journalists who report to the mainstream press themselves act as 'gatekeepers' and should report only facts without inflating or bloating them. Hackett (2007: 75-78) argued that by virtue of its "structured subordination to (or imbrication with) the interests of political and economic elites, journalism can still chasten power and enable it to be controlled."

Thus, Lynch says that good journalism can work against journalism itself or at least against journalism as usual (2014: 7). He cites his empirical studies on Indonesia and presents the case of Ghana which tended to suppress free journalism once Kwame Nkrumah came to power in the aftermath of liberation from the British (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005: xv).

Though Lynch has been a student of Johan Galtung and worked with him closely, how he missed the sight of Galtung's Buddhist approach to peace journalism is a big enigma. In his famous work, the *Global Standard for Reporting Conflict* (2014), one would not find a single mention of the Buddhist approach of Galtung anywhere. Mark Pearson, who named Gunaratne et al.'s work "Mindful Journalism", also hailed from Australia like Lynch. Lynch says that "in the context of reporting conflict, journalists, media activists, educators and scholarly researchers have, since the mid-1990s, been debating, teaching, advocating for and attempting to implement peace journalism, a deliberative creative strategy, conceived as a specific response to the policy implications of Galtung's (1965) study."

However, the assumed rejection of journalists' 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' has come under sharp criticism. Hanitzsch (2004) contested Galtung's model of 'peace journalism' and described it as a pack of "myths and fallacies". One influential critique of peace journalism scholarship has been that it regards audiences as a "passive mass that needs to be enlightened by virtue of right and proper reporting," asserted Hanitzsch (2008: 75). Loyn, a BBC correspondent (2007), strongly opposed the kind of 'peace journalism' advocated by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005). Loyn argued that peace journalism's opposite is "good" journalism, which traditionally relies on objectivity to uncover a version of the truth that is less relativistic than that produced by the "journalism of attachment" (Loyn, 2007: 2). However, it must be remembered here that Lynch and McGoldrick have offered a fair modicum of prescriptions to journalists to avoid escalation of 'conflict' and 'violence' due to reporting. Even so, Majid Tehranian (2002) has provided ten valuable commandments to diffuse the escalation of 'conflict' and 'violence' through the reporting of both internal and external conflicts.

Ottosen (2007), despite admiring and supporting Galtung's theory of 'peace journalism', opposed his (Galtung's) text-based model for underestimating the visual aspects of war and peace reporting. He, along with his colleague Stig A. Nohrstedt suggested critical analysis of visual aspects of reporting conflict to supplement Galtung's 'peace journalism' model. However, Samuel Peleg's defence of peace journalism dismisses the contention of Hanitzsch (2004) that 'objectivity' is the most important issue to worry about. According to Peleg, regarding 'the objectivity position', reporting what you see is not the most important issue when the main point of a story often is what you don't see. Thus, he preferred to differ from Loyn's position. More or less, he has taken the line of Lynch and McGoldrick's (2005) prescriptions for war reporting journalism.

Media researcher Wilhelm Kempf (2007), who used the peace journalism model in his research in Yugoslavia, basically supports its framework, even though he criticizes the book written by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) wherein they in turn criticise Loyn's position on 'objectivity' (2007: 4). Turning away from the call for 'objectivity', as suggested by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) and Hackett (2006), not only jeopardises the peace journalism project's acceptance in the journalistic community but also twists peace journalism into a form of "advocacy journalism" which leads directly to public relations and propaganda and can erode the trust its recipients have in peace journalism (Shinar & Kempf, 2007: 7).

Tehranian (2002), a renowned communication scholar in Islamic communication, argued while analysing the reporting of 9/11 that "ethically responsible" journalism is a *sine qua non* of peace journalism. He advocates a shift of focus from journalist-centric ethics to institutional ethical frameworks, which need to have international agreements among themselves to ensure that war reporting becomes institutionally responsible and accountable. He further calls for pluralism in media structures at the regional, national, and global levels to achieve pluralism in content.

Hussain (2016) studied the media coverage of the Taliban in Pakistan. He observed that in a conflict situation where national interests are involved, the media become nationalistic and patriotic, leaving behind the considerations of quality and good journalism. Abdul-Nabi (2017) says that the peace journalism model is a "rebellious form" and an "international reform movement" that aims to change the professional standards of traditional journalism.

It is surprising that despite Galtung's proposed model of peace journalism gaining wider acceptability at the height of the dichotomy between war journalism (WJ) and peace journalism (PJ), it continued to raise several theoretical and epistemological questions across practitioners of journalism in the West. It is also equally astonishing to note that a model of peace journalism has stemmed from a scholar from Norway, which has no known philosophical or spiritual *ethos* like India advocating for peace and nonviolence. Nor does Norway have any history of bloody wars in the past. Alternatively, Gunaratne, Pearson, and Senarath (2015) have proposed a model of 'mindful journalism' that offers new dynamics of news ethics for positive reporting in the digital era. Inspired by fundamental Buddhist ethical principles, mindful journalism suggests that the profession of journalism can adopt Buddhist strategies to add clarity, fairness, and equity to news decision-making and provide a moral compass for journalists facing ethical dilemmas in their work. Their practice is the most effective way to remove conflicts and the associated flow of agony from news coverage and media reporting (Murthy Book Review, 2016).

Even today, Norway continues to be the safest place on earth for journalists, while India occupies a position that poses a terrible threat to their safety and security (Murthy, 2018b). At the same time, the unfair way media outlets and journalists stir up social conflicts both inside and outside borders goes against what most people want. This paradox in Indian media centrally engages the present study.

From the foregoing literature survey, it becomes amply clear that the present state of journalism in India is stuck somewhere in the continuum between two emerging schools of thought on journalism: peace journalism and mindful journalism. Both of these new schools of thought want a more holistic approach to journalism and do not like how news is becoming more commercialized, sensationalized, and commoditized through stories that create or exacerbate conflicts and crises.

This question arises here as the mass Indian media have been performing a dubious role by relaying images of every debate as a conflict/war similar to conflicts across borders as portrayed in the Western media. Such a recurrent relay of images of political leaders "wearing royal attire and crossing swords" or "sporting glances of anger, outrage, and burst" against their opponents in a "face-to-face framing" has been a matter of concern for academics seeking to see the Indian media adopt a peace model that minimises growing violence and conflict in society.

Based on the situation in the Indian media that was described above, the following research questions come to mind:

Research Questions

RQ.1: Is it possible to relate the Western model of peace journalism to the Indian media that does not follow the Indian media *ethos* either?

RQ.2: Is competitive journalism, as implicated in Indian media behaviour, justified in portraying every public issue or political issue as an "*a la*" war?

The rest of the article examines these questions from different perspectives on the subject.

Description of the terms of discourse

"a'la" war: It conceives a situation that is similar to or in the manner of war, but does not actually amount to war using weapons to kill people during internal or external crises.

Negativity and grief: Negativity is one of the basic news values, as "bad news is sometimes more newsworthy". But the tendency to portray even what needs to be a neutral or objective report in a negative manner has assumed the form of an unbearable crisis. Similarly, sharing or circulating or conveying the news of the grief of an individual or society to a larger body of the masses or audience is another pathetic trend along with negativity these days in media reporting. As a result, the audience is constantly bombarded with news that agitates their minds and hearts.

Market-driven news and journalism: Market-driven news and market-driven journalism are, for the most part, interchangeable. This term refers to journalism that is written for a specific group of people. It can also mean that the news being reported is meant to impress those groups (McManus, 1994).

Competitive journalism: Conceived as the journalism that enables a particular media house to run first and fast with the latest soft news, defeating all other competitive media houses in the race.

Unstructured questionnaire: It collects qualitative data from the interviewees. This type of questionnaire in this case has a basic structure and some branching questions but nothing that limits the answers of a respondent. The questions are more open-ended. It is very helpful in qualitative communication research.

Methodology

This study is descriptive and grounded in qualitative analysis, adopting both hermeneutics and discourse methods as relevant to the interviews through an unstructured questionnaire. Using an unstructured questionnaire, the author opens up a horizon for the responses of the interviewees and for cross-questioning. The study analysed the interview-based statements of five prominent journalists (their original names have been deleted) who were also panel speakers for regional as well as national electronic media channels in India.

Eric Freedman (2017) has adopted this method for his research 'Journalism after Jail: coping with the trauma of imprisonment', published in *Media Asia*. Similarly, Somani and O'Boyle (2018) have adopted the same method in their latest work on 'TV News in India: Journalists in Transition', published in *Critical Perspectives on Journalistic Beliefs and Actions: Global Experiences* (see Freedman et al., 2018). Both science and social science agree that research methods used by well-known scholars and their predecessors should be used.

Sarah J. Tracy (2020), a renowned qualitative research theoretician, has stated that "interviews are valuable for providing information and background on issues that cannot be observed or efficiently accessed […]. Interviews may also access information on past events, rare occasions, dastardly deeds, clandestine trysts, disasters, or buried emotions" (p. 79). She has not stipulated any particular number of people that one has to conduct interviews with to validate the findings. Indeed, the numbers do not count, but the content that flowed from a select few would go far to establish the findings.

Questions raised in the interviews

The questions posed to the above-mentioned journalists through their mobile phones were open-ended to maintain a continuum of questioning. They were all almost similar to the

questions raised by Western scholars in the West. However, this is the first ever attempt in India to see whether the doubts or scepticism raised by Western scholars on the success of peace journalism as a model for mainstream journalism is relevant to India.

The questions raised included a wide range, beginning with the relevance of the peace model of journalism to Indians. Why were newsrooms transformed into war rooms at the turn of this millennium in a country that has had a strong *ethos* of peace and non-violence since Vedic times? The study tried to get journalists to talk about the most important question: What are media companies getting out of turning newsrooms into war rooms? Will it not just stir up the emotions of the general public (audiences) and give a bad impression of the country with a lot of bad news?

Panellists chosen for interviews

The journalists interviewed were: Journalist A, a former editor of *Prajasakti,* a daily newspaper published in Hyderabad; Journalist B, a psychologist and political analyst; Journalist C, a former news bureau chief at the *Deccan Chronicle*, and later resident editor of *Indian Express*, Hyderabad; Journalist D, a former correspondent of All India Radio, Hyderabad, and a political analyst, and Journalist E, a former political leader of the Loksatta party and a panel speaker. All these were also panellists for national channels though they are all based in Deccan, South India.

Journalists/panellists' discourse

As mentioned at the start, the Indian media needs to account for its failure to mitigate the spread of negativity and sorrow. It also has to explain its false pretensions of negotiating peace between conflicting groups. In recent times, Vijay Darda (2020), a special correspondent, has also raised some critical questions on the role of Indian media in fomenting crises rather than alleviating them (2020); "Should it report only the incidents?" Perplexed, Darda queried how the media could get down to the root of the problem and report the truth without further aggravating the conflict. The fact is that "the media is proving incapable of adjudicating its role properly," he added. He did not stop there. He explained further the scenario of the Indian media in relation to the majority of global media: "If a mob lynching is reported anywhere in India, different media groups take opposing stands. In trying to bring out the magnitude of the crime, they start promoting disharmony between the two communities. There are no attempts to indicate that they are trying to broker peace with their journalism. This is the case with not just India alone; the media all over the world lacks a peace agenda."

Asked about this kind of situation widely prevailing in India, Journalist C responded by saying that: "The Indian media is never as mentally mature as one finds with the Western media." But it was pointed out to him that even in the West or in the Middle East, the media failed to adopt 'peace journalism' and preferred to embrace 'war journalism'. The senior Journalist C said that "In my view, peace journalism is a non-starter in India and I am even sceptical of the Indian media ever toeing the line of producing non-violent news." As a response to the persistent questions of the Indian media not adopting its past *ethos* of peace as embodied in Indian philosophy, which also contributed to the development of 'peace journalism' by Galtung, he said that "the current *'tamasha'* effect of portraying any issue in its worst 'violent' form on the small screen vis-à-vis the strong *ethos* of preaching and practising non-violence and peace in ancient India, was a consequence of the evolution of 'realism' divorced from the religious life of ancient prescriptions over time." Today, 'religion' and 'reality' are parallel lines, he argued, and do not impact each other. He also pointed out the growing religiosity in India on the one hand, and political and journalistic ethics drifting from non-violence, peace, and objectivity to violence, subjectivity, and bias on the other. This was in agreement with what Vijay Darda (2020) precisely pointed out in his write-up in *The Indian Express*.

When the same issues of concern were placed before Journalist A, a renowned Marxist analyst, he responded by saying that 'peace journalism' is not possible in developing countries like India. He expressed views on peace journalism from the Marxist perspective. He went further, putting the crux of the issue in the laps of the western countries. He said that war and conflict between different strata of society, such as class enemies (capitalists vs. labour and/or feudalists vs. labour), is a never-ending process in a developing and mixed economy like India. He also added that even assuming that 'peace journalism' is a luxury of developed countries like Norway or Sweden, these countries could not foster a similar ideology of media among other advanced nations like the USA and the UK. Much of the conflict in the world is largely due to the conflict-prone policies of the USA, the UK, and the former USSR, besides international funding agencies. Surprisingly, this issue is not discussed threadbare in the works of either Galtung (1965) or Lynch and McGoldrick (2005).

However, Lynch pointed out similar gaps in the peace journalism discourse, citing the contentions of Liz Fawcett (2002) and David Loyn (2007). Lynch argued that "structuration is always already underway in journalism, which therefore requires the adoption of a deliberate remedial strategy to counter its effects. In this case, familiar patterns of 'news flow' would tend, unless compensated for, to produce representations of global governance issues skewed towards the perspectives and interests of the rich world at the expense of the poor" (2008). This agrees exactly with the views of Journalist A. He did not have a positive view of the media of these nations. According to him, the media of the USA and the UK contributed to the larger share of conflict promotion and violent images of the ongoing Gulf wars and Afghan-Taliban conflicts. He adds that just as entertainment has become news, negativity and sadness have also become news, akin to marketable commodities for the media.

When asked about the visual presentation of 'conflict' images

on television screens for every issue or any issue, Journalist D expressed the view that it was due to the media's intentions to reach larger sections of the audience, besides the "market-driven journalism trends of the US" which turned out to be an emulative ideal for the sustainability of visual media. He further added that the "imagery of conflicts and 'violence' shown in the frames of Indian television, especially in Telugu television, is part of 'sensationalism' and 'hype'. It is just a canvas; the real stuff comes from the different parts of society."

When a particular query was raised from the author's end about whether he meant the influence of Gerbner's cultivation theory (1969) in all such projections, he agreed this was so and said that Gerbner's theory was a corollary to marketing strategies of the US and UK markets that were emulated by the Third World media including India. Do you mean to say that the cultivation theory effect has altered the attitudes of the public? He responded by stating that "over decades of drifting time, the attitudes and aptitudes of Indian people have drastically changed, and people seem to enjoy such violent imagery and abusive verbal exchange among panellists as they are used to more and more such debates in the newsrooms of Indian media houses." Asked further about the indispensability of such images of violence and abusive debates in the media, he said that "whatever they are in a marketing sense, the issues can be handled devoid of aggressive postures of the elements involved in the reporting."

Asked as to why 'peace journalism', which emerged from the peace *ethos* of India at one time, could not be a guiding spirit to Indian journalism, Journalist B, a psychologist and political analyst, responded by stating that "most regional media in India have no occasion to report on border conflicts." This view is in agreement with the view of Journalist C. He explained that "internal conflicts of castes, communities could not be treated on a par with cross border conflicts." He supported the view of Journalist C that peace journalism, as one could gather from the existing literature, stemmed from the reporting methods of the ongoing conflicts between nations in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Middle East. He said that 'peace journalism' would not apply straight away to India despite India having a strong peace *ethos*.

To a question about whether the portrayal of violent images in Indian media is not akin to Western imagery, he replied in the negative. In Journalist C's view, the magnitude of damage to properties and human losses found in the Gulf War or the Afghanistan-Taliban conflict is in no way comparable with what one perceives as a conflict both in politics and in newsroom discussions in India. However, he concurred with Journalist D's view that "war-like images" or "aggressive postures" akin to war/conflict are unwarranted on Indian television screens. Regarding the question of Galtung's suggested objectivity and five-point model as a condition precedent for good journalism, he clarified that there is "sensationalism" and "hype" and an absence of neutrality and objectivity with regard to incidents of conflict in India, and that the structuration of media (see Lynch 2014) is indispensable in developing countries like India. Like Loyn and Hanistzsch, he argued that there is no such thing as absolute neutrality or objectivity. Situational judgments vary from journalist to journalist. "What one journalist perceives as a neutral report may not be 'neutral' to another journalist," he added. In a country like India, where pluralism exists at every turn of life (see Majid Tehranian's ten-point model), it is impossible to stipulate harsh or rigid guidelines to journalists on "neutrality" and "objectivity" he asserted.

Journalist E, a political activist and commentator, straightaway blamed the West for the present trends in the transmission of negativity and sorrow, besides the violent imagery on background screens and abusive discussions, constituting a *'tamasha'* in television newsrooms. To the pertinent question of whether he deemed 'peace journalism' relevant to India, he answered that "it is also a Western product that did not somehow gain popularity in the West itself, let alone India." When the relevance of the strong *ethos* of peace embodied in the Indian scriptures was pointed out to him, he countered that the "modernity" that crept into the education and training of journalists and media management created a disjuncture with the past. He, however, agreed that transmitting violent images and conflicts, riots and clashes, murders and rapes with or without dramatization can certainly be part of 'conflict journalism' or 'war journalism' but does not necessitate the invocation of 'peace journalism' of Galtung's original thesis in *The Structure of Foreign News* (1965).

At the end of the journalists' and panellists' discourse, it appeared that there were sharp differences over accepting 'peace journalism' (PJ), which arose in the West, as an eventual panacea for the Indian media in reducing the transmission of negativity, sorrows, and flare-ups that are impacting on the psyches of Indian multitudes. The overall analysis offers a lot of diversity in the views of the panellists reported here.

Conclusions

The present study, though the first ever on the relevance and application of 'peace journalism' to India, offers clear evidence of the following facts. Firstly, India as a nation-state has an indelible religious and spiritual *ethos* that suggests peace and non-violence as an unalienable human function, with its spiritual texts offering numerous models of peace discourse. Secondly, despite such strong philosophical traditions, the internal conflicts and wars that marred Indian history have disturbed the much-advocated 'peace' and 'non-violence' idealisations. Thirdly, despite all this inflicting a deep injury on the psyche of Indians, the Indian media—a product of the West in education, training, and management—have continued to indulge in promoting conflicts and mediating them later, as Vijay Darda rightly pointed out, taking advantage of differences and dissensions existing within the caste, religion, region, and politics of the State as a nation.

The present study not only offers an overview of the above but also establishes through the interviews with the expert panellists interviewed that 'peace journalism' is impracticable. An inference that could be drawn from the foregoing views of all the panellists is that "there is no direct positive relationship between the expanding media ecology and culture, and the probability of implementing peace journalism" in India. Firstly, many scholars are of the view that peace journalism is relevant to nations that are marred by both external and internal conflicts, such as Syria, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Turkey, etc., leading to terrible damage to property and engendering huge human losses. Thus, the panellists see the relevance of 'peace journalism' (PJ) as a substitute for 'war journalism' (WJ) only about the external conflicts of Western countries (cited above).

Many do not see 'peace journalism' as a model with wider applications for a country like India, despite the latter having a number of internal conflicts. The imagery of *a'la* war in the backdrop of television newsrooms, vulgarity, slang, abuse, and aggressive posturing go to constitute a *'tamasha'* of Indian newsrooms but do not reflect the magnitude and seriousness of the 'actual war imagery' reporting during the external conflicts in the West or the Middle East.

Though many of the scholars mentioned above agree that the negativity and anguish caused by the current trends of media transmission in India are problematic, the relevance of peace journalism to the Indian media scenario is dubious. Further, growing changes in the attitudes and aptitudes of people as a consequence of the influence of cultivation theory towards watching warlike imagery on the television screen inside newsrooms accompanied by violence, vulgarity, obscenity, and aggressiveness may also be one reason as to why and how "conflict and violent" newsroom discussions and debates have become marketable commodities. However, all of the panellists agreed that these could be avoided, but they were sceptical about whether it would happen given media management's current attitudes.

Thus, peace journalism is looked upon as an 'ideal' rather than a phenomenon compatible with the current trends in the Indian media economy, its peace *ethos* notwithstanding. Hence, the inverse relationship between the propositions of peace journalism and the media economy becomes more apparent and a reality. Even though media culture, the economy, and the environment are all expanding, it is unlikely that peace journalism will enter the Indian media scene at this point.

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QUADERNS DEL CAC

Crisis communication and thematic transfer by the Spanish government during COVID-19

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Abstract
The results of this study show that the government's communication strategy has certain shortcomings, such as the high presence of assumptions and contradictions. Likewise, themes like the constant update of deaths and hospitalisations are prioritised, as well as news related to the State Security Forces and Corps. In order to analyse the general features of the government's communication strategy, the press conferences of the Technical Management Committee for the coronavirus and the president of the Spanish Executive during the first few weeks of the state of alarm were watched with the goal of studying to what extent they follow the recommendations of crisis communication and to determine the main themes that appear.

Keywords
Crisis Communication, Institutional Communication, COVID-19, State of Alarm, Health Crisis.

Resum
Els resultats d'aquesta recerca assenyalen que l'estratègia de comunicació del Govern pateix certes mancances, com l'alta presència de suposicions o contradiccions. Així mateix, es van prioritzar temes com l'actualització constant de morts, hospitalitzats, etc. o aquells relacionats amb les Forces i Cossos de Seguretat de l'Estat. Per dur a terme l'anàlisi de les característiques generals de l'estratègia comunicativa del Govern, es realitza un visionament de les compareixences protagonitzades pel Comitè Tècnic de Gestió contra el coronavirus i el president de l'Executiu espanyol durant les primeres setmanes de l'estat d'alarma amb l'objectiu d'estudiar-ne l'adequació a les recomanacions de la comunicació de crisi i els temes principals que apareixen.

Paraules clau
Comunicació de crisi, comunicació institucional, Covid-19, estat d'alarma, crisi sanitària.

1. Introduction

On 1 February 2020, the director of the Health Alerts and Emergencies Coordination Centre (CCAES), Dr Fernando Simón, appeared at a press conference to explain the characteristics of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Spain: a German tourist had tested positive for the coronavirus on the Canary Island of La Gomera after having been in contact with a Chinese citizen in his home country.

From that moment on, given the incessant news of positive cases on the ensuing days, Fernando Simón's press conferences became constant as he attempted to tell citizens how the pandemic was evolving. Thus, the director of the CCAES became a reference figure in finding out about the development of the coronavirus in Spain, although until that time he had remained outside the media spotlight with the exception of the handful of times he had appeared during the 2014 Ebola crisis.

However, this formula of a single spokesperson disappeared as of 17 March, when the press conferences in which Fernando Simón had spoken alone turned into a choral exposition. These press conferences complemented the appearances that the president of the government, Pedro Sánchez, held to report on the health situation and make an array of official announcements.

In this way, the reports by Technical Management Committee and the appearances of Pedro Sánchez are the cornerstones of the Executive's communication strategy during the early stages of the state of alarm in Spain. The attention of both the media and the public at large focused on televised press conferences, which reported on the advance of the pandemic in the country on a daily basis.

2. Theoretical framework. Crisis communication

Political communication has expanded its limits beyond traditional electoral campaigns. Voting periods no longer exclusively capture politicians' efforts, as they did in the past, and now they require specialisation in a variety of areas like governmental communication and crisis communication (Beck,

1992). According to the definition set forth by Pauchant and Mitroff (1992), a crisis is a situation which physically affects the entire system and threatens its fundamental values and even its very existence. Saura (2005), in turn, equates the concept of 'crisis' with a dire situation that affects a company or institution and damages or hinders some of its functions. Furthermore, crises are attributed a series of features which can complement each other to aggravate the situation, such as the potential to escalate in intensity and the possibility of harming key audiences, having a negative media impact or creating or shaping a negative image in public opinion.

Crises, conceived in this case as a public health alert, fundamentally affect two generally interconnected areas. First, they have health repercussions with an impact on the health of the population and the measures that the institution put into motion. Secondly, the space of social perception has to be taken into account, that is, how citizens may interpret the problem and react to it (Mestre-Ortega et al., 2018).

In this sense, Coombs (2014) has divided periods of risks or crises into different phases:

1) Pre-crisis phase, related to all aspects of prevention and preparations to deal with the danger.
2) Crisis phase, related to decision-making and managing the threat.
3) Post-crisis phase, the stage in which the measures taken are assessed after the danger has passed.

Therefore, the field known as crisis communication is in charge of dealing with a crisis situation which meets the aforementioned features. On the one hand, according to González Herrero (1997), crisis communication is an organisation's capacity to reduce or predict future risk and uncertainty factors so it can prepare itself to quickly and effectively take on the communication operations needed to contribute to lowering or eliminating the negative effects that a crisis can have on its image and reputation. On the other hand, Moreno-Castro and Luján López (2009) view crisis communication differently: as the transmission of information to the public about the conclusions reached after assessing the risk and the decisions to be taken regarding the risk in question.

The ultimate goal of crisis communication can be established from different perspectives, which may be complementary but focus on different aspects. On the one hand, given the need to inform the population about important matters related to the risk, the end goal of crisis communication should be to 'provide certainty and eliminate conflict' (Riorda, 2011).

On the other hand, the communication strategy can focus on minimising what is known as reputational risk, that is, avoiding the erosion of the public image of the company or institution managing the crisis. However, having reputation management as the main goal can end up turning into managing the company's or institution's popularity, an effort which tends to be inappropriate, superficial and potentially frustrating, because while risk is manageable, the reputation or image projected to citizens is not (Xifra, 2020).

One of the most prominent issues in crisis communication is when to convey a possible health risk to the public at large, as well as the intensity of the messages, which aim to inform public opinion without causing unnecessary or alarming fear (Rodríguez Andrés, 2011). In this sense, different studies uphold the need to be faithful to the events and not hide the truth in risk situations, as the first step in dealing with a risk is first letting it be known (Acinas, 2007).

Therefore, it can be determined that the Spanish administration did not act in accordance with what is recommended for situations like this one, as it overprotected the population during the early stages of the pandemic, which led to a reality shock in the more advanced phases, when it could have instead chosen a more gradual preparation or transition to the more acute phases of the pandemic (Costa-Sánchez & López-García, 2020).

The population's perception of risk is a substantial factor that plays a key role in institutional communication (Costa-Sánchez & López-García, 2020). In this vein, we should distinguish between objective risk and perceived risk. First, objective risk is the real, certain or authentic danger that a society is facing. On the other hand, perceived risk is defined as the sum of this real danger plus everything surrounding the danger, which Peter Sandman (2012) defines as *threat* plus *indignation*.

The perception of risk is a purely subjective matter. Furthermore, the perception of risk increases when the danger (in this case, a danger to people's health) meets the following requirements (Sandman, 2012):

- It spreads unevenly among the population.
- Precaution does not avoid exposure to risk.
- Its influence is visible among acquaintances, even among family members.
- It comes from unfamiliar or novel sources.
- It is scientifically unknown and subject to contradictory statements from official sources.
- It causes irreversible and hidden damage.
- It causes death.

In consequence, given that the characteristics of the COVID-19 pandemic fit the majority of these requirements, we can determine that the coronavirus crisis generated a notably high perception of risk among the Spanish population.

During periods of crisis or alarm like the current one, the media have wield power and importance (Masip et al., 2020). Under these circumstances, citizens need and demand more information while also calling for higher quality standards in the news they consume (Seeger, Sellnow & Ulmer, 2003). In situations like the COVID-19 pandemic, in which crisis communication emerges as a fundamental factor, elements like transparency, clarity, honesty and empathy become predictors of trust in this crisis communication (MacKay et al., 2021).

However, the level of information that Spanish society received after March, which was described as excessive by the audience itself (Villena-Alarcón & Caballero-Galeote, 2020), had counterproductive effects in citizens. For example, some studies claim that the greater the media exposure, the higher citizens' anxiety (Thompson et al., 2017), a phenomenon which was observed during the early months of the pandemic (Garfin, Silver, Holman & 2020). In fact, citizens' perception of the quality of the information, as well as the Spanish executive's handling of the communication strategy, was negative, and this mistrust spread across society as a whole (Arcila-Calderón, Blanco-Herrero & Oller-Alonso, 2021).

All of this directly affects the reputational factor as a critical element for the management of the political communication of the crisis (Solanilla, 2020), even further magnifying—if possible—the total mistrust in institutions and the political class that characterises today's societies (Edelman, 2019, 2020).

One of the consequences of this reputational crisis is that it creates the ideal breeding ground for the proliferation of fake news (Solanilla, 2020). For example, on 18 March and 18 April, a telephone number was set up to receive hoaxes spread in Spain via the messaging app WhatsApp. A total of 2,353 messages was received, in which 584 different hoaxes were identified, most of them chains of text and video (Moreno-Castro et al., 2020).

In this sense, the nature of the Spanish media system must also be taken into account, as a clear example of the polarised pluralism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) that is common in southern European countries, where there is a high degree of political parallelism and the audiences have historically been partisan (Humanes, 2014; Valera-Ordaz, 2018).

Likewise, the spread of unproven information is particularly harmful during a health crisis, as it can lead to excessive fear, an unreal perception of risk of the gravity of the situation, mistrust in health guidelines and/or the use of treatments that are harmful to our health (Rosenberg, Syed & Rezaie, 2020). In fact, the study conducted by Moreno-Castro et al. (2020) on the fake news received on WhatsApp found that one out of every five news items was on preventing or curing the coronavirus, most of them argued based on the principle of medical authority and promoting the consumption of natural substances.

2.1. The figure of the spokesperson

The figure of the spokesperson is extraordinarily important when deploying a crisis communication strategy. The choice of spokesperson cannot be left to the mercy of improvisation, as their action may condition the public's perception of the management of crisis communication (Crespo, Garrido & Medina, 2017) and their role is essential in building and maintaining the reputation of the image of any institution or company (García-Santamaría, Pérez-Serrano & Rodríguez-Pallarés, 2020).

Different studies show that the best course of action is to appoint a single spokesperson (Mestre-Ortega et al., 2018; Calleja-Reina & Becerra, 2017), although other possibilities are also considered. When this cannot happen due to the complexity and type of the crisis at hand, it is recommended that the spokesperson be the coordinator and director of the crisis committee (Crespo, Garrido & Medina, 2017) to avoid duplicated messages.

One of the most common controversies in the study of crisis communication is what criteria should govern the choice of the spokesperson according to their particular characteristics and skills. This is the usual dichotomy between technical or political profiles.

However, the recent literature seems to have arrived at a kind of consensus on the need to have a technical spokesperson who is credible to the public in these situations, with the goal of reinforcing the organisation's message (Rodríguez Andrés, 2017). That is, the fact that the spokesperson is an expert (an epidemiologist, in this case) gives the communication process much more credibility than if they were a political spokesperson (Peytibi, 2020). However, in other countries where the main spokesperson came from the political sphere, trust was not significantly diminished because a strategy based on science and backed by medicine was employed (Bernard et al., 2021).

3. Objectives

The main objective of this study is to analyse the communication strategy implemented by the Government of Spain regarding the COVID-19 crisis during the lockdown in March and April 2020. Its purpose is to examine the different features of the daily press conferences, the thematic transfer and their suitability given the recommendations of crisis communication. Therefore, the objectives of this study can be summarised in three points:

O.1. To analyse the characteristics of the press conferences of the Technical Management Committee and the president of the Government during the state of alarm (length, speaking time, number of questions, etc.).

O.2. To analyse the different themes addressed in the press conferences (news updates, measures taken, etc.).

O.3. To examine to what extent the general characteristics of the press conferences reflect the recommendations of crisis communication.

4. Research design and methodological questions

The study population of this research is comprised of the successive press conferences held by the Technical Management Committee and the press conferences and institutional statements by the president of the Government, Pedro Sánchez.

It is important to note that the daily press conferences of the Technical Management Committee for the coronavirus were being held before the state of alarm was declared. However, after that time the conferences started to feature five members instead of Dr Fernando Simón appearing alone, as he had until then.

Thus, after the state of alarm was declared, the participants included Dr Fernando Simón, María José Rallo (secretary general of Transports), Miguel Ángel Villarroya (Chief of Defence Staff, JEMAD), Laurentino Ceña (Lieutenant General of the Civil Guard) and José Ángel González (Chief of the National Police).

Regarding the timeframe, we bore in mind press conferences held from 13 March 2020, one day before the state of alarm was declared in Spain, until 25 April 2020, the last day that the press conferences of the Technical Management Committee were held with the presence of the aforementioned members (after that, Dr Fernando Simón once again appeared alone in the press conferences).

Thus, this research took into account a total of 24 press conferences of the Technical Management Committee, as well as 10 of the head of the Spanish Executive. In terms of the press conferences of the Technical Management Committee, those in which Dr Fernando Simón appeared were chosen, as he had become the main spokesperson during the early stages of the health crisis. Therefore, we excluded the 14 days when he was convalescing from COVID-19. With regard to the press conferences of Pedro Sánchez, the sample chosen encompasses all of those held by the president of the Government during the timeframe chosen.

With the objective of analysing the communication strategy used by the Government of Spain after the declaration of the state of alarm, we use a quantitative methodological approach based on content analysis.

Content analysis is one of the most widely used procedures in the field of communication, as well as in many other social science disciplines. According to Berelson, content analysis is 'a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication' (1952: 18).

In this sense, a series of themes was established in order to determine to what extent related issues appeared during the implementation of the communication strategies. Specifically, the following variables were analysed:

- **V1.** Data updates. Part of the speaking time is spent reporting on new figures, totals or the evolution in the number of: a) deaths, b) infections, c) hospitalisations, d) people arrested, e) frontier activity, f) mobility (AVE, airports, motorways, etc.) and g) others.
- **V2.** Institution of new measures. The decisions or new rules which were just implemented or are going to enter into force soon are explained.
- **V3.** Reminders of measures in place. Reminders are provided of the measures in force at the time of the press conference.
- **V4.** Positive effects of the health measures taken. The effectiveness of the restrictions imposed are discussed or highlighted with figures that confirm their appropriateness.
- **V5.** Health recommendations. A series of tips or suggestions are given to citizens, although they are not compulsory.
- **V6.** Calls to citizens. A series of requests or warnings are given to citizens, usually regarding the negative consequences of failing to comply with the rules.
- **V7.** Irresponsible behaviours. Illegal or antisocial actions carried out (or suspected of being carried out) by part of the population are condemned.
- **V8.** Acknowledgement of effort. The efforts and sacrifices being made by a) healthcare workers, b) State Security Forces and Corps (SSFC) and c) population at large are highlighted.
- **V9.** Actions of the State Security Forces and Corps. The actions underway and planned by the Army (within what was known as Operación Balmis), the National Police and the Civil Guard are summarised.
- **V10.** Specific actions of the State Security Forces and Corps. Specific actions that illustrate the efforts of the FCSE are showcased.
- **V11.** Praise of the virtues of the State Security Forces and Corps. The virtues and capacities of the SSFC are showcased.
- **V12.** Fake news. The fake news, hoaxes and other risks of online disinformation related to the health emergency are mentioned and identified as a serious problem within the current situation.

In order to analyse whether or not the press conferences met the recommendations of crisis communication, we used the following variables:

- **V13.** Use of data. Facts and figures are repeatedly used which help complement the speech and lend accuracy to the spokesperson's words.
- **V14.** Empathy. The speaker tries to put themselves into the audience's shoes. Communication experts recommend beginning with a reminder of the victims (in this case, the deceased and ill) and their families' grief.

Table 1. Composition of the sample

Body	Number of press conferences
Technical Management Committee against the Coronavirus	24
President of the Spanish Government (Pedro Sánchez)	10
TOTAL	**34**

Source: Author.

Table 2. Duration of the press conferences

Variable	Body	Average time	Exposure time	% Exposure	Questions time	% Questions
Duration of the apperances	Committee	48:44	29:01	59%	19:43	41%
	President	50:33	23:42	47%	26:51	53%
	TOTAL	**49:39**	**26:21**	**53%**	**23:17**	**47%**

Source: Author.

- **V16.** Confusion. There are contradictions within the same press conferences among the statements of the different speakers participating in it.
- **V17.** Support materials. Additional materials like figures, maps or infographics are used to help clarify the speech.
- **V18.** Assumptions. The content of the press conferences includes data that have not been scientifically endorsed or about which there is not total certainty.
- **V19.** Opacity. The journalists' questions are not answered completely and satisfactorily. Unproven data is shared, or the reality of the situation is not explained transparently.

6. Results

It is essential to highlight the fact that the tables show data from both the Technical Management Committee and the president of the Government in different formats. Both results also appear combined in both tables, which should be interpreted as the overall communication strategy used by the Government.

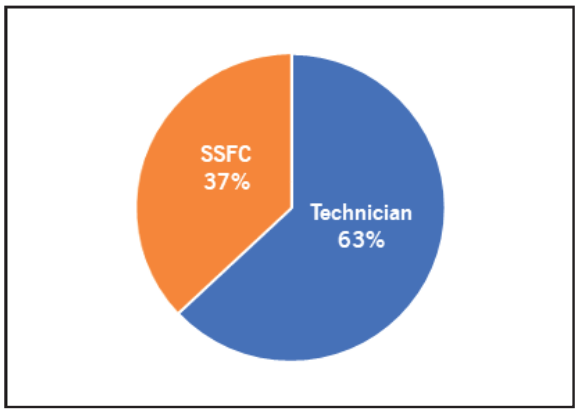
6.1. Characteristics of the press conferences

Given the general characteristics of the press conferences of the Technical Management Committee and the president of the Government, Pedro Sánchez, we first find that both last a similar length of time (Table 2). However, this figure is influenced by the brief length of the first conference by the president of the Government (on 13 March), which only lasted 6 minutes and 11 seconds. Without taking this press conference into account, the mean length of his appearances is 55 minutes and 6 seconds, a mean of almost 7 minutes longer than those of the Technical Management Committee (48 minutes and 39 seconds).

Regarding the specific features of the press conferences of the Technical Management Committee, namely the multiple voices participating in them, the results show that Fernando Simón, the director of the Health Alerts and Emergencies Coordination Centre, played a core role in them. The distribution of speaking time according to the profile of the spokespersons participating in the conferences (Figure 1) indicates that technical speakers were more important than those from the State Security Forces and Corps, even though the latter had more spokespersons (three representatives from the SSFC versus two technical spokespersons).

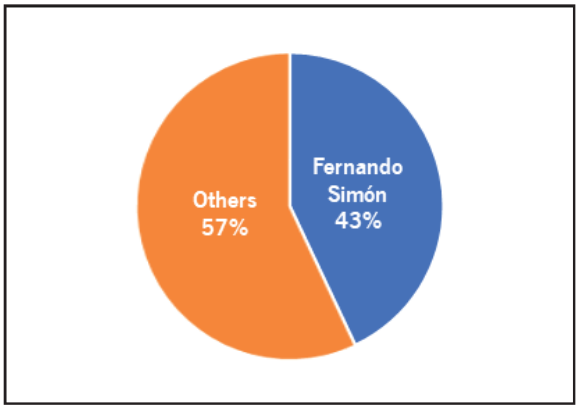
In fact, Dr Fernando Simón was the spokesperson with the most speaking time during the press conferences of the Technical Management Committee, with 43% of the total time

Figure 1. Profile distribution (Technical Management Committee)



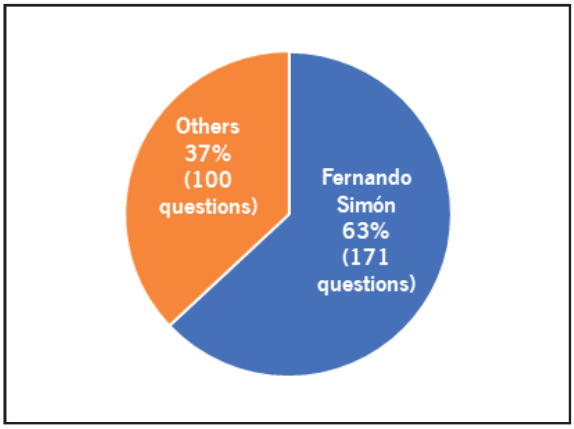
Source: Author.

Figure 2. Time spent by Fernando Simón during the press conferences (Technical Management Committee)



Source: Author.

Figure 3. Distribution of the questions based on to whom the questions were addressed (T. M. Committee)



Source: Author.

Table 3. Themes in the appearances

Variable	Body	Absolute frequency	Average per press conference	Rang de variació
Data updates	Committee	613	26	22-31
	President	19	2	0-6
	TOTAL	**632**	**19**	**0-31**
Planned actions of the SSFC	Committee	396	17	11-20
	President	0	0	0
	TOTAL	**396**	**12**	**0-20**
Acknowledgement of effort	Committee	219	9	4-15
	President	123	12	4-19
	TOTAL	**342**	**10**	**4-19**
Appeals to the population	Committee	168	7	1-12
	President	110	11	6-15
	TOTAL	**278**	**8**	**1-15**
Anecdotal actions by the SSFC	Committee	184	8	4-13
	President	0	0	0
	TOTAL	**184**	**5**	**0-13**
Reminder of measures in place	Committee	110	5	1-11
	President	50	5	0-10
	TOTAL	**156**	**5**	**0-11**
Institution of new measures	Committee	61	3	0-7
	President	93	9	3-26
	TOTAL	**154**	**5**	**0-26**
Praise to the virtues of the SSFC	Committee	139	6	1-15
	President	10	1	0-4
	TOTAL	**149**	**4**	**0-15**
Health recommendations	Committee	90	4	0-10
	President	35	4	0-10
	TOTAL	**125**	**4**	**0-10**
Positive effects of the measures taken	Committee	25	1	0-3
	President	33	3	0-10
	TOTAL	**58**	**2**	**0-10**
Irresponsible behaviours	Committee	52	2	0-5
	President	5	1	0-2
	TOTAL	**57**	**2**	**0-5**
Fake news risks	Committee	27	1	0-4
	President	10	1	0-3
	TOTAL	**37**	**1**	**0-4**

Source: Author.

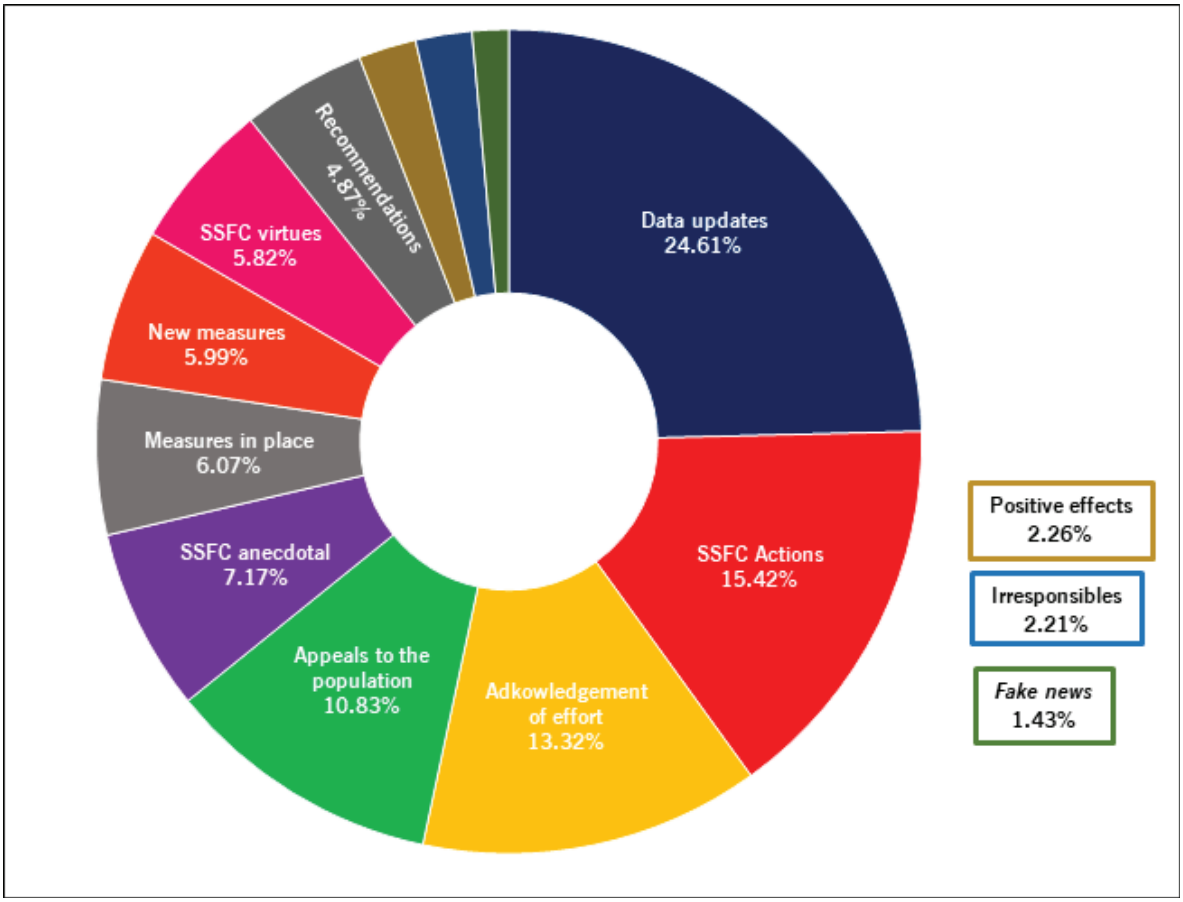
(Figure 2). The remaining 57% is divided among the other four spokespersons, who figured less prominently. Simón's leading role becomes even more evident if we observe the distribution of questions asked by journalists (Figure 3); 63% of the questions asked to the Technical Management Committee were directed at the director of the CCAES, while the remaining 37% were answered by other members of the Committee.

6.2. Themes in the press conferences

With regard to the analysis of the themes that stood out the most in the Government's communication strategy during the early weeks of the state of alarm, Table 3 offers the results on their respective importance.

Some of the issues which they sought to highlight were the following. The first is the frequency with which the figures on deaths, infections, hospitalisations, etc. were updated, during several press conferences the results reveal that there is a vast gulf between the Technical Management Committee and the president of the Government. The difference in criteria between the two bodies is also visible in the minimum and maximum number of times the different figures were updated during the press conferences. While the Technical Management

Figure 4. Distribution of the topics of the appearances of the Technical Management Committee and the President of the Government (%).



Source: Author.

Committee never mentioned the evolution in these figures fewer than 22 times, the maximum number of updates provided by Pedro Sánchez was six.

With regard to the themes that involved the population the most directly, which are associated with the conduct of society as a whole, acknowledgement of both citizens' and healthcare workers' and the military's efforts is the most prominent in the communication deployed by the Government. This is followed by the constant calls to citizens on the importance of behaving responsibly. One of the president of the Government's common allusions was an appeal to unity, coordination and collaboration, not only among the population at large but also among government institutions. Pedro Sánchez attached greater importance to these two themes in his respective press conferences, although during the conference held on 18 March, Fernando Simón admitted that both acknowledgements of effort and calls to citizens were like 'sections' within the press conferences because of how frequently they appeared.

The results also indicate that an average of four health recommendations were given per press conference, which rose to ten during the times when the death and infection figures were the highest.

Topics related to the SSFC show the most disparity between the Technical Management Committee and the president of the Government. Pedro Sánchez never mentioned the actions planned by the SSFC at any time in any of his press conferences, nor did he mention the specific actions they were carrying out. However, these two topics were particularly prominent in the press conferences of the Technical Management Committee and its three spokespersons from the SSFC, as they appear 17 and 8 times, respectively.

Finally, both are identical in terms of how often they mentioned the risks of hoaxes and unproven information during the pandemic, which they situate in reference to the phenomenon of disinformation in the press conferences.

Therefore, overall the topics that appear the most frequently in the Government's communication strategy are news updates, the actions of the SSFC and acknowledgement of the efforts of the population, healthcare workers and the military (Figure 4). However, the results reveal significant differences between the topics that appeared the most frequently in the press conferences of the Technical Management Committee and the president of the Government.

Table 4. Recommendations affecting the perception of the truthfulness of the message

Variable	Body	Absolute number	Average per appearance	Variation range
Use of facts and figures	Committee	298	12	9-19
	President	98	10	0-24
	TOTAL	**396**	**11**	**0-24**
Assumptions	Committee	67	3	0-6
	President	9	1	0-3
	TOTAL	**76**	**2**	**0-6**

Source: Author.

Table 5. Empathy, confusions and support material

Variable	Body	Conferences where they appear	% appearances
Empathy	Committee	10	42%
	President	7	70%
	TOTAL	**17**	**50%**
Confusion and contradictions	Committee	5	21%
	President	3	30%
	TOTAL	**8**	**24%**
Support material	Committee	17	71%
	President	0	0
	TOTAL	**17**	**50%**

Source: Author.

Table 6. Opacity in answers

Variable	Body	Number of questions	Unclear answers
Opacity	Committee	271	20
	President	100	14
	TOTAL	**371**	**34**

Source: Author.

6.3. Recommendations of crisis communication

To perform the study on fulfilment of the recommendations of crisis communication for situations like the pandemic, we took into consideration eight variables whose objective is to evaluate to what extent the Government's communication matches these precepts.

According to the analysis on the use of data and figures in argumentation (Table 4), the results show that an average of 11 data points were used during the press conferences analysed.

Regarding statements without scientific confirmation, the members of the Technical Management Committee also made the most assumptions, with an average total of 3, versus Pedro Sánchez's one assumption per press conference. Having reached this point, it is worth noting that some of the assumptions made were accompanied by some caveats when they were stated, which at times softens the emphasis with which they were stated.

On the other hand, empathy (in this case, materialised in recollections of the victims or their family members) appears in half of the press conferences analysed (Table 5). However, the president of the Government showed a higher degree of empathy than the members of the Technical Management Committee. Some of the condolences expressed by the committee, specifically those uttered by members of the SSFC, were meant for the families of police or military officers over COVID-19, not the family members of all the victims.

With regard to the use of support materials like graphics or tables to support their appearances, the president of the Government used no supplementary materials, while the members of the Technical Management Committee used them in 71% of their appearances. In the press conference held on 15 April, seven different graphics were used, the highest figure in all the conferences.

Finally, with regard to the opacity of the answers to the questions asked by the journalists (Table 6), the figures show that 9% of the questions were answered in an unclear way or part of the question was ignored in the response. This means that of the 371 questions received by the Technical Management Committee (271) and Pedro Sánchez (100), 34 were answered incompletely.

7. Conclusions

Bearing in mind the distribution of Committee press conferences according to the profile of the spokesperson (technical vs military), the total time used by Simón and the distribution of questions according to spokesperson to whom they were asked, we can claim that despite the multiplicity of voices in the Government's communication strategy, Fernando Simón indisputably became the executive's main spokesperson during the early weeks of the state of alarm in Spain.

In this sense, some authors claim that the formula of spokesperson applied in Spain during the month of March and April runs counter to the general recommendation of risk and crisis communication and also departed from previous similar situations due to the large number of official voices (Costa-Sánchez & López-García, 2020). Furthermore, the theory recommends that there be a single spokesperson to avoid duplications and contradictions in the messages (Mestre-Ortega et al., 2018; Calleja-Reina & Becerra, 2017).

However, due to the prominent role of Fernando Simón and his centrality as a spokesperson, we could also consider that the Government's communication strategy did follow the recommendations proposed by crisis communication, at least to a certain extent, as other authors claim that even if it contravenes the general theory, choosing several spokespersons is understandable given the transversal nature of a crisis of this kind, which affected many government efforts beyond healthcare (Rojo Martínez, Moreno Moreno & Soler Contreras, 2020).

Secondly, the results of the content analysis reveal that the Government's communication focused on certain themes. Specifically, constant news updates and figures on deaths, infections, hospitalisations, arrests, etc. were unquestionably the predominant themes in the press conferences. Likewise, the results show that significant importance was attached to affairs related to the State Security Forces and Corps, including the specific actions of the Army, the National Police and the Civil Guard. Acknowledgement of the efforts made by both society as a whole and different professionals (especially healthcare professionals) is the last of the essential thematic axes of the government's communication strategy.

In contrast, some topics that presumably could have had more importance in this strategy did not recur as often as one might expect. Themes like health recommendations for citizens or the positive effects of the measures adopted, for example, only play a residual role in the Executive's communication, while this type of message appears the most commonly in the social media (Kwok, Lee & Han, 2021), where information related to prevention occupied many of the messages related to the coronavirus.

Furthermore, the results show that there were differences between the themes usually discussed by the Technical Management Committee and those that appeared more frequently in the press conferences of the president of the Government. While in the press conferences of the former, updates on figures or anything related to the FCSE were the predominant topics, Pedro Sánchez more often chose to mention the new measures implemented or to acknowledge citizens' efforts.

However, the State Security Forces and Corps played a dominant role in the communication strategy used by the government, beyond the press conferences of the Technical Management Committee. One of the cruxes of the story told by the Executive on the COVID-19 crisis in Spain was the regular appearance of the actions of the FCSE and positive news in relation to this group in the media (López-García, 2020). That is, not only were they particularly prominent during the daily press conferences, but the government also showed its concern with this matter by privileging its appearance in the media.

The results obtained indicate that generally speaking, the communication strategy during the early months of the state of alarm in Spain has certain shortcomings in relation to the basic tenets of crisis communication.

On the one hand, the Technical Management Committee has unequivocal shortcomings in its degree of empathy, which is very low, and in the worrisome number of assumptions it made. On the other hand, the president of the Government failed to fulfil the recommendations of crisis communication due to the repeated appearance of confusion and contradictions, the number of questions not answered transparently and the lack of supplementary materials during his appearances. In the sense, studies confirm the benefits of using different platforms and resources to increase understanding and improve communication management (Hattani & Jai, 2022).

For this reason, it is obvious that the Government's main aim was to frame the pandemic as a veritable war, with all the additional connotations that this entails. The prominence of certain themes enabled the Executive to reinforce a series of messages that at the same time brought it undeniable political benefits.

In this sense, the Government was able to highlight the severity of the pandemic with the presence of official spokespersons from the State Security Forces and Corps. Their participation in the Technical Management Committee, as well as their daily press conferences, highlighted the extraordinary nature of the situation. Consequently, the messages that appealed to citizen discipline were more legitimate, as they came from an authorised source. In fact, Wodak (2021) notes that the political leaders in charge of speaking to citizens in countries like Germany, France,

Austria, Hungary and Sweden deployed a variety of strategies to legitimise the restrictive measures adopted. For this reason, the appearance of military officers and members of the police force in the Spanish Government's communication promoted compliance with health norms inasmuch as the FCSE projects an image of greater formality, commitment and seriousness than the technical or political profiles.

Furthermore, at wartime, governments try to encourage a sense of unity and solidarity among the people, who generally tend to steadfastly support executives in situations which pose a major risk to the political community as a whole. The president of the Government's constant appeals in this sense could precisely have sought the objective of fostering citizen cohesion not only to deal with the pandemic but also to ensure that political differences were minimised, that is, evoking patriotism to achieve unanimous support of the government's management and avoid a political crisis.

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QUADERNS DEL CAC

Infodemic management in Catalonia during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract
During the spring of 2022, we interviewed different public workers responsible for managing the Covid-19 infodemic, with the aim of documenting and studying how several units of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia) acted to mitigate the effects of the infodemic. We then met with representatives of the two main fact-checking organisations in Catalonia to identify how they had responded to the infodemic and what we could learn. This local study allows us to understand the behaviour of the Catalan community and to adapt interventions, as most previous studies are based on the English-speaking community.

Keywords
Infodemic, Disinformation, Fact-checking, Crisis Communication, Institutional Communication, Covid-19.

Resum
Durant la primavera del 2022 ens vam entrevistar amb diferents treballadors públics responsables de la gestió de la infodèmia de la Covid-19, amb l'objectiu de documentar i estudiar com diferents unitats de la Generalitat van actuar per mitigar els efectes de la infodèmia. Tot seguit, vam reunir-nos amb representats de les dues principals organitzacions de fact-checking *a Catalunya per identificar com havien respost a la infodèmia i què en podíem aprendre. Aquest estudi local permet conèixer el comportament de la comunitat catalana i adaptar-ne les intervencions, ja que la majoria d'estudis previs es basen en la comunitat de parla anglesa.*

Paraules clau
Infodèmia, desinformació, verificació, comunicació de crisi, comunicació institucional, Covid-19.

Introduction

In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic impacted everyone regardless of demographic or economic characteristics. While we were confined in our homes, deprived of freedoms such as never hitherto imagined, social media and instant messaging became our only way to socialise. At those times of uncertainty and bewilderment, we all tried to form an idea of what was happening. Because the virus was so recent, little information could be considered truthful, and sometimes "the truth" would change overnight. Some took advantage of the situation to generate and promote the emergence of alternative accounts, resulting in untrue or conflicting information. Almost overnight, governments and public health officials were faced with the unique and far-reaching challenge of having to mitigate the catastrophic effects of misinformation.[1] The problem was so great that the World Health Organization (WHO) warned about it and popularised the term *infodemic*.

This cyber threat was unlike any previously identified by public security agencies, such as hacking or system failure, as its main component was the taking advantage of digital channels through social exchanges. Because of this, combating misinformation fell to communication and citizen monitoring units rather than units concerned with technology. For this article, we interviewed the most relevant infodemic managers, mainly those in charge of communication monitoring units, in addition to cyber security units. We agree with other authors that misinformation is a threat that needs to be tackled through diverse approaches.

We carried out this study based on seven semi-structured interviews during March and April 2021, the twelve months following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our criteria for selecting interviewees were job responsibilities and their teams' areas of action. To complement our overview of infodemic management in Catalonia, we also interviewed people external to institutional management, including representatives of the two main fact-checking organizations of Catalonia, Maldita and Verificat, who played a relevant role in identifying and verifying infodemic related information.

With this article, we contribute to documenting how the infodemic was managed in Catalonia during the first year of the pandemic. We explain how the institutional teams of the Government of Catalonia operated, what procedures they used

to identify and contrast misinformation, and how mitigation responses and interventions were coordinated and evaluated. In addition, we provide the complementary view of fact-checking organizations, their collection and validation processes, and their response to the community. In the conclusion section, we address the misinformation debate in Catalonia as well as possible paths for exploration to help us face this challenge. This case study can help public and private institutions be more efficiently prepared to mitigate the effects of alternative narratives, providing additional resources to combat future infodemic occurrences.

Theoretical framework

The term *infodemic*[2] gained great popularity following the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is not a new term, as it can be found in the literature of 20 years ago (Eysenbach, 2002), though different tactics and means were available at the time, when digital messages were circulated through personal websites. With technological progress and the explosion of the social web, also known as Web 2.0, internet content publication became democratised. Special computer skills were no longer required to create a channel, broadcast information, and even be influential (Bakshy et al., 2011). With the emergence of the social web, governments and public institutions have been adopting new tools to communicate with citizens. We are beginning to see the usefulness of digital channels, especially social media, as tools to manage and study emergencies (Palen & Anderson, 2016), when the need arises for truthful information to reach the greatest number of people as quickly as possible. These platforms are appreciated for the great ease and speed with which users share information. A new scientific field of *computer crises* (Palen et al., 2020) now studies emergency management based on social media activity.

The massive use of digital platforms led to a massive change in information consumption. While not replacing mass media (Nielsen et al., 2020), social media became an environment where people and institutions would go to obtain information. At the same time, the expansion of the number of broadcasting channels also meant that more people could be reached by channels sharing untruthful information. As the problem grew larger and its effect on social behaviour was observed – the 2016 US elections marking a turning point in this sense – there grew an awareness of *information disorder* (Wardle & Derakhsan, 2017).

Moreover, we should point out the impact of digital channels on public security. The classic view of cyber security involves people with technical capabilities studying threats and coming up with solutions based on their skills. As argued, the nature of an infodemic is social, where communication has a direct impact on the well-being, safety, and health of ordinary people (Cotter, DeCook, & Kanthawala 2022). Although digital channels are involved, an infodemic cannot be solved solely by technological means. The literature shows that a multidisciplinary approach is needed (Briand et al., 2021), along with specific information operations (Francois & Lin, 2021).

Considering that an infodemic is primarily a social phenomenon, different dynamics and behaviours exist in each local community, which is why more effective interventions require that each case be studied on an individual basis (Calo et al., 2021). Currently, most of the academic literature on infodemic and misinformation is focused on the English-speaking communities in the United States and the United Kingdom. Some internationally renowned authors (Tucker et al., 2018) and institutions (World Health Organization, 2021) have pointed to the necessity of studying behaviour in other languages and areas of the world, so that knowledge of the phenomenon may be expanded and its effects better mitigated. The references made in this article alone clearly show that there is a dearth of literature on this phenomenon in non-English speaking communities.

As far as the Spanish language is concerned, some studies have indeed dealt with the infodemic phenomenon, focusing particularly on Spain. Some dealt with the analysis of content identified as *untrue* (Salaverría et al., 2020), while others took a qualitative perspective based on the experience and perceptions of locally established verifiers (López-García, Costa-Sánchez, & Vizoso, 2021).

As for Catalonia, emergency management and misinformation in digital channels have been studied on few occasions (Espinet, Garcia-Alsina, & Canals, 2015; Xaudiera & Cardenal, 2020). In our opinion, we need to explore in more detail the effects that the infodemic has on our community in order to improve our ability to respond. Based on the need to know what the infodemic phenomenon is like in Catalonia, we asked **(Q1) how public institutions, especially the Generalitat de Catalunya, i.e. the Government of Catalonia, went about fighting the infodemic during the first 12 months of the pandemic.** With this intention, we interviewed people involved in different areas, to document and understand the Administration's response. To get a more general picture of the situation, we also interviewed managers of the two main fact-checking organizations in Catalonia. The purpose of the meetings was **(Q2) to identify the workflow aspects of the fact-checking organizations that can help the public sector in dealing with the infodemic.** We have structured the information we gathered from our interviews according to the 4 main phases recommended by the WHO to combat the infodemic: detection, verification, response, and evaluation (World Health Organization, 2021).

There are several proposals made to combat the infodemic and mitigate its effects. In this paper, we focus on the potential of social media platforms to reach large audiences easily and effectively thanks to their amplifying capacity (Houston et al., 2015). Sets of general proposals have been suggested to manage the infodemic in other areas of the world (Eysenbach 2020), especially to cover information gaps efficiently when it comes to information that cannot yet be verified (Gorman

& Scales, 2022). Several techniques have been proposed for application on a global scale, which may be as diverse as creating a common knowledge bank (Watts, Rothschild, & Mobius, 2021), getting help from the media (Marx, Mirbabaie, & Ehnis 2018), and studying the demographic and psychological traits that make content go viral (Pennycook et al., 2020). As mentioned, given that an infodemic is a social phenomenon, it is necessary to study how it behaves in each region and community. In conclusion, we offer a series of answers to the question **(Q3): how can we prepare to face the next infodemic in better conditions?**

Methodology

Between 18 March and 18 May 2021, we conducted a qualitative research study based on semi-structured interviews with managers of different areas impacted by misinformation during the management of the pandemic. These interviews allowed us to obtain first-hand information on how the infodemic was dealt with in Catalonia, especially during the first 12 months of the pandemic. As a result, we documented the management of misinformation and were able to establish its major patterns for a more effective mitigation of infodemic effects in the future.

We divided each of the semi-structured interviews into four parts, one for each phase of the operation to combat infodemic effects, which are, as stated, detection, verification, response, and evaluation. Each part included different questions and topics depending on interviewee type. In the detection phase, we investigated how the networks monitored public-private collaborations and if they had specific software to carry out the task. As for the verification phase, we wanted to discover the internal procedures of the Catalonian Government and external procedures of the verifiers which were used to check content information validity. In the third phase, response, we looked into how the channels were coordinated to ensure that the community would obtain truthful information by taking advantage of all available channels, what means were used, and how the verified information was collected. In the fourth and last evaluation phase, we focused our questions on what indicators and methods were used to measure the impact and influence of the operations carried out.

To begin with, we interviewed workers at the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia) of the following pandemic communication management units: General Directorate of Citizen Attention, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health, Civil Protection and Emergencies, and Cybersecurity Agency of Catalonia. We selected these areas for their direct relationship with the problem to be studied, that is, misinformation during the coronavirus pandemic and the government's response in order to guarantee the safety of citizens. These interviews allowed us to delve deeper into the management of the crisis and its associated risks from different points of view internal to the Public Administration.

Table 1. Interviewees and related positions at interview time

Organisation	Interviewee	Position
Ministry of Home Affairs (Government of Catalonia)	Marc Homedes	Director of Communication
Ministry of Health (Government of Catalonia)	Rosa Romà	Director of Innovation
Civil Protection and Emergencies	Sergi Delgado	Deputy Director General
GD of Citizen Attention	Jordi Graells	General Director
Cybersecurity Agency of Catalonia	Xavier Panadero	Operations Manager
Maldita	Pablo Hernández	Academic Manager
Verificat	Alba Tobella and Lorenzo Marini	Founders

Source: Author.

Next, we interviewed people who were fighting the infodemic from outside the public sector, belonging to Maldita and Verificat, the two main Catalan fact-checking organizations. Such an external point of view provided us with a complementary picture more focused on identifying and verifying information and allowed us to analyse how public and private entities collaborated in the mission to ensure a healthy information ecosystem.

Finally, we analysed the information obtained and grouped it into the 4 aforementioned phases of infodemic management: detection, verification, response, and evaluation. This synthesis allowed us to get a clear idea of how information management was conducted during the first 12 months of the pandemic. These experiences and structured ideas allowed us to come up with possible roadmaps and interventions for dealing more effectively with future infodemics.

We would also like to point out that, in this article, we are using the term *misinformation* – as opposed to *disinformation* – because we are specifically referring to instances where content is published without verifying its veracity, not with the express purpose of disseminating false information.

Discoveries

Detection

The first aspect on which we focused our research was how different public units detect and identify misinformation. Institutions engage in active digital listening to learn about relations between citizens and organizations. Despite working in different units and departments, our participants reported similar issues and pointed to a lack of tools and internal

coordination when it comes to identifying alternative narratives that appear on digital platforms. Each unit performed basic reactive monitoring of conversations in digital environments as just another task, without a specific tool or person responsible for the monitoring. This means that the same narrative could be identified and studied by different areas of the same organization.

One of the interviewees pointed out a common practice among his team members: "as a result of not having enough resources, we often detect alternative accounts when the media ask us if they are truthful". Personal circles sometimes also act as a source of information: "sometimes an acquaintance will send me a WhatsApp message to ask me about the authenticity of some content that has been forwarded to them". Therefore, the work of detecting and identifying online relations and narratives is mostly reactive, as warning signals often come from external factors. One such external factor is VOST, Virtual Operations Support Teams. "These teams, in which we actively participate, act as amplified social sensors. They allow us to have more ears in different groups".

On the other hand, the workflow of local fact-checkers is very different. In the case of Maldita, while they have staff trained to detect and identify misinformation, they are also part of a user community in which each user acts as a social sensor to detect misinformation in their social circles. "Crowdsourcing is the key to Maldita's success" in identifying large volumes of content to be verified. "They send us the content they have received by using our WhatsApp and Telegram bots, so we can check for credibility. This allows us to identify many of the main narratives that emerge during an emergency". The WhatsApp bot works very well for them as a channel to receive content likely to be untruthful: "the WhatsApp bot is our main source for detecting content to be verified". Verificat told us that they also have a chatbot, which sees less activity than Maldita's but amounts to 80% of the content input to be verified.

Maldita told us that they had recently established a collaboration agreement with Facebook.[3] "When its users report content as misinformation, Facebook sends it to Maldita for verification, and, if it turns out to be untrue, their algorithm penalises the content by reducing exposure and amplification". Even if it is a complementary channel – the WhatsApp bot being their main detection channel, "this channel sees a much lower volume of input, but it is a way to do active listening", in addition to having direct impact on content dissemination. Moreover, they commented on how there is still work to be done to improve the process and make it more efficient, with more immediate impact on content distribution.

Verification

The second phase of the infodemic emergency management cycle is content verification. The speed with which detected content can be deemed truthful or classified as misinformation is very important in this phase. Again, we found that each unit works independently, although the Government has operatives who will verify every piece of narrative: "we have the ability to verify all the content we receive, but we have to pick and choose which narratives we do verify". Once the information has been validated, each unit gives the response it thinks is most appropriate. "A problem arises when the information cannot be verified by our team, for example, when it pertains to another department. In such a case, the verification process is slower. Our vertical work organization makes the transmission of internal communication more complicated". In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the truth kept changing every day, so having no consolidated information was an aggravating factor. What we reported as true one week could be denied the next." This aspect made it even more complicated to monitor the alternative accounts that appeared. "Especially during the first weeks, there was great confusion, the information provided by experts on masks kept changing a lot".

When asked about the use of a verification data bank, a practice in force with public bodies such as the UK Government, all interviewees agreed that it would be useful. "We have found ourselves in situations where, despite working in the same unit, the operators of each channel – social networks, media, telephone support – had to search and many times verify the validity of the information for themselves". Besides being inefficient, this process "can also harm the coherence of institutional messages, which sometimes released different information about the same content".

Research participants also noted the recurrence of alternative accounts: "we have identified similar false stories in different crises. Sometimes the same story appears in different waves during the same crisis. There are also narratives that repeat for every emergency, and some have even emerged during crises in different years". If they had a data bank, operatives could respond quickly by looking up the response given to a narrative that had already appeared during other emergencies. This would facilitate the cohesion of institutional response. Furthermore, if ordinary citizens could search the data bank on their own and carry out their own verifications, this could help reduce the number of inquiries and optimise our resources."

As for the external fact-checking organizations, their representatives agreed that there is a lack of direct communication with public institutions when carrying out verifications and that "a treatment like that reserved to the media or a chat channel with a direct contact would be very useful". There is currently no contact person to verify the alternative accounts detected, which means that the entire verification process has to be undertaken independently, in parallel with what the public institutions are doing. This double verification process can add value in some cases, but in most cases, it is an inefficient format that duplicates efforts across multiple channels. Maldita has a network of experts on different subjects who verify information.

Response

The next step, once the information from the alternative accounts has been detected and verified, is to respond and carry out a series of interventions. In this phase, once again, we found a lack of coordination between the different units. Just as they identified and verified stories independently, there was no cross-cutting strategy in responding to misinformation during crises. This means that different responses may have been provided for the same narrative depending on the responder and the information available to the unit.

Response is usually implemented by directly informing those who reported the information. If the information is deemed relevant, public messages are also posted to reach the entire audience. Some units launch targeted advertising campaigns to get the message to the most sensitive communities, but not to directly respond to an alternative narrative. The interviewees mentioned a number of techniques: "we publish a message when we detect that a story is gaining popularity", "we inform the media when we identify untrue published information"; but they all agree that "there is a lack of resources to respond to all the messages and follow up on all the narratives. Twitter is a useful tool for quickly informing audiences, but not for resolving individual queries during the early stages of an emergency. We simply do not have the necessary human resources." Regarding messages, many emphasised the importance of creating "visual pieces, infographics with the key ideas. Often, messages were plain and came straight from the FAQs received through citizen attention channels, such as digital, face-to-face, and phone calls. There was a risk that this content would be circulated when the information was no longer valid; "we even found pieces that imitated our format with untrue information".

In the following case, collaborating with the traditional media has been profitable: "when we can verify an alternative story that has reached us through the media, we help them debunk the message and amplify the resulting content." There are institutional channels with wider audiences than the media. Attempts have also been made to coordinate an institutional response: "on some occasions, we have tried to take advantage of the accumulated organic audience, the sum of followers, to amplify messages in a coordinated way". Collaborations were also established with innovative traditional media: "we went to the most listened to radio programme in Catalonia to answer questions from the audience. These interventions were very useful."

The government also worked with internal advisors. "The Ministry of Health trained internal audiences to become advisors on official messages." Since it was a health-related crisis, doctors became referents and amplifiers of official messages. "We held regular meetings; we promoted messages and contents for them to share among their contacts and on their public channels." The Ministry also collaborated with professional associations, influencers, and journalists: "we created a WhatsApp group through which we answered questions and provided information in a matter of minutes. We could not afford to let the media have any doubts about the information they published." Another very relevant aspect of infodemic mitigation was reaching the most sensitive audiences. This aspect was twofold: dealing with those most sensitive due to the disease and those less digitally able to discern false information. A massive information campaign was carried out with the elderly through texting and graphic material in health centres, pharmacies, and any other location where they could be reached.

People coming from other areas and speaking other languages were also identified as a key audience. "These people have channels of information far different from those with which we collaborate more closely." In order to get the messages across to them, different community opinion leaders were contacted to explain the situation as it evolved. "We wanted them to have the latest truthful information and to be able to share it with their contacts."

As for fact-checkers, their response was independent from that of public institutions. It had a great impact within their own communities, complementary to the audiences of the institutional channels. However, they have much fewer resources than public institutions to reach diverse audiences.

Evaluation

The last phase is about evaluating how the infodemic was managed and proposed actions. This phase is not properly part of emergency management, but it is important for institutions to better prepare to handle the infodemic challenge. In this regard, the following was pointed out: "we need greater analysis of the narratives that appear on networks. There is no doubt that knowing how misinformation spreads would help us prepare for future emergencies", "understanding the dynamics of a viral story on digital platforms would be very useful to improve our operations", "it would certainly help us to be better prepared". An interviewee commented that "having previously identified channels that spread untruthful information would make it easier for us to monitor them in future news peaks".

A constant aspect is not having enough human resources to combat the infodemic. As a result, maximum resources are allocated to verification and response, while other phases such as identification and evaluation are left uncovered. Moreover, all the interviewees agreed there was a lack of staff with specialized digital skills in this field. Even operators of the Cybersecurity Agency of Catalonia admitted that better digital training would be helpful in all mitigation phases: "we understand the threat of misinformation but dealing with responses during the emergency consumes all our resources". Cybersecurity Agency of Catalonia's work "focused on acting as a firewall, especially in cases of phishing. We identified a good number of channels that tried to collect personal data through digital platforms".

Among those interviewed, only the Cybersecurity Agency of Catalonia and Maldita have staff with technical programming skills. One interviewee admitted that "it would be great to have staff with technological skills to help us improve our response". The interviewees voiced a unanimous opinion on the great

potential usefulness of professionals able to analyse and work with information from digital platforms, that is, experts of computational social sciences, as they are referred to in the academic world.

Conclusion and discussion

Misinformation during emergency situations poses a big threat. Although the infodemic phenomenon is not new, technologies that are now widely available have multiplied its impact exponentially. Furthermore, since digital tools constantly introduce new information, mitigating the impact of misinformation and the infodemic requires up-to-date knowledge of platforms and methods, which is a complicated matter. Our first conclusion is that this is a major challenge because it keeps on changing. The infodemic tactics and interventions documented in this article bear little resemblance to those that were carried out for the 2016 US elections.

As reported, public institutions are not prepared to efficiently combat this challenge. Despite management improvements and the experience gained from each case, those who are in charge admit that resources and capabilities to handle the infodemic in the most efficient way are lacking. It would be good to consider the creation of new spaces and profiles throughout the organization to work with computational social methods in real time, as information comes in from social platforms. Fact-checking organizations could provide training and share their knowledge, especially in the information identification and verification phases.

Public institutions and fact-checking organizations increasing their collaboration would create an opportunity for improvement, involving the mobilization of audiences and technical resources. Indeed, some platforms have already signed collaboration agreements with verifiers because of their agility when checking the truth of information. We think that society would gain incalculably from encouraging collaborative work synergies.

On a practical level, a data bank that collects verified contents could prove quite useful. Considering that we observed almost non-existent coordination between internal and external agencies, we believe that gathering all the relevant information in one easily accessible place would be simple to implement and a resource with a big impact. Ordinary citizens could also have access to such a data bank and verify information for themselves. As for the Catalonian Government, it would be very useful for coordinating its units' efforts.

In terms of detecting and identifying alternative accounts, the Administration could replicate the tactics used by fact-checkers, such as providing chatbots and emails for the public to send content to question its veracity and improving the monitoring system to proactively detect narratives as they begin to gain popularity. It has been shown that response speed is a relevant factor in altering the path of unverified content. Finally, we should keep in mind that knowledge and verified information keep changing during an emergency. A message deemed untrue one day may become true another day, as the initial judgment may be proven wrong.

During emergencies, this becomes a major challenge which can lead to a loss of confidence in official sources. It was especially so with the management of COVID-19. To deal with this issue, maximum transparency is recommended, both to explain the Administration's knowledge management processes and to publish the content as soon as it becomes available. A constant flow of information should be maintained, even just to say that no information is available, because this approach contributes to establishing a bond of trust with the public.

There is no single solution to the infodemic challenge, especially from the perspective of ever-changing digital environments. Consequently, public institutions should be determined and take actions to adapt to the challenge, as independent fact-checkers and social platforms have been doing for some time. In the specific case of the Generalitat de Catalunya, unit leadership should be established, especially in the more technical phases of monitoring, evaluation, and report analysis. A central unit should be in place, with a team of qualified personnel who can support specialized management units.

Notes

1. *Obama: Misinformation is killing people.* https://www.axios.com/2022/04/21/barack-obama-disinformation-social-media
2. 'Rapid dissemination of rumours, inaccurate information and misleading news relating to an infectious disease or public health problem as it spreads or evolves.' Termcat
3. This organization is currently known as Meta, the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

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The news production process in confluence with political and social conflicts. The case of TV3 journalists and Catalonia's pro-sovereignty process

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Abstract

The Catalan pro-sovereignty process was a political and social movement that defended the right to decide and the independence of this territory, which led to a confrontation between Spain and the Catalan government. The Spanish and Catalan media played a crucial role in the press coverage due to their proximity to the conflict and, at the same time, they were at the centre of the public debate. This research uses TV3 [the Catalan public broadcaster] and its journalists as a case study to find out how the political and social context conditioned the journalistic account and what external and internal factors were involved. Through semi-structured interviews with eleven journalists, including writers and editors of TV3 news programmes, it is possible to identify different aspects that allow us to conclude that journalistic sources, work routines and the responsibility of TV3 as a public media outlet were the main factors that intervened in news production.

Keywords

Catalan Pro-sovereignty, TV3, News Production, Journalistic Routines, Political Journalism, Public Service.

Resum

El procés sobiranista de Catalunya va ser un moviment polític i social que va defensar el dret a decidir i la independència d'aquest territori i que va derivar en un enfrontament entre l'Estat espanyol i el Govern català. Els mitjans de comunicació espanyols i catalans van tenir un rol crucial en la cobertura mediàtica per la seva proximitat amb el conflicte i, alhora, van estar al centre del debat públic. Aquesta recerca pren TV3 i els seus periodistes com un estudi de cas per conèixer com el context politicosocial va condicionar el relat periodístic i quins factors externs i interns hi van intervenir. Mitjançant les entrevistes semiestructurades a onze periodistes, entre redactors i editors dels programes informatius de TV3, es poden identificar diferents aspectes que permeten concloure que les fonts periodístiques, les rutines de treball i la responsabilitat de TV3 com a mitjà públic van ser els principals factors que van intervenir en la producció informativa.

Paraules clau

Procés sobiranista de Catalunya, TV3, producció informativa, rutines periodístiques, periodisme polític, servei públic.

1. Introduction

The Catalan pro-sovereignty process was a social and political movement based on the demand for the right to self-determination in favour of Catalan independence, which took shape, most notably, from 2010 onwards. It is considered that the event that triggered this movement was the ruling of the Constitutional Court on the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, while the elections to the Parliament of Catalonia on 21 December 2017 marked the culmination of the period following the referendum of 1 October. (Almiron, 2018; Carbonell, 2018; Gifreu, 2018). This movement was driven by pro-independence political forces and led to a confrontation between Spain and the Catalan government (Gagnon, Montagut & Moragas-Fernández, 2019).

As the conflict grew, so did the tension between the two opposing sides, with the percentage in favour of independence increasing, reaching 48% in 2013 and remaining at around 40% during the period from 2010 to 2017 (CEO, 2016-2020; Palà, 2020). Conversely, there continued to be a percentage of the population that rejected Catalonia's independence and was in favour of it remaining an autonomous community of Spain, a fact that highlighted the increasingly accentuated polarisation of citizens (Burg, 2015).

This polarisation is compounded by three key factors that make the pro-sovereignty process an important academic phenomenon: its magnitude, its duration and its legal consequences. From a social point of view, it was a movement that attracted a large number of people in favour of Catalan independence and the right to decide (CEO, 2010), mobilised thousands of people on the streets, especially during the Catalan national days (Clua, 2014), and has been sustained over the years. The political aspect was marked by the confrontation between the Spanish and Catalan governments,

and between 2010 and 2017, led to the calling of four elections of the Catalan Parliament and two referendums with the aim of allowing Catalan society to decide its future. In the end, after the referendum of 1 October, several ministers of the Generalitat de Catalunya (i.e. the Catalan government) were imprisoned and some of them left Catalonia (Gifreu, 2018; Palà, 2020).

Meanwhile, the media devoted more and more attention to the conflict, placing themselves in the spotlight, and they became the target of criticism as to whether they were taking one side of the conflict or the other. This is because, from a social and political perspective, the importance of the media in the narrative of conflicts and their ability to influence the way people understand, conceive and interpret the reality that surrounds them has not been overlooked (Entman, 1993). This is where the basis of this study lies: understanding the narrative of the conflicts as a construction of meanings between the journalists and the surrounding context.

In a convulsive political and social context such as the one generated by the pro-sovereignty process in Catalonia, journalists were forced to talk about events that happened quickly and whose consequences could not be foreseen. This could have put greater pressure on professionals and, at the same time, caused the influencing factors in a newsroom to vary or become more pronounced. Most research on the pro-sovereignty process analyses the journalistic account of the conflict (Ballesteros, 2015; Cortiñas & Pont-Sorribes, 2009; Martínez & Álvarez-Peralta, 2016; Palà, 2018), but few focus on the place where these news items were being reported: the newsroom. The aim is to learn how and according to what criteria one story or another was created, whether it was intentional or not, what factors it depended on, etc.

To do so, TV3 is the chosen media outlet, because it has been a key player in the narrative of the pro-sovereignty process for three main reasons: for being the channel of reference for news during the period 2010 to 2017 in Catalonia (Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals, 2017); for being a publicly owned television channel and, consequently, for the need to focus on public service missions and commitment to ethical and democratic principles (Catalan Audiovisual Council, 2017), and, finally, for its geographical proximity to the conflict, since the area where the conflict took place coincided with its broadcasting area. These three premises, together with the magnitude of the conflict and its impact on Catalan society, make the news production of the pro-sovereignty process by TV3 a subject of academic relevance.

2. Objectives

In order to understand and identify the context that accompanied TV3's news production on the pro-sovereignty process, the aim of this research is to determine how TV3 journalists define, explain and argue their coverage of this conflict and, in this way, to find out how news about the pro-sovereignty process was constructed and what the influencing factors were.

In order to achieve this objective, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the journalist-authors of the pieces analysed in order to answer three research questions. The first is to find out what time and format guidelines were followed by journalists when reporting on the Catalan pro-sovereignty process (RQ1); the second refers to what the main factors influencing their coverage were (RQ2); and the third aims to identify the degree of awareness that the editors had when it came to respecting the plurality of views involved in the conflict and, thus, to be able to know what criteria they used to cover the news (RQ3).

3. Theoretical framework

The article is based on the framing theory, an explanatory theory of the public opinion phenomena that argues that the media select certain aspects of reality and highlight them in a way that promotes a problem, a cause, an evaluation and a recommendation (Entman, 1993). In this respect, and in contrast to other theories of public opinion, framing conceives the construction of news as a negotiation process of meaning between journalists and the individuals who receive these messages (D'Angelo, 2002), in which the active or passive role of the individual is key to determining the extent to which they are influenced by the frames.

Using the cognitive perspective of framing as a reference, and as this study defends, individuals are capable of negotiating the meanings given by the media (Valkenburg, Semetko & De Vreese, 1999). This paradigm also focuses on the process of constructing frameworks, whereby the production of news becomes a key to understanding how these meanings work. With regard to theoretical concepts, it is therefore necessary to outline the premises that have been taken into account to study the context and the news production process in a newsroom, and to defend the role of journalists as key actors in the construction of the narrative of conflicts.

3.1 The news production process

The news production process is closely linked to the concept of journalistic routines. News is "the act of constructing the reality [...] and transforming everyday occurrences into news events" (Tuchman, 1983: 25), which, at the same time, depends on institutional processes and practices. Although the act of selecting information can be understood as a naturalised, automated and intuitive process that is linked to the professional's criteria and experience, it is also the result of an operational and symbolic mechanism that includes values, ideological lines and publishers (Túñez, 1999).

This is why there is talk of a certain *routinisation* in the news production process and it is defined as the creation

of "consolidated behavioural guidelines in the profession, assimilated by habit and usually carried out in a mechanical way [...] that can have repercussions on the message transmitted to the audience" (Túñez, 1999: 148).

This process of news creation is influenced by different elements that intervene and condition the work of journalists, whether through factors that derive from the newsroom itself or from external factors. According to the literature review carried out, the influencing elements to be highlighted are the journalistic sources used, the competition for audience between media outlets, the immediacy of the information, the journalist's degree of autonomy, the conversations between professionals and the style of the narrative.

The sources condition the story to a large extent, because it is difficult to detach oneself from the information that comes from the sources, especially in a current context in which the sources have multiplied and there are many news proposals (Túñez, Martínez & Abejón, 2010). This is why it is said that there is a dependency between sources and journalists, and that journalism professionals tend to adopt the story from the sources. This dependence between sources and the media is stronger due to the proliferation of press offices and consultants, sources specialised in constructing a story that favours their interests or what they want to make public (Túñez & Martínez, 2014).

Another element that intervenes in the process of creating content is the commercial orientation of the media outlet and the pressure to achieve high audience ratings, which automatically makes it compete with other media outlets to satisfy its audience. This issue is even more prominent in the case of commercial television stations, which obtain most of their funding from advertising and therefore want to produce whatever brings them the most financial gain. The journalist is important in this sense as a mediator between the news event and the audience, as he or she acts as a gatekeeper, analysing, interpreting and explaining what is happening (Rodrigo, 2005).

In the context of the digital revolution, the need to constantly update information conditions the time journalists have to prepare the news. Following on with the idea of competition between media outlets, priority is given to having the exclusive or being the first to publish a news item. This means that the pressure of immediacy leads to sacrifices being made concerning other aspects such as the quality of the final product or the contrast of the sources (Marcus, Salinas, Yáñez & Santa-Cruz, 2018).

The degree of autonomy that writers have also influences news production. This autonomy is conditioned by the social and political roles of the professionals, making it difficult for them to detach themselves from their own conceptions when writing content (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014). In other words, the journalist is both an individual and a representative of a media outlet or institution, and it is this duality that comes into play in the writing process.

The journalist's decision-making autonomy is at the same time subject to the editors or editors-in-chief, who are the people who choose the topics to be covered and, often, the approach to be taken. This is an organisational approach that is related to the editorial line of the media outlet and is also a mechanism of internal control of the media outlets, which means that journalists are conditioned by the hierarchical structure and external pressures (Marcus et al., 2018).

Conversations between journalists are another conditioning element, given the fact that news is commented on among employees is a form of self-legitimising the content (Túñez, 1999). There is an exchange of opinions and interpretations of current affairs between people who, in addition to their professional relationships, have personal relationships that lead to a social exchange that seeks a consensus on inclusions and exclusions on the subject.

Lastly, the journalist's style or way of narrating also plays a role in the construction of the story, because every event has a narrative voice, a story-teller capable of producing stories based on particular traits in order to turn events into attractive products (Tuchman, 1983). So, we return to the idea of framing referred to at the beginning of this theoretical section, whereby the journalist selects particular aspects of an event to end up producing a constructed reality.

4. Methodology

The methodology used for this research is the qualitative semi-structured interview. It is a data collection method or research technique that allows access to events from the past that would not be accessible in any other way (Blasco & Otero, 2008). It allows us to ask questions that are not observable and that can only be answered through the responses of the interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Basically, the semi-structured interview is characterised by a series of questions on specific topics that are included in an interview guide and these are posed to the interviewee in a flexible manner so as to prompt new questions as the conversation progresses (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). It also makes it possible to focus on those questions that the interviewee wants to conceal, because they are deflecting or want to avoid answering them, but which are equally significant, because they reveal which topics are the most sensitive or delicate (Barbour & Schostak, 2005).

4.1 Interview script

The interview script was drawn up after carrying out a content analysis of the most popular TV3 news programmes during that period, *Telenotícies* (i.e. the TV news programme of TV3), the results of which were reflected in Palà's doctoral thesis (2020). A total of seventeen events related to the referendum of 9 November 2014 and 1 October 2017 were analysed, two of which were similar processes that allowed us to see the way in which the journalistic account of those years unfolded. Once the

results were obtained, the interview script was drawn up with the aim of finding out how the journalists covered the story and to be able to ask them questions based on these results.

The interview script is structured in four sections: (1) seniority and professional career in the company and records of the coverage of the two referenda, (2) conditions of the television format and decisions taken in the preparation of the journalistic pieces, (3) internal and external factors that influence the journalistic work and its incidence in the account of the sovereign process and (4) plurality and impartiality in public media. The interview script is attached as an appendix.

4.2 Selection of interviewees and coding of answers

The first decision to be taken to carry out the interviews was who to interview: defining the sample and deciding the criteria according to which some people were chosen and others were not, as they had to represent a variety of positions in relation to the subject of the study and shed light on the differences of meaning in the experience (King & Horrocks, 2010).

The population universe therefore included all those journalists who worked at TV3 between 2013 and 2017, and who wrote some of the journalistic pieces analysed. They are the authors of the analysis material and are the ones able to provide an explanation of all the issues related to the construction of the journalistic account in the first person.

Two filters were applied to identify the people who form part of this population universe. The first was based on content analysis, as the names and surnames of the people who signed the pieces were identified by viewing the material. The second filter was to obtain the list, from a member of the TV3 News management team, containing the names of all the journalists who were part of the Politics section of the TV3 News programme during the period under analysis. The resulting list was made up of 3 section heads, 4 deputy section heads and 27 editors.

Once the people had been identified, the selection criteria for the sample were twofold: the quantity of pieces that each person produced and the position they held. Firstly, the journalists to be interviewed were the ones who had written the most pieces and, therefore, the ones who had participated most frequently in reporting on the pro-sovereignty process. Secondly, it was prioritised that there should be representation from all of the managers involved, because there are different responsibilities and different decision making processes. When determining the number of people to interview, the Taylor and Bodgan (1984) "theoretical approach" was followed, which states that what is important is the potential of each case to help in the development of understanding, and not the number of cases.

With this idea in mind, fifteen people were invited to be interviewed, four turned down the invitation and eleven accepted it. The result was, therefore, a total of eleven people interviewed who held the following positions: the three editors of *Telenotícies* during that period, a head of the Politics section, a deputy head of the Politics section, five editors of the Politics section and a news writer of the Society section.

Once the interviews had been conducted, they were transcribed in order to analyse the information. This involved a coding process that allowed the information to be grouped into categories according to a predefined scheme in order to interpret the ideas, concepts or themes discovered during the interview by analysing the content (Fernández, 2006). After several readings of the professionals' answers, this coding led to the identification of the results: a total of twelve items, which are discussed in the following section.

5. Results

In order to respect the anonymity of the interviewees, they are identified by an acronym and a number. The only difference is the job position, depending on whether it is news writer (R), head or deputy head of section (S) or editor (E), as this variable is to be taken into account when sifting the answers.

Twelve items have been coded, which are set out below in the following order: access to and treatment of journalistic sources (1); professionalisation of political sources (2); plurality and representativeness of actors (3); professional autonomy and hierarchical structure in decision-making (4); system for electing management positions (5); factors influencing news production (6); television protagonism of the pro-sovereignty process and flexibility in the length of news programmes (7); criteria for prioritising the news coverage of the process (8); challenges in the narrative of the conflict (9); perception of the two referendum periods (10); relations between the media and politics, TV3 as an object of criticism (11), and corporate identity and defence of public service (12). In each case, quotations from the interviews are shown to help illustrate how each question was argued.

5.1 Access to journalistic sources and the treatment of these sources

One item that emerges from the interviews is the access to and treatment of journalistic sources. Firstly, there is a discourse on what should be done, an aspect that, journalistically speaking, is ethical and, secondly, there are contradictions when it comes to considering that there has been easier access to sources due to the fact they are TV3.

There are journalists who consider that they have been able to obtain information without difficulties from Catalan sources because they are Catalan media (S1, R1), while others point out that this ease of access to government sources is not true, that they do not have "privileges" because they work for TV3 (R3 and S2).

While there is talk of a certain normalisation in terms of facilitating access to Catalan sources, there is also criticism of certain sources of the Spanish government. It is concluded that, in more conflictive cases, the opacity of the sources is

more evident. Journalists acknowledge that they had occasional difficulties during the days before and after the referendum of 1 October (S2, R1).

5.2 Professionalism of political sources

When talking about access to political sources, there is one item that journalists keep repeating: they have become professionalised through the press offices. In other words, journalists emphasise that these agencies act as intermediaries and, ultimately, they pass on the discourse that interests them to the media, which has first passed through many filters: "It's information that is ready-made; somehow, you are heading towards making protagonists out of those who have already marked you beforehand and, whether you like it or not, that's where you and all the media are heading" (R5).

Firstly, the interviewees are critical of this, because this fact restricts their information and makes it difficult for them to construct an alternative narrative. Secondly, because it is an artificial discourse that does not connect with the spectator; they consider that the professionalisation of sources makes politicians inconsistent with their discourse: "There are many more intermediaries, or all these intermediaries do their job, and this means that it is often complicated to understand" (R5).

5.3 Plurality and representativeness of actors

One of the questions raised in the interviews is the representativeness of the actors involved in the conflict: the aim is to find out what criteria were followed when deciding whether one actor or another should appear and how they were applied in practice. The data indicate that journalists, in general, talk about perceptions of plurality and balance of views, and therefore do not mention any pre-thought-out strategy.

There is a difference between the answers of the editors and section heads and those of the writers, since the first two rely on objective data to justify that their news is plural (such as the plurality reports of the Catalan Audiovisual Council or the polls of the Centre for Opinion Studies), while the writers report personal beliefs or feelings.

As for the criteria for deciding which actors appear in the news, the *Telenotícies* editors argue that the criterion is merely informative and that they adapt to the current situation, where everyone has the "same opportunities" (S1). They also take into account the geographical factor when talking about things that affect the Catalan region, and they point out that the time they have available to write a news item also has a bearing. Although they do not detail how the presence of the actors is distributed, they recognise that there is a tendency to spend more minutes talking about the political parties of the government than about the opposition.

5.4 Professional autonomy and hierarchical structure in decision-making

When it comes to knowing how the editorial team was managed and coordinated during the coverage of the pro-sovereignty process, the discourse is consistent for all the editors: they describe an identical situation in which decisions are taken jointly, with the entire editorial team (editors, section heads and writers). In contrast, it is the editors who are more open to admitting that they have more decision-making power.

The general perception from the editors' answers is that they enjoy professional autonomy when writing the pieces and can express their opinions freely. They recognise that the editor is ultimately responsible for the news items and that this means that they have to adapt to their decisions, but that they have room to express their opinions and reach a consensus on the news items: "Decisions don't end up being made by just one person due to the fact that it is a good thing that there is a kind of counterbalance and consensual decisions" (S1).

5.5 System for electing senior managers

One of the questions that generates most reticence is whether the changes in the management of 'Informatius' (news programmes) have any effect on the editorial staff. Since this refers directly to their boss, the interviewees are more measured with their words, which can be seen in the fact that they speak less or are more cautious.

One of the writers argues that senior managers end up being elected "by the governing party, and that logically this has an influence on the outline" (R1). Other interviewees consider that the change of the heads of Informatius is noticeable in the way they work: "There are heads of Informatius who have a certain way of working, and others have a different way" (S1).

There is also widespread criticism of the system for electing the senior management of TV3, as they are elected by the CCMA's Board of Governors (i.e. the ruling board of the Catalan Public Media). This criticism, however, is given by the editors and not by the writers, which leads to the conclusion that in this case the responses vary according to the job position of the person interviewed: there is greater resistance by the writers and more willingness and criticism by the editors.

Nevertheless, there is no will to fight it or to denounce it, but rather it is taken for granted that the system works like this and that it can only be changed from an individual position. They point out that they try to avoid any kind of influence that might come from management, so that it does not affect the content: "That it is the minimum possible to what is professional work from a strictly deontological and professional point of view" (E1).

5.6 Influencing factors in news production

The factors that condition the daily work of the journalists are aspects that are also taken into account in order to know how they were affected during the reference periods. In this sense, a wide variety of aspects come to light, ranging from external factors to the internal factors of the editorial process itself.

In order of importance, the factors identified are the following: budget cuts that lead to fewer human and technical resources; political surveillance during the period of the conflict; external

pressures from institutions or influential groups; media outlets that provide an intentional or prefabricated story; pressure from economic groups; self-censorship by the journalists themselves to avoid ideological positioning; comments from the audience in the form of complaints or suggestions about the contents of the news; the ideological tendencies of other colleagues; the time constraints of the television format; and, finally, professional experience as an advantage in order for their criteria to prevail.

5.7 Televised prominence of the conflict and flexibility in the duration of news broadcasts

The coverage of the pro-sovereignty process increased from 25% on 9 November 2014 to 49% on 1 October 2017 (Palà, 2020). Half of the journalists believe that there is a lot of talk about the *process*, and the other half believe that this is not the case or that they are talking about it in the right proportion.

Journalists who consider that there is excessive talk of the pro-sovereignty process do so by pointing out that it forms part of all TV3 programming, but not in the case of news programmes. In other words, from an informative point of view, they believe that it is justified and that it has had the necessary space, but it is in the television channel's other programmes as a whole that it seems that they talk too much about it: "I think we spend too much time talking about the same thing: you turn on the television at 8.00 a.m. in the morning and turn it off at midnight and we don't talk about anything else" (R4).

5.8 Criteria for prioritising news about the *process*

Out of all the journalists' answers, and above all those of the editors, since they are the ones who provide the most information on this issue, five aspects have been identified that they use to justify the news coverage they gave to the pro-sovereignty process in Catalonia.

One of these aspects is the good audience figures generated by the programming on the political-social conflict, as they admit that "there was an increase in the demand due to the interest in the pro-sovereignty process" (R6). They also refer to the political and social significance of the events and the consequences that followed, as they consider them to be unprecedented events.

A third element is the editorial line of TV3, since they offered content consistent with the programming of this medium: "If you see that the channel has made a commitment to a certain thing, you end up backing it" (E1). Also due to the fact that media competition forced them to act in advance, to be "the first" to talk about everything related to the pro-sovereignty process (E2).

Lastly, the conflict itself generated attractive elements for the audience, because they offered entertainment: "Television, to a certain extent, is a show; therefore, it has to be made in the most attractive way possible, without ever losing the show appeal" (E2). Some examples of these attractive elements are the images of the demonstrations or the tension during the referendum votes.

5.9 Challenges in the narration of the conflict

One of the issues that came up during the interviews was the challenges they faced when reporting on a conflict such as the one in Catalonia. In other words, there are journalists who refer to the particularities and difficulties of explaining the pro-sovereignty process in a communicative way, which could indirectly influence their writing.

The search for impartiality is the most frequently repeated item by the interviewees, because they admit that they wanted to ensure as much objectivity as possible, but at the same time they knew that "it is difficult in politics and it can't always be like that" (R3). Another element of difficulty is finding the right balance when it comes to explaining the events, i.e. neither underestimating nor magnifying what is happening, because the events not only had an important political and social transcendence, but also a judicial one.

Emotional distance is another factor that emerges from the interviews, as some considered that the emotional bond they had with everything that happened in Catalonia made it more difficult "to be objective and impartial" (E2). The fact that the pro-sovereignty process was led by certain political and social actors made it difficult to detach oneself from personalism, and specific faces ended up being associated with the events without being able to include all the agents and actors who participated in them.

5.10 The perception of the two referendum periods

One of the results that emerges from the interviewees' answers is that all of them perceived the two reference periods as "intense", speaking from a journalistic point of view, which led to an increase in the volume of work. This adjective, together with others such as "unprecedented", "unique" or "uncertain", are the ones most used to evaluate their work during those years (R1, R5, R6).

There is a general perception that the events were rushed and became so important in news terms that the editors and writers themselves were improvising and adapting as they went along. This coincided with a period of budget cuts that conditioned the day-to-day work of the editors: they had to work longer hours, but without the extra resources or additional staff.

5.11 Relations between the media and politics: TV3 as an object of criticism

During the referendum period of 1 October 2017, TV3 was criticised by some political sectors and media outlets. Some political leaders, in their speeches or statements to the media, accused TV3 of not being pluralistic and of defending the pro-independence stance. The interviewees were asked about this issue: the aim was to find out how they received the criticism and whether it affected their work routines.

Journalists with a higher level of responsibility are the ones who are most critical of this situation and consider that criticising TV3 is part of an electoral strategy, in other words, that it has political implications. In fact, in dealing with this issue,

there is outrage among the workers, who adopt a tougher and firmer stance than in the other issues dealt with. Some of the criticisms are that TV3 was "instrumentalised", that it was used for "political gain" or that it was an "excuse" for the "political class": "Television is very good as an instrument for complaining, for harping on about it, criticising it and demonstrating it" (S1).

5.12 Corporate identity and defence of the public service

Throughout the interviews, there are constant appeals to the values of public service. This means that there are certain themes that ultimately lead to the same idea, which is why it is considered that there is a conscience or a will to show that they are aware of what function they carry out as journalists. They see the fulfilment of their public service missions as an "obligation".

For example, when they argue that it is their duty to cover all aspects of the conflict in the news item or that the limited time allowed by the television format when it comes to explaining the facts should not prevent rigour and depth, etc.

At the same time, the political uncertainty at the end of 2017 was transferred to the newsroom and made journalists more "prudent" when it came to managing their personal social networks, i.e. they were more "careful" with the content they published because they were part of TV3.

6. Discussion

This section relates the interviewees' answers to the aspects linked to the production of news that have been discussed in the theoretical section. This makes it possible to answer the objective of this study: to determine how TV3 journalists define, explain and argue their coverage of the Catalan pro-sovereignty process.

The journalists' answers reveal an idea that is repeated throughout the interviews: the feeling of belonging to a public media outlet. Although this item is not underlined by the interviewer, the writers take the opportunity to explain that they are part of a public media outlet and that this has consequences for their work routines. They relate these effects to the fact of being extremely cautious when publishing certain information (carefully checking sources), being curious about what is said (trying to be sensitive to all views and opinions) and avoiding any kind of personal ideology (in order to represent an editorial line).

When they talk about TV3, journalists use the first person plural to include themselves in the media, that is, they internalise their belonging to the company and feel responsible for it: "We are who we are", "we, for being TV3", "we are public television". In this sense, they see themselves as a benchmark for communication in the Catalan sphere, which is why they go to extremes when they speak of pluralism and diversity, for example.

This internalised responsibility has to do with the gatekeeper function of journalists, in other words, their ability to control information and the awareness that their actions have an influence. In this case, and contrary to what some studies argue (Túñez, 1999), gatekeeper awareness is not lost, but reinforced. Journalists know that their work has effects beyond the media and that what they say will be seen and questioned not only by the public, but also by political and social agents. That is why it is perceived that journalists themselves remember and reinforce their role as mediators in a context of political and social conflict.

By linking these aspects to one of the research questions, what degree of awareness do the writers have of the plurality of views involved in the conflict (RQ3), it can be concluded that this degree is high, as they continually refer to the term *plurality* as the obligation and responsibility to make all ideological positions visible. The writers argue that whenever they can, they try to include all views, both for and against the conflict.

Nevertheless, two difficulties arise that are related to the limits of the media outlet's format and access to journalistic sources. Journalists admit that, on some occasions, they cannot include all the political views because the piece is too short. They also admit that they have had occasional difficulties in accessing certain sources.

The writers say that they are free to choose which political views appear and which have to be discarded due to lack of space, but ultimately it is up to the news editor to decide. When asked about the criteria for the presence and hierarchy of actors, they assure us that they follow the criterion of information and that no prior guideline or strategy has been established. This is not a conscious criterion and a deliberate way of doing things, but rather an improvisation and an adaptation to the current news situation.

With regard to the research question on which are the main factors that have influenced journalists in their coverage of the pro-sovereignty process (RQ2), the results show similarities with respect to other studies on professional routines and news production, and differences with regard to the specific context of TV3 (Tuchman, 1983; Túñez, 1999).

This means that almost all the factors identified as the ones that most condition production correspond to those argued by TV3 journalists: the journalistic sources and communication offices, the degree of autonomy of the journalist, the competition for the audience between media outlets, the conversations between professionals, the format of the media and professional experience.

Conversely, there are influencing factors that are only identified in this case study and that have to do with the political and economic context of the CCMA. One of these factors has to do with the impact of the economic crisis of 2008, which led to a reduction in staff at a time when political information about the pro-sovereignty process was increasing. The other conditioning factor is the fact that they belong to a public media outlet: they cannot simply prioritise what works for the audience, but they have to take into account their public service missions.

With regard to the time and format guidelines followed by journalists when preparing the news (RQ1), it can be concluded that these guidelines have become more flexible as the Catalan pro-sovereignty process has progressed. The editors of *Telenotícies* said that the news programmes had a longer duration because the current news required it. This decision is attributed to the TV3 management, which considered that the programmes had to be more flexible when it came to conceding more airtime due to the complexity of the political and judicial actions.

To conclude, one last aspect of the news production of the pro-sovereignty process worth mentioning is that almost all journalists point out the exceptional nature, intensity and uncertainty of the moment. The context that accompanies the production of news is therefore linked to factors beyond the control of journalists. They stressed that this was one of the most important moments in Catalonia's history in recent years, and this meant that they were constantly alert to new developments.

Furthermore, it ended up being the journalists who adapted to the situation and at certain times had to improvise in the preparation of the news. Firstly, this reduces the time taken to prepare the news, which can affect the final quality of the product, and secondly, it explains the difficulties they had to avoid constructing a prefabricated story. In short, it clearly shows the contradiction between what journalists want to do and what they can actually do, and the fact that news production is highly influenced by journalistic routines.

7. Conclusions

The significance of the Catalan pro-sovereignty process in the political, social and legal spheres seems unquestionable. Research such as this confirms that, during a conflict, the context of the media outlets is fundamental to understanding the narrative they construct and, at the same time, shows how complex it is for political journalism to be in tune with the interests of the media outlets and the objectivity of the news.

This study has made it possible to get closer to the place and the people who construct these stories. There are no other known surveys that have interviewed all the editors and writers who participated in TV3's journalistic account of the Catalan pro-sovereignty process, and this makes the analysis of the answers of the professionals interviewed particularly relevant for different reasons.

Firstly, to be able to corroborate that this television station was criticised by political parties and the media for questions of plurality and bias, and that, conversely, other actors defended it and made use of reports where it was agreed that this was not the case. Both attitudes are closely linked to political and commercial interests. It is a political war and, at the same time, a media war. This confrontation goes beyond the media in order to win the story of the conflict and, therefore, to promote an ideological position. TV3 has not been an exception.

It is also clear that TV3 has had easier access to Catalan sources and to the Government of Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya), while it has had occasional difficulties in obtaining information from the Spanish institutions. At certain times, it has been disadvantaged and this has been due to a purely political issue: it has been conditioned by governmental interests when it comes to selling a certain story which, on some occasions, has made it difficult for professionals to access information.

This research shows that the political observation made of TV3 has at times been passed on to its employees, who have felt and experienced this pressure. This is considered to be a worrying aspect, especially if one takes into account that any means of communication should be exempt. The Catalan and Spanish communication system has independent bodies or entities dedicated to supervising and controlling the contents of the media. Should these measures not be sufficient, others must be implemented, but politics must never be a means of pressuring and conditioning the media, however indirectly.

Note

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Appendix. Complete interview script

You will now be asked a series of questions related to your work as a journalist in the political section of the TV3 news programme during a broad period of time, from 2013 to 2017.

- Could you tell us how long you worked in the political section of TV3 news between the end of 2013 and the end of 2017 (less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years or more than 3 years)? Do you think there was an "overrepresentation" of the Catalan conflict?
- Did you participate in the press coverage of 9 November 2014 and 1 October 2017?
- How do you remember these events from a journalistic point of view (volume of work, time allocated for delivery, atmosphere in the newsroom, etc.)? If the case of having participated in both referenda, do you remember them in a similar way?

In this research, a quantitative analysis was made of part of the content broadcast on TV3's Telenotícies related to the Catalan pro-sovereignty process, namely, aspects such as the journalistic sources used, the actors who appeared on a recurrent basis, the minutes devoted to talking about the process, etc. It is for this reason that some of the following questions refer to these items.

- Taking into account the results of the analysis of the content, the figures show that the number of minutes dedicated to talking about the pro-sovereignty process increased notably from 9 November to 1 October. What is the reason for this increase in media attention by TV3?
- Regarding the journalistic sources you used to obtain information, which were the most recurring, who provided them and how easy was it to access them?
- At any time during the period between 2013 and 2017 did you have any difficulties in gaining access?
- In relation to the actors who appear in the news reports, how was it decided to give prominence to one or the other and in what order for them to appear? Did your boss give you any instructions in this regard? [version for writers] / What guidelines were given to the writers in this regard? [version for section heads and editors].
- How many minutes did the pieces have to fill? Did these indications remain constant over time or did they vary? Did that affect the story you had to tell? [version for writers] / How many minutes were given to writers for their pieces? Did that affect the story you had to tell? Do you think that this could have affected the writers' reporting? [version for section heads and editors].
- Were all the pieces you produced supervised by the editor? [version for editors] / As an editor or section head, did you review the pieces written by the writers? [version for section heads and editors].
- Are there internal factors, in other words, those within the newsroom, that could influence the creation of the journalistic content, be it the conversations with fellow writers, time constraints and the format, etc.? How do they influence you?
- What other external factors can condition the journalist's work and how does this affect your approach to your work?
- Could the fact that TV3 is a public media outlet that depends to a large extent on funding from the Generalitat (i.e. the Catalan Government) be an influential factor for you?
- Are there pressures from political parties, representatives of institutions or others trying to influence your work? If so, have you personally experienced this? Do you think that these pressures have increased during the period of the pro-sovereignty process?

This research has also analysed the journalistic discourse, taking into account a study that considers that there are generic frameworks when talking about social and political conflicts. What do you think are the main difficulties or the main challenges when covering a conflict of these characteristics?

- Do you think the story tends to define the two (or three) sides of the Catalan conflict, indicating winners and losers?
- Do you think it is possible to be plural and impartial in the narrative of a conflict such as the pro-sovereignty process?

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Audiences and streamers on Twitch: consumption and production patterns in the Spanish-speaking world

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Abstract
In the context of the struggle for audience attention, Twitch has gained ground by offering live broadcasts of user-generated content. This article quantifies this platform by focusing on the Spanish-speaking community, specifically by analysing the broadcast patterns of streamers, audience distribution and consumption cycles. The results show massive, consolidated audiences with cyclical patterns, as well as clear differences between amateur and professional creators; the latter capture the majority of the audience and have generated production routines comparable those in the TV industry.

Keywords
Twitch, Live Streaming, Creators, Streamers, Audiences.

Resum
En un context de pugna per l'atenció de les audiències, Twitch s'ha consolidat proposant l'emissió en directe de continguts generats pels usuaris mateixos. Aquest article dimensiona la plataforma esmentada centrant-se en la comunitat hispanoparlant i posa el focus sobre els patrons d'emissió dels streamers, el repartiment d'audiències i els cicles de consum. Els resultats mostren audiències massives, consolidades i amb patrons cíclics, així com diferències clares entre creadors amateurs i professionals, els quals concentren la gran part de l'audiència i han generat rutines de producció homologables a la indústria televisiva.

Paraules clau
Twitch, live streaming, creadors, streamers, audiències.

1. Introduction

Even though the platform Twitch is not new, its popularity rose significantly after 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown. The 'new normal' imposed by the pandemic, which primarily affected free-time choices, pushed people to seek entertainment alternatives, and just like other audiovisual content services, Twitch benefited from this situation (Narassiguin & Garnès, 2020).

Despite the pronounced increase in users in the past two years, Twitch has never stopped growing since it has been tracked. According to twitchtracker.com, a portal specialised in analytically tracking this platform, in 2013 it had a average of 70,000 simultaneous viewers and peaks of up to 200,000 globally. By early 2022, the average number of simultaneous viewers was 2.5 million, with peaks of 6 million. It has also experienced a considerable increase in audience and popularity in the Spanish speaking-world, which is reflected in the increasing media presence of streamers (Gutiérrez Lozano & Cuartero, 2022), the name used for people who devote themselves to broadcasting live content via the Internet. In this sense, late 2019 marked a turning point, when some of the leading content creators on YouTube in Spanish moved to this platform. They migrated motivated (as they themselves have admitted) by worsening economic conditions and a sense of arbitrariness and defencelessness in the face of increasingly reactive content policies on the Google platform (Caplan & Gillespie, 2020). With this move, touchstones in content creation like Rubén Doblás, known as 'El Rubius' on YouTube, where he has more than 40 million subscribers, and Raúl Álvarez, known as 'Auronplay', with more than 28 million subscribers on YouTube, drew a significant part of their audiences away to Twitch.

In many senses, this platform is the antithesis of YouTube, as it focuses on live content and synchronous consumption. To monetise the ephemeral, Twitch has devised a monthly subscription system (which range from €3.99 to €24.99)[1] and occasional donations. These subscriptions or donations are targeted directly at a streamer, and Twitch acts as a broker to sustain the technical infrastructure and provide the platform.

It is important to clarify the fact that with very isolated exceptions, consumers may access the live contents on Twitch without paying anything. However, they are impacted

with several adverting insertions, which also provide the streamer and Twitch with income. The way content creators earn a profit for the work they do is perceived as fairer; unlike YouTube, the income is not solely associated with advertising, which disassociates the monetisation of the content with the audience size, and therefore the end income is less influenced by fluctuations in the auction prices of advertising inserts. While YouTube focuses on the number of views as an indicator of success, on Twitch the streamer has to assemble an audience around them that is committed and loyal enough that they are willing to support the creator's work by paying a subscription or making donations. That is something that –despite appearances– happens frequently and seems natural among the most loyal viewing public. Finally, Twitch is a stabler and more permissive platform in its content policies, which has enabled YouTubers to regain some degree of authenticity and creative freedom, issues which have been especially problematic on YouTube due to its rigidity and imposition of a neutral content policy.

In the eyes of the public at large, Twitch has been considered a platform focused on broadcasting videogames, or at least that was its initial purpose. However, the arrival of the YouTubers and their massive audiences accelerated the diversification of the contents and formats available, breaking the perception of Twitch as a 'niche platform'. On Twitch it is currently possible to see people playing piano, cooking, reading books, dancing and, of course, playing videogames. Even though this last category is still its main activity, today Twitch has content tags as diverse as music, discussion, sports, politics, pets, art, beauty, software development and food and drink, among many others. This gradual addition of new categories is making it possible for creating new audience niches and is attracting new users willing to create contents, a process that is contributing to the creation of an increasingly diverse and rich ecosystem for viewers.

Thus, in the past two years Twitch has been the epicentre of a series of changes in the industry and has managed to take advantage of the new forms of consumption, which have resulted in a significant increase in the number of users of this platform and its increasing media prominence. The purpose of this study is to capture the dimension of the Twitch platform, more specifically the number of Spanish-speaking viewers and content creators. By doing so, we seek to frame the platform Twitch as a consumption option in the current context of a vast abundance of audiovisual entertainment.

1.1. Composition of the streaming industry

The current configuration of actors and competitors in the market niche of user-generated content is no coincidence but instead the result of a five-year struggle in which the major tech companies have been vying to dominate the multi-million dollar eSports market. Founded in 2007 with the name of 'Justin.tv', Twitch was acquired by Amazon in 2014 for 735 million euros, the largest acquisition made by Jeff Bezos until that date (*El País* 2014). Amazon's intention with this purchase was to compete for eSports audiences alongside platforms like Mixer (owned by Microsoft), Facebook Gaming (owned by Meta) and YouTube Gaming (owned by Google). The period spanning 2015 to 2019 was marked by an intense struggle among these large companies to capture still fragmented audiences by making million-dollar offers and exclusivity contracts with major streamers in an attempt to mobilise attention towards a given platform (Carroni et al., 2021; Förderer & Gutt, 2018).

Today, the opacity of the audience figures of YouTube Gaming and Facebook Gaming make it difficult to ascertain each of these platforms' market shares. However, we do know that Microsoft abandoned Mixer in 2020 to join forces with Facebook Gaming, while YouTube Gaming seems more interested in offering asynchronous contents and has no prominent live content creator among its ranks. In contrast, in 2022 Twitch is the platform preferred by the majority of successful streamers, and many of them are participating with exclusivity contracts. Therefore, despite the absence of solid figures, this scene leads us to believe that Twitch occupies a hegemonic position in this industry.

1.2. Consumption motivations

The success of Twitch as an entertainment alternative, especially among younger audiences, may be due to their disaffection with traditional TV contents and the consolidation of videogames as a cultural product (Gutiérrez Lozano & Cuartero, 2020). However, the act of watching other people play videogames is nothing new, and references to this form of entertainment can be found since the birth of the medium itself (Tammy Lin et al., 2019). Broadcasts of videogames and the consumption of this kind of content is nothing more than a reinvention of tandem play (Scully-Blaker et al., 2017), a term coined to describe a style of play in which several people congregate around a player to help them through their experience, without the need for these viewers to actually intervene in the game. Twitch is somehow reviving the idea of the now-defunct arcades, where players and viewers would gather together to share the game experience live.

The consumption motivations on Twitch have also been addressed from the field of psychology, which has noted the existence of affective gratification and feelings of community or social integration (Sheng & Kairam, 2020), which help to generate viewer loyalty (Hilvert-Bruce et al. 2018). Nor should we ignore the fact that Twitch is two-way in that it makes a chat available to viewers through which they can interact with the streamer, so they can participate in the broadcast (Gros et al., 2018; Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016).

Twitch's indissoluble association with the phenomenon of influencers and micro-celebrities is also a factor to bear in mind when trying to explain the platform's success among young people. The spontaneity, proximity and sense of authenticity transmitted by the streamers, as well as the absence of constraints and filters, give this format a different tone than

other media can offer, even though all these elements are often the outcome of a carefully measured execution and conceal a high degree of professionalisation (Beil et al., 2021).

1.3. Twitch in the context of the audiovisual supply

To understand the prominence and resonance of Twitch, we have to analyse its role within the global audiovisual and entertainment industry. In the 'post-network' era (Lotz, 2007), the number of actors offering audiovisual contents has increased considerably, generating a context of fierce competition in the struggle for viewers' and/or users' attention. Following the tenets of the attention economy (Freire, 2008; Simon, 1971), traditional media, video on demand service platforms and other services offering audiovisuals are currently competing for people's time, which is considered a scarce good. Furthermore, there are more and more interrelations among the different types of audiovisuals, including Twitch, YouTube, subscription video on demand (SVoD) services, linear TV and even radio. For example, some TV programmes in Spain are already offering content on Twitch, and radio programmes are also broadcasting via this platform (with images) to complement their voice broadcasts (Gutiérrez Lozano & Cuartero, 2020). Within this context, we should note the differences and similarities between these actors in order to understand their relationship, competition and coexistence in the current audiovisual market.

Historically, the emergence of new media has meant the appearance of discourses on the end of the previously hegemonic medium, usually wielding technophilic arguments (Bolter & Grusin, 1999). In the audiovisual world, where the Twitch platform is situated, the decline and possible 'death' of TV has been proclaimed for more than a decade due to the increasing popularity of video streaming techniques. Due to their industrialisation and contents that resemble those of TV, video on demand services, especially transnational SVoD services, have positioned themselves as the future heirs of linear TV. These services offer users a vast amount of content whenever and wherever they want, in contrast to the rigid, predetermined structure of linear TV. While SVoD services like Netflix or HBO Max are compared with traditional TV (Lobato & Lotz, 2020; Radošinská, 2017; Straubhaar et al., 2021), platforms like YouTube or Twitch have tried to disassociate from these audiovisual actors by highlighting the non-industrialisation of their contents, most of which are generated by (non-professional) users.

Unlike SVoD services and platforms like YouTube, Twitch is based on live broadcasts. Live content has always been one of the main cornerstones of the audiovisual industry, as it guarantees a potential connection to a shared social reality that is happening at that very moment, boosting the cultural value of that content (Bourdon, 2000; Couldry, 2004). As 'live' content was losing prominence, except for specific events like large sporting or news events (Delgado et al., 2018), Twitch's strategy is based on synchronous consumption, while also harnessing the social connection among users to generate audience interest (Hilvert-Bruce et al., 2018).

Despite the importance of video on demand (VoD) as a form of entertainment in recent years, which comes from giving viewers a high degree of control over what audiovisual titles they watch from an extensive catalogue and when they watch them, leaving old contents available on the platform is optional on Twitch. Many streamers do not keep their videos after broadcasting them live, and for those who do decide to activate the VoD option, the platform only keeps the content accessible between 14 and 60 days.[2] This is reminiscent of the 'catch-up' dynamics of linear TV, in which programmes broadcast live are only accessible for a certain period of time (Raats et al., 2016). The clear focus on live content distinguishes Twitch from other platforms based on user-generated content and separates it from the offerings of the leading SVoD services.

The prominence of live broadcasts on the platform entails implementing a series of practices to guarantee a number of live viewers, which means paying attention to key factors like broadcast time, the competitions' broadcasts and the length of the contents, factors that are highly developed in the TV industry. However, Twitch is a platform with a transnational reach capable of generating consumption communities beyond national boundaries, mostly based on content that is not professionally generated.

2. Objectives

Unlike other user-generated content platforms, there is little research focused on Twitch. Studies have been conducted from the field of education which explore the platform's potential as a tool to transmit technical-scientific knowledge (Gandolfi et al., 2022), its use as a complement or alternative to formal teaching (Pozo-Sánchez et al., 2021) and the existence of streamers and communities of content creators specialised in disseminating scientific knowledge (Steinbeck et al., 2021). Specific elements of the interface and the possibilities it affords have also been the focal point of research, such as interaction spaces in real time (Nematzadeh et al., 2019), the mechanisms available to streamers to directly arbitrate in the ways users are interacting (Flores-Saviaga et al., 2019; Poyane, 2019) and the collective consumption experiences facilitated by this platform (Jacobs & Booth, 2021).

Other studies have observed how the different types of contents and audience size affect communities of viewers, the quality of interactions and their level of commitment to the content creator (Wolff & Shen, 2022). Likewise, research has examined how communities of anonymous viewers sometimes evolve to give way to closer interpersonal relationships (Sheng & Kairam, 2020). Studies have also been published with the gender perspective, which reveal the issues facing women who participate in creating contents around videogames, a

niche that has traditionally been occupied by men (Kampel et al., 2020; Olsson, 2018). The field of computer science has studied metrics and indicators of live broadcasts to determine the factors that lead to a streamer's success and growth (Le et al., 2021). Finally, the studies conducted by Gutiérrez Lozano and Cuartero analyse the increasing presence of streamers in the media in Spain and the popularity of the platform among younger audiences (Gutiérrez Lozano & Cuartero, 2020, 2022).

However, there is little literature that manages to measure and quantify Twitch as a mass phenomenon within the framework of communication studies. Even though the platform's press kit provides macroscopic figures on its audience and content creators, it is difficult to find detailed information that helps to accurately describe and understand the dynamics occurring on the platform.

Therefore, this study seeks to offer a general approach to Twitch focused on the Spanish-speaking community, with a spotlight on three basic factors: audiences, content creators and behavioural patterns. To do so, it has three objectives:

a) To describe the audience size of the Spanish-speaking community on Twitch.
b) To quantify the number of content creators in Spanish on Twitch and their broadcast dynamics.
c) To analyse the existence of cyclical behaviour patterns among the audience and content creators.

3. Methodology

To gather information for this article, data from the platform Twitch were collected non-stop from 1 December 2021 until 31 January 2022. The period of analysis spanned a total of 62 days or 1,488 broadcast hours. To do this, capture software written in Python that was capable of communicating with Twitch's API was created in-house.[3] This software was placed in a server and mined all the data on all the live broadcasts in Spanish in real time. This data mining was done every 30 minutes throughout the entire analysis period, yielding a total of 2,976 samples. This data-mining frequency was determined after finding in previous analyses that greater granularity in the samples does not affect the end result. Each sample contains a complete list of the content creators who were broadcasting live at that precise instant, and for each of them the number of viewers, their position in the ranking (according to audience size), the title of the broadcast and the broadcast category were recorded. This data collection process enabled us to create a database with more than 40 million units of analysis.

We shall focus on the Spanish language because at the time the study was conducted, it was the language on the platform with the second largest absolute audience according to the portal twitchtracker.com, due to the steep increase in viewers that this community has experienced and the increasing presence of the most important content creators in the media on Twitch. The analysis period was chosen because it contained a mix of work weeks, vacation periods and holidays, which enabled us to observe the effects of these changes on the dynamic of the audiences and content creators. Finally, all the time references are in GTM +1, that is, the time zone of peninsular Spain.

The data on the language and the activity during the live broadcast are not automatically detected by Twitch; instead, the streamer has to declare them before and during the broadcast. Therefore, a live broadcast can be located in different content categories depending on the time and activity. It is important to remember that Twitch has a transnational reach, so audience data should be attributed not to countries but to language communities. When we talk about streamers in Spanish and their respective audiences, we are referring to a transnational community that is not limited to any governmental boundary. The concept of 'Spanish-speaking', in turn, encompasses all the varieties of Spanish existing in the world.

Finally, just as with other platforms and media, the numerical audience figure corresponds to the number of unique receiving devices consuming a given content, meaning that it is impossible to establish how many real viewers exist behind each receiving device. For this study, a receiving device was considered to correspond to one viewer, as this assumes the minimum number of viewers possible.

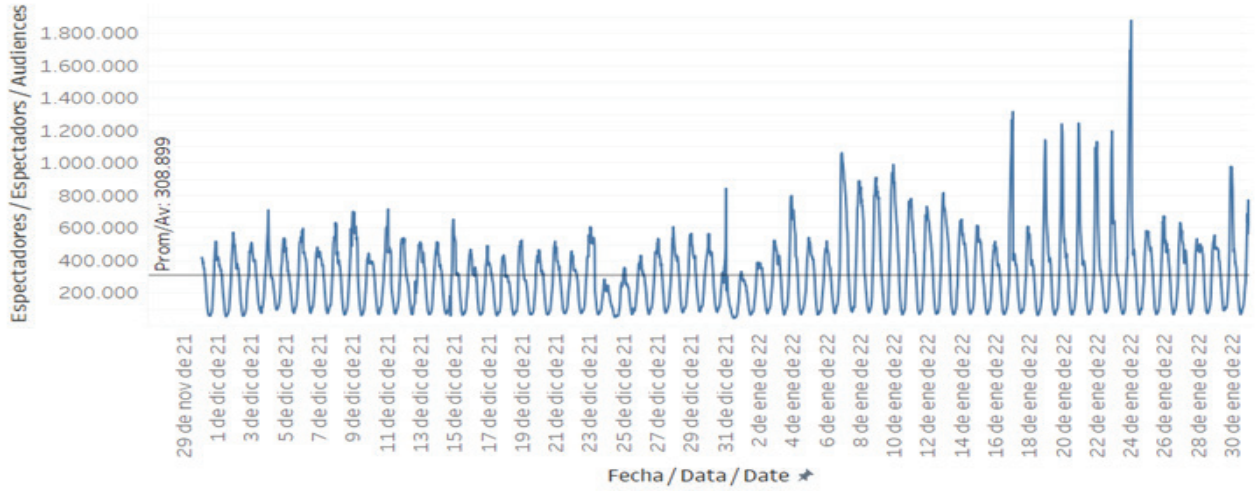
4. Results

4.1 Audience data

In absolute terms, the average aggregate audience of contents in Spanish broadcast on Twitch during the period analysed is 308,899 viewers. This figure fluctuates notably depending on the time of day and increases considerably when there are special events. As shown in Graph 1, there is cyclical behaviour in the audiences, which create a daily pattern. If we take the aforementioned average audience as a reference, we find an 'off-peak' period from 5 am to 4 pm. During this time bracket, the audience is lower than the average and reaches a minimum of between 60,000 and 70,000 viewers, usually at 11 am. On the other hand, there is a 'peak' period between 4 pm and 5 am. During this time range, the audience is above the average and increases quickly until reaching its peak between 8 pm and 10 pm, with 500,000 to 700,000 viewers. This alternation between off-peak and peak hours takes place daily and without interruption, which indicates the existence of stable, consolidated and predictable consumption patterns.

In the period analysed, we find occasional moments when the audiences grow far above the usual rates, so it is pertinent to conduct a detailed analysis of them in order to understand some of the dynamics on the platform. The first of these 'anomalous' peaks took place on 31 December 2021, with a peak audience that reached 843,244 viewers right before midnight (see Graph 1). This increase corresponded to the live broadcast of the Spanish streamer Ibai Llanos, along with the TV host Ramon García, from Madrid's Puerta del Sol as the bells tolled in the

Graph 1. Evolution of the audience in Spanish-speaking channels in Twitch from December 1, 2022 to January 31. 2022



Source: Authors.

New Year. At peak audience, this broadcast garnered 801,079 simultaneous viewers, capturing 94.99% of the Spanish-speaking audience available on the platform at the time.

The second event worth attention took place on 7 January 2022. On the afternoon of that day (peninsular Spanish time zone), the audience grew to reach 1,063,768 viewers at 10:30 pm. This growth dovetailed with a collaborative event among streamers from different countries known as 'Egoland', where 99 participants played the survival videogame 'Rust' (Brugat, 2022).

The third milestone was on 17 January, when a figure of 1,316,780 viewers was reached (78% of the Spanish-speaking audience on the platform) in a single broadcast, dovetailing with the live broadcast of the 'Island' awards ceremony for content creators on Twitch and YouTube held at the Palau de la Música Catalana and organised by the streamer David Cánovas (alias 'TheGrefg'). Unlike the other two peak audiences, this time the broadcast managed to sustain a large audience throughout the entire broadcast period, surpassing one million viewers for four hours.

The fourth and last major milestone in the Spanish-speaking Twitch community during the period analysed started in the afternoon of 19 January 2022 with the premiere of a new collaborative serial event associated with the videogame *Minecraft*, in which the trials in the Netflix series 'The Squid Game'[4] were recreated over the course of six days. Even though the event was organised by the leading Spanish-speaking streamers, it was celebrated under the aegis of the 'Twitch Rivals', an official series of matches in which Twitch participates as the organiser,[5] where the winner earns a cash prize of 100,000 USD. In addition to the live broadcasts by the content creators themselves from their own Twitch channels, the platform also made an official broadcast with commentators, where it was possible to see the different vantage points of each participant. During the moment of peak audience on Twitch at 9 pm, the figure of 1,143,192 viewers was reached, approximately 83% of whom (around 950,000 viewers) were following some broadcast related to this event.

The contest sustained an audience higher than one million viewers throughout the event, beating the audience record within the period analysed on the night of 24 January 2022 at 11 pm, with 1,878,485 viewers, dovetailing with the final match, where the players vied for the prize live. Approximately 1,720,103 viewers (91%) were connected to some channel related to the event. Of them, 1,208,144 (70%) were watching the final in a single broadcast, specifically the one by the streamer known as 'El Xokas', a finalist in the event.

4.2. Content creators

During the period analysed, a total of 964,698 unique people participated in the platform as content creators in Spanish, with a average of 10,207 unique broadcasts per day. Just as with the audiences, there are considerable fluctuations throughout the day, with off-peak and peak hours (see Graph 2). The off-peak hours, where the volume of streamers is below the average, span from 6 am to 7 pm. During this period, a minimum of around 3,000 broadcasts is reached at 11 am. In contrast, the hours when the volume is higher than the average span from 7 pm to 6 am, reaching a maximum of around 18,000 live broadcasts at around 4 am. Just as with the audiences, the live broadcasts follow a cyclical pattern that is repeated on a daily basis.

Despite the number of users participating on the platform, there are differences in the division of labour or level of dedication in terms of the number of hours broadcast. The total aggregate live broadcast hours is 16,326,566, and the average broadcast per streamer is 16.92 hours. However, 77.64% of the streamers broadcast less than this average, and

their contribution to the aggregate volume of broadcast hours is 18.72%. To further explore this irregular contribution to broadcast hours, we found that 233,160 users (24.17% of the total) broadcast an hour or less throughout the entire period, and their contribution to the total hours only accounts for 1%. In contrast, 22.36% of the streamers broadcast more than this average, and their contributions accounted for 81.28% of the hours broadcast throughout the entire period analysed.

Graph 2, which specifically shows 4 December 2021 at 10 pm, illustrates a steep increase in the number of content creators broadcasting on the platform. This anomaly dovetails with a very brief special event on the videogame 'Fornite', one of the most popular on the platform, which was broadcast simultaneously by many users (more than 35,000). However, the increase in the number of streamers had no notable effect on the audience volume on the platform (see Graph 1 on the same period), and it was extremely brief and localised, lasting less than 30 minutes.

4.3. Audience distribution

The audience distribution among all the broadcasts available during the period analysed is far from being equitable. Of the 964,698 users who participated in the platform as content creators, 35,913 (3.73%) had no viewers. Another 509,658 (52.83%) had an average of 1 viewer. That is, nobody saw more than half the Twitch broadcasts in Spanish.

During peak audience hours (from 4 pm to 5 am), 76.29% of the viewers were concentrated around the 100 leading streamers. That is, 0.97% of the audiovisuals available captured most of the audience. There are substantial differences even within these top 100 streamers, as on average, 40.29% of the total viewers on the platform were concentrated around the top 5 streamers (see Table 1). This polarisation is also found during the platform's off-peak hours (from 5 am to 4 pm), where the top 100 streamers continued to capture a large portion of the viewers, with an average of 67.88% of the total. However, within this segment, the audience division is more equitable in this time bracket, and the top five streamers each earned an average of 25.83% of the audience.

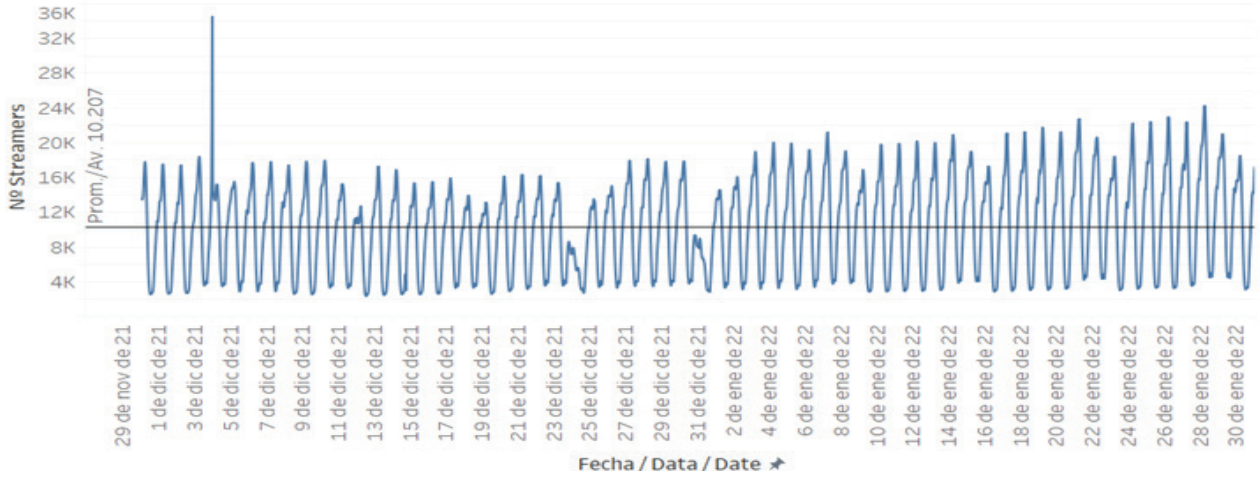
The average audience for a streamer in the top 100 is 2,335 viewers any time of day, while the average for the others is 8 viewers. As described above, the dispersion of the numbers in these groupings is quite high, as the top-ranked streamer regularly reaches an average of almost 79,759 viewers, while the positions ranked close to 100 have an average of 157 viewers.

So far, we have discussed the off-peak hours and peak hours in the data. These concepts apply to both the size of the audience consuming contents on the platform and the number of streamers broadcasting live. As Table 2 summarises, we can see that these cycles do not match. The maximum audience on the platform usually occurs at around 10 pm, while the maximum number of streamers broadcasting simultaneously comes at 4 am. However, what does match is the minimum audience with the minimum number of simultaneous streamers at 11 am.

To show the 'asynchrony' in the audience and content creator numbers, we took a small sample spanning from 18/12/2021 to 21/12/2021. Graph 3 exemplifies the lack of coordination between the number of people broadcasting live and the audience numbers on the platform. This is a pattern that is repeated on a daily basis throughout the entire period analysed, which was only broken by the special events described above.

Graph 3 shows how the audience volume grows progressively throughout the afternoon and evening until reaching a maximum between 8:30 and 10 pm (peninsular Spanish time zone). After

Graph 2. Volume of Spanish-speaking streamers in Twitch from from December 1, 2022 to January 31. 2022



Source: Authors.

this peak, the audience suddenly drops off, stabilises at around 1 am and then enters off-peak hours. In turn, the number of simultaneous streamers starts to rise in the afternoon and evening, just as audience numbers are rising. But this growth is broken (or even declines) during the peak audience hours. After that time, the number of people broadcasting live shows another upswing (in a staggered fashion) until reaching the peak at around 4 am, with a large concurrence of streamers from Latin America.

With this detailed analysis, we also found that the maximum audience time dovetails with the simultaneous presence of the leading Spanish-speaking streamers, namely Auronplay, Ibai Llanos, TheGrefg and El Rubius, among others, all of whom broadcast from the Iberian Peninsula (Spain or Andorra). The end of their broadcasts dovetails with the drop in audience on the platform and the simultaneous launch of a host of new live broadcasts from small content creators.

5. Discussion and conclusions

This article has placed the live streaming platform Twitch within the context of the entertainment industries and focused on its broadcast and consumption dynamics. A priori, Twitch is described as a digital platform based on contents generated by non-professional users and live consumption. However, the results of this study reveal a process of industrialisation, professionalisation and standardisation which can be described using concepts associated with TV audience studies.

Table 1. Audience average of Spanish-speaking channels on Twitch by position segments in the ranking

Place	Audience at peak hours (%)	Average audience at peak hours	Audience at off-peak hours (%)	Average audience at off-peak hours
Average	100%	443,181	100%	120,490
Top 100	76.29%	338,112	67.88%	81,791
Top 5	40.29%	178,576	25.83%	31,123
1st ranked	17.99%	79,759	11.69%	14,093
2nd ranked	8.99%	39,870	5.23%	6,307
3rd ranked	5.92%	26,243	3.62%	4,371
4th ranked	4.21%	18,667	3.10%	3,747
5th ranked	3.16%	14,037	2,38%	2,879

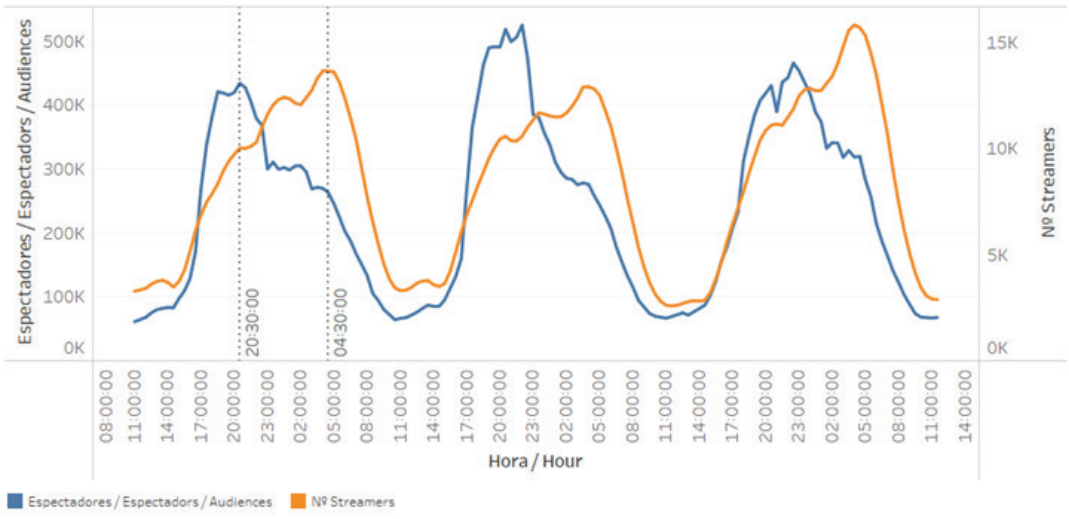
Source: Authors.

Table 2. Summary of the distribution of peak hours and off-peak hours in streamers and audiences (peninsular Spanish time zone)

	Off-peak hours	Minimum hour	Peak hours	Maximum hour
Audiences	5 am to 4 pm	11 am	4 pm to 5 am	10 pm
Streamers	7 am to 7 pm	11 am	7 pm to 7 am	4 am

Source: Authors.

Graph 3. Comparison between the daily cycles of Spanish-speaking audiences and streamers on Twitch (peninsular Spanish time zone)



Source: Authors.

5.1. Cyclical and polarised audiences

Bearing in mind the cyclical audience behaviours, and drawing a parallel with the programming logics of TV, there is a clear alternation between broadcasts during prime-time and low competition time brackets. The data analysed show that this alternation in cycles is stable and that maximum and minimum audiences are reproduced regularly, which enables us to claim that Twitch is a consolidated platform and that audiences go there regularly to consume its contents.

The existence of 'off-peak' and 'peak' hours affects not only the volume of viewers but also the audience's division among all the audiovisual contents available. During 'prime-time' hours, the viewing public tends to concentrate around just a few broadcasts, while during the times with lower audiences the division is more equitable. Nonetheless, in absolute terms, the audiences in Twitch are polarised. A very small group of streamers (less than 1%) captures between 67% and 76% of the audience available on the platform at any time of day, and there are even substantial differences within this small group of content creators (see Table 1).

The surge in entertainment contents means that it is increasingly difficult to draw (and keep) viewers' attention, as they are a scarce good according to the attention economy paradigm. Only a few contents manage to attract large audiences, while the others remain niche or often even residual. In this sense, the vast catalogues of the major SVoD services also work under this dynamic, in which a small number of titles reach the majority of subscribers while consumption of the rest of the catalogue is highly individualised.

As noted in the results, daily broadcasts are complemented with the programming of special events. Some of them, like the 'Esland' awards ceremony organised by the streamer TheGrefg and the bells tolling in the New Year, featuring Ibai Llanos and Ramón García, have a format that clearly echoes TV, and they are produced with professional technical and human resources. These special events, which reach huge peak audiences, are an opportunity to capture new viewers unfamiliar with the platform's own codes. However, the data analysed do not show clear indications that this audience is retained, and viewer figures tend to stabilise a few days later.

5.2. Amateur versus professional streamers

Among all the data analysed, we can make out three clearly distinct groups of content creators. The first is a group of users (24.17% of the total) who have broadcast one hour or less throughout the entire period, and their contribution to the overall calculation of total hours is just 1%, which indicates that they spontaneously and almost accidentally dabbled in the platform. The second group, which is in the majority (53.47%), is comprised of streamers who operate in a totally amateur way, who only contribute to generating 17% of the content. Finally, there is a third group of streamers (22.36%) who broadcast regularly and whose efforts have generated 81.28% of the content. Therefore, we can conclude that only 1 out of ever 4 streamers participating on Twitch does so regularly and shows some degree of professionalisation or commitment.

Within this small group of professionalised streamers who seem to be committed to the platform, we find names like Auronplay, Ibai Llanos, TheGrefg and El Rubius, and their reach and dynamic are similar to those of the mass media. They show clear daily broadcast routines following the parameters of the horizontal programming of linear TV, a concept detected back in the 1970s in general TV channels (Williams 1974). Setting clear broadcasting times generates routines in viewers' lives that help to stabilise and ensure a high number of total viewers on a daily basis. These production routines, coupled with the use of technical resources superior to those of other more modest streamers, enable us to draw a clear dividing line between those who participate on Twitch as professionals and those who dabble in it occasionally or in a totally amateur fashion.

5.3. Abundance of content in a highly competitive environment

The division between amateurs and professionals becomes evident when we see that more than half the broadcasts analysed (52%) have just one viewer, and it may well be the streamer him/herself monitoring his/her broadcast live via a second window. This figure highlights the aforementioned audience polarisation, yet it also reveals the difficulties that many streamers encounter capturing audience attention.

The figures indicate that Twitch is a highly competitive environment where there is a tendency towards audience concentration while a vast number of contents remain invisible due to both the abundance of content and the unique features of the platform and design of its interface. This has led many small streamers to come up with broadcast strategies. For example, during peak audience hours, we find the concurrence of the most popular content creators in Spanish, yet this time does not dovetail with the highest volume of simultaneous streamers (see Graph 3), and at times the volume of contents actually decreases. This dynamic reveals that many content creators do not want to compete for their share of the audience during the same time bracket as the major streamers and instead prefer to start their broadcasts when the large streamers sign off in an attempt to capitalise on the orphaned viewers who are looking for a broadcast to join. This is similar to the audience retention techniques used in vertical flows on TV line-ups. This strategy may explain the exponential surge in live broadcasts when the major streamers go off-air.

However, the end of the broadcasts of the major streamers also dovetails with a clear drop in audiences on the platform. That is, a significant number of viewers show interest in a specific streamer and only consume contents when they are live, and then leave the platform as soon as the broadcast is over. This dynamic reveals viewers' behaviour and consumption patterns, but it also sheds light on the competition faced by smaller

streamers, as the audiovisual contents increase precisely when the available audience decreases, thus considerably heightening the difficulty of attracting viewers.

Despite everything, it is important to recall that the logic used to measure success on Twitch is different than on other platforms, and audience volume is not a metric that automatically translates into larger economic returns. The existence of a large unmotivated, casual audience gives the streamer no direct profit, while small, highly cohesive and committed communities of viewers can lead to significant income. Coupled with the low production costs, this means that a streamer can earn a profit or even professionalise their work if they manage to win the loyalty of a small audience.

To conclude, in the past decade we have watched as viewers have distanced themselves from linear TV and synchronous consumption (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2022). This trend has been further reinforced by the increasing presence of VoD content services and other digital content platforms. Just when it seemed that viewers wanted to decide when to view a given content outside the rigid linear TV programming line-ups, Twitch is clearly focusing on live contents. Within this context, the platform is a 'rara avis' by proposing content whose value lies in synchronous consumption and live interaction between audiences and broadcasters. The viewer figures described in the results reveal that there is still an interest in these forms of consumption, and in this sense, it is possible to venture a guess that audiences' disaffection for TV may be motivated by the contents, formats and forms of production instead of necessarily by the consumption model.

5.4 Future research

This study aims to be a preliminary general examination of Twitch in the Spanish-speaking world, which enables us to frame the platform as a mass medium in a highly competitive environment with hyper-fragmented audiences. There is a clear need to perform interpretative studies with qualitative methodological frameworks that could address issues like the audiovisual formats used by the streamers and the types of content, in order to understand both viewers' needs and production trends. From the sociological and anthropological standpoint, it is relevant to view Twitch as a new medium whereby cultures, ideas and values are shared, a function that the media like TV, radio and the press have traditionally fulfilled. Likewise, it is essential to analyse the content creators and their audiences from the gender perspective, as we have found an absence of women among the most prominent streamers. Finally, despite the difficulty in circumscribing audiences to specific geographic regions, it would be highly relevant to conduct comparative studies that could compare Twitch's reach with that of TV.

Notes

1. In July 2022.
2. Twitch VoD: https://help.twitch.tv/s/article/videos-on-demand?language=es
3. For more information on Twitch's API, see: https://dev.twitch.tv/docs/api/
4. Netflix did not participate in the production of the event.
5. Twitch Rivals: https://twitchrivals.com/

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EduMediaTest, a tool in the service of media competence. Project report, results and recommendations

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Abstract

EduMediaTest is a free interactive digital tool to assess and train the media competence of European students aged 14 to 18. The project, within the framework of a European call for proposals, has been led by the Catalan Audiovisual Council (CAC), with the Pompeu Fabra University, five European audiovisual regulators and two educational organisations. It consists of a fun-interactive survey and flexible training material on every dimension of media competence. In May 2021, 8,699 students answered the survey, of which 1,192 were from Catalonia. The analysis of the results concludes that there is an urgent need to improve media literacy skills among young Catalans and Europeans, especially those related to the production and dissemination of messages.

Keywords

Media Competence, Media Literacy, Training Materials, Formal Education, Assessment.

Resum

EduMediaTest és una eina interactiva digital gratuïta per avaluar i formar la competència mediàtica d'estudiants europeus de 14 a 18 anys. El projecte, en el marc d'una convocatòria europea, l'ha liderat el Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya, juntament amb la Universitat Pompeu Fabra, cinc reguladors audiovisuals europeus i dues entitats educadores. Consta d'un qüestionari lúdic-interactiu i de material formatiu flexible sobre cada una de les dimensions de la competència. El maig del 2021 van contestar el qüestionari 8.699 estudiants, dels quals 1.192 eren de Catalunya. L'anàlisi dels resultats conclou que urgeixen millorar les habilitats d'alfabetització mediàtica entre els joves catalans i europeus, sobretot les relatives a la producció i difusió de missatges.

Paraules clau

Competència mediàtica, alfabetització mediàtica, material formatiu, educació formal, avaluació.

Introduction

The Catalan Audiovisual Council (CAC) and Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF) led a project in 2019 and 2020 to develop an interactive digital tool aimed at assessing and improving the media skills of European students aged 14 to 18 years. The initiative is part of a competitive call for research on media literacy called 'Media Literacy for All', promoted by the European Commission (EC). One of its aims is to combat disinformation and critically manage the content received via social networks. The project, called EduMediaTest, was one of the 15 winning proposals, out of a total of 69 submitted in the 2019 call for proposals, and was delivered to the EC in September 2020. The resulting document has been made available to institutions throughout the countries of the European Union, openly and free of charge, and can be accessed via the website https://edumediatest.eu/.

The project saw the participation of five European audiovisual regulators, two public institutions in the field of education and one university. Specifically, the five regulatory authorities are the CAC, the Agencija za elektronicke medije (AEM) in Croatia, the Rada pre vysielanie a retransmisiu (CBR) in Slovakia, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA) in France and the Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social (ERC) in Portugal.

The two educational institutions are the National Centre of Audiovisual Media & Communication (EKOME) in Greece and the Dublin West Education Centre (DWEC) in Ireland. The Pom-

peu Fabra University has participated in designing the proposal, drawing up the survey and the training sheets, and ensuring that the project responds to the principles of scientific research.

In order to streamline coordination between members and the implementation of the online assessment and training tool in very different contexts, a face-to-face workshop was planned for members and staff involved, in order to reach a consensus on the theoretical and methodological criteria. The limits imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic made this initiative impossible, but nevertheless, it has been possible to rise to this challenge by means of virtual meetings and exchanges through digital systems.

The tools designed to assess and train in media competence have been evaluated to guarantee their validity and reliability, firstly in individual and collective pre-tests, applied to all countries and, finally, in the actual process of carrying out the project. The final survey was distributed to 9,379 young people from seven countries (Catalonia, France, Greece, Croatia, Slovakia, Portugal and Ireland) and 8,699 were considered valid for analysis. The participating schools were both public and private entities in urban and rural areas. In Catalonia, the participating schools were: Assís School (Premià de Mar), Cor de Maria School (Mataró), Pia el Masnou School, Solc School (Barcelona), Virolai School (Barcelona), Antoni Torroja Secondary School (Cervera), Ernest Lluch Secondary School (Barcelona), El Vern Secondary School (Lliçà de Vall), Euclides Secondary School (Pineda de Mar), Antoni de Martí i Franquès Secondary School (Tarragona), Manyanet Les Corts School (Barcelona) and Jaume Cabré Secondary School (Terrassa). A total of 1,192 surveys were collected in these schools and secondary schools.

What exactly is EduMediaTest?

The project consists of an online tool for assessing the media competence of students aged 14 to 18 and, at the same time, interactive training proposals to correct any weaknesses. The programme is designed to be managed by teachers who want to assess pupils, but at the same time educate them in this subject as another teaching activity in the school. Only by being aware of gaps in knowledge is it possible to feel the need to learn. The aim of this project is to educate in media competency based on an assessment of its current status.

With regard to the first part (assessment), the aim is to check the degree of media competency of the students by means of an interactive survey of 43 questions covering the different areas detailed in the following section: technology, languages, production process, reception and dissemination process, ideology and values, and aesthetic dimension (Ferrés & Piscitelli, 2012) by means of an interactive survey of 43 questions. By way of example, it assesses the students' ability to determine the reliability of news, detect the non-visible interests of sources, determine the existence of stereotypes and encourage a responsible attitude towards copyright. The aim is also to test the mastery of expressive codes and the ability to generate understandable and effective messages. To answer the survey, the student had to do a variety of activities such as analysing videos and photographs or searching for information using an internet search engine in order to complete the answers.

With regard to the second part (training), the programme proposes training activities in media competency that teachers can implement in the classroom based on the data obtained in the assessment and a dossier of material posted on the web, together with a sheet of training proposals for each question, which teachers can choose according to the areas of weakness observed in their pupils.

The EduMediaTest media competency assessment and training tools are openly and freely available on the web (http://edumediatest.eu), so that anyone who wants to use them, whether they are teachers in formal or non-formal education, or even families, may use them. Both the survey and the materials are available in ten languages to ensure widespread dissemination: firstly, in English, as this is the working language of the project, and also in Catalan, Spanish, Croatian, French, Gaelic, Greek, Portuguese, Slovak and German.

Conceptualisation of the project

The growing concern about disinformation cannot be addressed effectively in education without transcending the instrumental approach to media competence. The verification of facts and the critical assessment of information, although useful, are not enough to change the attitude of users towards the media. It is necessary to have a deeper understanding of the role played by the media in society, its economic structure and its politics, but, above all, it is necessary to know how the mind of the interlocutor works and to be aware of the interests and contradictions that motivate them.

Similarly, it is essential to enhance the ability to interact with the media in a broader sense, to be able to express oneself through different codes and formats. But, moreover, to focus attention on the role played by beliefs, unconscious attitudes and emotional responses in the experience of interacting with the media. It is therefore important to bear in mind the importance of maintaining a critical attitude towards one's own practices and knowledge when it comes to the use of the media. For this reason, the EduMediaTest project adopts a holistic approach and takes into account the dimensions that make up media competence, which have been developed and refined over the course of multiple research projects over the last twenty years (Ferrés, Aguaded-Gómez & García Matilla, 2012; Masanet, Contreras & Ferrés, 2013; Ferrés, Masanet & Blanco, 2014; Ferrés, Figueras-Maz, Masanet & Hafner, 2017). The central axis on which the different questions of the survey are based refer to the six dimensions of Ferrés and Piscitelli (2012: 79-81):

- **Languages**: knowledge of codes and the ability to use them and analyse messages in a multimedia, transmedia and multimodal culture, from the perspective of sense and meaning, from narrative structures and genre conventions.
- **Technology**: understanding the role of ICT in society. Knowledge and ability to use the tools that enable communication in a multimedia, transmedia and multimodal context; and understanding of the processes through which messages are created.
- **Reception processes**: Ability to assess, select, review and value one's media diet. Ability to understand and manage, from a critical point of view, the cognitive, rational, emotional and contextual elements involved in reception processes.
- **Production and dissemination processes**: Knowledge of the roles and tasks carried out by the social actors involved in the production and dissemination processes, and their regulatory framework. Ability to craft, select, share and disseminate media messages.
- **Ideology and values**: Ability to foster a comprehensive, committed and critical attitude in the selection, consumption and elaboration of media messages, understood as representations of reality.
- **Aesthetics**: Ability and sensitivity to analyse, assess and enjoy the formal aspects of media messages, taking into account their aesthetic quality and originality. Ability to produce messages that contribute to increased levels of creativity, originality and sensitivity.

The project's added values

The proposal is innovative both from the point of view of the approach and the contents as well as the methodology. Some of the project's added values are:

- EduMediaTest is one of the few existing tools that measures the media competence of citizens (assessment is a prerequisite for training). Moreover, the measuring instrument offers an automatic and instant assessment. Teachers can see the results obtained by their class immediately after completing the survey.
- Contrary to what is usually the case in assessments, the tool takes an interactive and playful approach. Students interact with the computer or tablet to answer the questions and do so using a variety of resources such as the mini-quiz, the swipe, the grid-array-drag, the filter, the mechanics and the multiple choice.
- The few materials on the market for measuring citizens' media literacy (including those produced by prestigious institutions such as the BBC) are of a self-perceptive nature. This is not the case here: For example, to measure whether or not they verify the information they access on the Internet, the survey asks them to search for information in a browser and the device automatically detects and assesses not the accuracy of the answer, but whether the student has verified the information they have found on the first search, i.e. whether they have made more than one search.
- The tool serves not only to assess media competence in general, but also that of each of its six dimensions, as mentioned above. It is possible that a person may be very competent in one dimension, for example, in the case of young people, they may be very competent in technology, and little or not at all in another, for example, ideology.
- The resource is also used to assess media competence and to train children and young people in this competence. After assessing the group/class, teachers can see the results obtained and can access the sheets and put them into practice. The training material offered is totally flexible and can be limited to dedicating a single hour of class time to training students in their own weaknesses (for example, only in that dimension of the competence in which they have obtained the worst results) or it is possible to provide intense and structured training, focusing on all the dimensions that form part of media competence.
- At the conceptual level, the contents, both in the assessment and training parts, take into account the innovations developed in the field of technology and new communication practices, as well as the discoveries made in the field of neuroscience regarding the functioning of the mind, which interacts with and through these digital media, and above all, it stresses the importance of the unconscious and the emotional brain in media processes.
- The project not only addresses the critical skills needed to process information-centred discourse, but also the underlying strategies undertaken in fictional discourse —through storytelling techniques— for the purpose of manipulation, which is fundamental in a context where disinformation is pervading the media ecosystem.

Some conclusions about the level of competence of young Europeans

One of the most important conclusions of the EduMediaTest project concerns the reliability of the test, bearing in mind that the aim of the project was to design a tool that would both assess and train young people's media competence.

In terms of media competence, the project has confirmed at European level what other academic research has shown in relation to other competences: that in most countries there is a correlation between the level of competence of the citizens and the educational level of the mother. In other words, the mother's level of education is a better predictor of the child's level of media competence than the father's (Mercy & Steelman, 1983; Gutman, Sameroff & Cole, 2003; Ribas, Moura & Bornstein 2003).

The results have also been significant in relation to the variables of age, gender and the device used to answer the survey. Girls obtained a higher overall score than boys; older students obtained a higher score than younger students; and those who used a computer to take the tests had better results than those who used mobiles or tablets. The study showed that 72.9% of users used a PC and 27.1% used smartphones/tablets. The only exception was Croatia, where almost half of the people interviewed used computers and the other half used smartphones or tablets. With regard to the time taken to complete the survey, the older segment of the young people spent more time online, and the longer they spent on the survey, the higher the score obtained by the participant answering the survey.

With regard to the assessment of the media competence of the young European participants in each of the six dimensions, the results of two of them, technological and aesthetics, stand out. This table shows the scores for all the dimensions in a standardised range of 0-10 (0 minimum score and 10 maximum score on the test). The results of each dimension were weighted according to the instructions provided by the team that designed the survey on the basis of their relevance in relation to the dimensions and indicators of media competence.

The highest levels of competence are found in the technology dimension, which shows the contradiction of the school, which reduces media competence to digital competence (basically in its instrumental dimension). In other words, schools tend to offer the highest level of training in the only area in which students are already prepared. The young participants have adequate media training in terms of technical skills (access to content, content management, web browsing).

However, it is clear that the schools have been changing the parameters in which media literacy moves according to the changes derived from technological innovations, but they have not changed them according to the discoveries about the functioning of the brain interacting with these technologies. A new challenge for media literacy.

The other dimension in which they have achieved good results is aesthetics. The aesthetic dimension scored second highest and its aim is to assess the participants' ability to take pleasure in formal categories, to recognise the aesthetic quality of a product and to relate media productions to other artistic works, detecting mutual influences.

The ideological dimension was rated third overall. The questions on ideology explored how the media's representations structure everyone's perception of reality and paid special attention to the power of visual communication. This dimension involved questions about distinguishing truth from false information and the disinformation explored.

The worst scoring dimensions were the three remaining ones, production and dissemination, language and reception. Production and dissemination included exploring the ability to share and disseminate information through traditional media and social networks, while improving the visibility of messages, interacting with increasingly larger communities. The language dimension involved assessing the participants' ability to alter existing products, giving them a new meaning and value. Reception was aimed at assessing the participants' knowledge of the concept of the target audience, the studies on the target audience and its objectives and limitations. Low performance in these three dimensions indicates that students are unfamiliar with how media organisations and content platforms work, how media messages are produced according to certain rules and how they can have a lateral meaning.

Some conclusions about the level of media competence in Catalonia

As mentioned above, 12 schools and secondary schools in Catalonia from three provinces (Barcelona, Tarragona and Lleida) participated in the EduMediaTest in May 2021. The final selected sample of participants was 1,192 young people and represented 13.7% of the final sample. Before conducting

Table 1. Overall results of the seven countries in each of the 6 dimensions

Dimensions	Sample	Average	Standard Deviation
Aesthetics	8,699	4.42	2.61
Ideology	8,699	3.21	1.93
Language	8,699	2.51	1.45
Production and dissemination	8,699	2.44	1.18
Reception	8,699	2.77	1.69
Technology	8,699	5.11	2.50

Source: Authors, SPSS.

the survey, two virtual meetings were held with the people responsible for the educational centres to explain the project and clarify any doubts that might arise. In addition, some of these secondary schools had volunteered to pilot the survey in February 2021. The involvement and collaboration of everyone was excellent, as were their assessments of the process and the survey, which they were able to assess through a short survey that was prepared specifically for them. Some of the comments they wrote, which are quoted verbatim, are as follows:

> Q3: The proposed contents of the survey are not widely taught at our school and they were useful.
>
> Q10: The test included very interesting questions on the use of images and web content, taking into account rights of use. It could have gone further to find out to what extent they have mastered "citation", i.e. to find out if they know how to cite (texts and images found on the web).

With regard to the results obtained in Catalonia (see table 2), it is important to say that they do not differ much from the general results in Europe. Likewise, the scores for all the dimensions are shown in a standardised range of 0-10 (with 0 being the minimum score and 10 the maximum score on the test). The technology dimension is also the one most mastered by the young Catalans who answered the EduMediaTest, which it reflected in Europe, with an average score of 5.44. Secondly, the aesthetic dimension and thirdly, the ideological one, just like in Europe. The main difference in the remaining three dimensions compared to the results obtained by young Europeans is that the language dimension is the dimension with the lowest score for Catalan young people, in sixth place, while it is in fifth place in Europe. This dimension is important because it assesses the ability of adolescents to modify existing products in different languages. The reception dimension, as well as the production and dissemination dimensions, occupy the fourth and fifth place, respectively, in our country. As in Europe, the fact that these three dimensions have the lowest scores shows how necessary it is to consolidate media literacy in the country in order to give young people the necessary skills to become media literate prosumers.

Recommendations issued to the European Commission

According to the statistical analysis of the results, there is still a great need to improve media literacy skills among young people. It is for this reason that at the end of the project, and on the basis of the results obtained, recommendations were drawn up for decision-makers in the field of media literacy. These are summarised below:

Recommendation 1: Given the apparent contradiction in schools, which reduce media literacy to a simple digital skill (essentially, its instrumental dimension), it is essential to continue improving media skills and at the same time incorporate digital transformation educational approaches that are considered necessary for blended learning models, such as Flip Classroom and Remote School Education.

Recommendation 2: Although the aesthetic dimension was the second highest rated, it is essential that aesthetic courses continue and improve at all school levels, with more national and intercultural references for all pupils.

Recommendation 3: It is also necessary to make further efforts in the third dimension, ideology, which is placed in third place in the results. It is important to improve the school curriculum with more subjects on the ideological conception of how the media works and the impact of the audience.

Recommendation 4: With regard to production and dissemination, reception and language, which are at the bottom of the ranking, it is recommended that these cognitive skills be reinforced in order to turn students into better researchers and analysts of the meaning and of the creation media.

Recommendation 5: Firstly, given the correlation between score performance and age, there is a need for more units related to the media for a lower level of education. Secondly, given the correlation also with the time taken to complete the survey, it

Table 2. Results in Catalonia in each of the 6 dimensions

Dimensions	Sample	Average	Standard Deviation
Aesthetics	1,192	4.28	2.73
Ideology	1,192	3.62	1.93
Language	1,192	2.59	1.45
Production and dissemination	1,192	2.71	1.18
Reception	1,192	2.85	1.64
Technology	1,192	5.44	2.39

Source: Authors, SPSS.

is recommended that an adequate amount of time (at least 2 teaching hours) be devoted to carrying out assessment projects such as the EduMediaTest based on one's own experience and knowledge. The students were willing to complete the survey and explore its dimensions, but there was not enough time.

Recommendation 6: Despite the availability of technical equipment for interactive educational processes in schools, they generally need to be improved and updated.

Recommendation 7: Schools are mostly unaware that, if media experiences are interactions between minds through technologies, they cannot be made enriching by knowing how technologies work if they do not know how minds work. This is a new and unresolved challenge in media literacy, one which must be taken seriously.

Final considerations

Once the project was completed, the CAC presented the results of the EduMediaTest at the EPRA Assembly (European Platform of Regulatory Authorities, https://www.epra.com/), where in recent years the actions carried out to promote media literacy have been a constant feature. In addition, the project has also been presented to the Assembly of the PRAI (Ibero-American Platform of Audiovisual Regulators, https://prai.tv), the body of which the CAC is Vice-Chair. Furthermore, presentations were made to the British regulatory authority Ofcom; to the Media and Learning Association (https://media-and-learning.eu/) and to the Mediterranean Regulatory Authorities Network (https://www.rirm.org/). In all cases, a great deal of interest has been shown in the project and in moving towards a media-savvy citizenship.

EduMediaTest represents the consolidation of a measurement and training tool, theoretically based on the long history of previous empirical research by the UPF team in different media literacy projects, and now represents an opportunity to offer the implementation of the instrument to various Latin American countries, both in Spanish and Portuguese. The UPF is working on this possibility through a joint initiative with Alfamed. Regardless of the framework, the efforts made in this project and the results obtained should be used to continue promoting the assessment and training of media competence in Europe, globally, and in Catalonia in particular.

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Young People, Feminism and Self-representation on Instagram: challenges and recommendations

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Abstract

This paper taps the gender perspective to unpack the creation of content on Instagram by young women to compare the way they see and experience feminism and how they self-represent on this social media site. It draws on virtual ethnography, content analysis of Instagram posts and six in-depth interviews to shed light on how the everyday practice of feminism is made trickier by the impact of social media. It also sets out several challenges and recommendations for working on creating content based on digital skills.

Keywords

Young People, Post-feminism, Instagram, Self-representations, Gender.

Resum

Aquest article investiga, des de la perspectiva de gènere, la creació de contingut a Instagram per part de dones joves amb l'objectiu de contraposar la manera com entenen i viuen el feminisme i com s'autorepresenten en aquesta xarxa social. A través d'una etnografia virtual, una anàlisi de contingut de publicacions a Instagram i sis entrevistes en profunditat, es posa de relleu com la pràctica quotidiana del feminisme esdevé complexa amb l'impacte de les xarxes socials. S'hi proposen un seguit de reptes i recomanacions per treballar la creació de contingut aplicant les competències digitals

Paraules clau

Joves, postfeminisme, Instagram, autorepresentacions, gènere.

1. Introduction

The first feminist general strike in Spain was called in 2018. Since then, every March there have been fresh feminist demonstrations and demands involving both organised women's groups and individual women. The 'Manada' court ruling and the various gang rape cases which have hit the media coupled with femicide rates around the world and the emergence of online protest movements such as #MeToo and #Cuéntalo have made visible a pent-up rage shared by many women and helped to raise collective feminist awareness.

The existence of diverse feminist discourses in everyday life seems to be at odds with the images displayed on social media sites, especially on Instagram, featuring posts by young women in which they objectify and sexualise themselves and in which the body becomes the protagonist over and above the message and takes on a meaning of its own when it comes to communicating. The conversation about the use of women's bodies on social media and their interpretation (objectification versus empowerment) is not only happening in academia in gender studies but is also at the core of lively discussions between feminist currents. Following the advent of the pandemic and the enhancement of communication via social media, this conversation has burgeoned with young people as the key players in the discussion (Al-Ali, 2020; Hurley, 2020).

This paper sets out the case study of the self-representations of young adult women aged 18-25 through the content they generate on Instagram. Specifically, it addresses one particular aspect: the correspondence between the manner in which these young women see and experience feminism and the way they depict themselves on Instagram. The aim is thus to see how the young women studied tailor and represent their

feminist discourse in a virtual setting. The findings are used to pinpoint a number of challenges and make recommendations for working with young people on creating content on social media by leveraging their digital skills.

The methodology used in this study, in particular its qualitative approach and the tool employed for content analysis, was designed on the basis of the literature review. This means it can be harnessed not only in this study but also in future research to explore the contrasting online and offline feminist narratives and scrutinise the stances generated by young women through analysing manifest, contextual and latent variables.

This study starts from two premises which influence the configuration of young women's self-representations: firstly, that social media have an identity dimension (Fernández-Planells, Masanet & Figueras, 2016) which furnishes young women with a space to build part of their own individuality; and secondly, that feminism is a fashionable identity among young women and, as with all fashions, media culture is inherently tied to and drives a new feminist visibility (Gill, 2016).

Young people, social media and building identity

Today's young people have grown up with information and communication technology (ICT). The sway of new technology is increasing and it is essential in order to grasp how young people are growing up and developing as individuals in the ubiquity of these devices (Stoilova, Livingstone & Khazbak, 2021). Aside from leveraging ICT to communicate, make contact and build relationships, their use of interfaces and social media has a bearing on the shaping of their personal identity (Fernández-Planells, Masanet & Figueras, 2016). Through these interfaces and screens, young people can decide how they want to show and define themselves. Hence the identities represented by these images built by young people are constantly shifting, i.e. they are reviewed and adjusted to match an ideal self (Caldeira, 2016; Caldeira et al., 2020), and this affords young people a role and an intentionality in building their identity.

boyd (2014) sees identity as a continuum between offline and online spaces. In other words, people do not change their identity from one space to another but instead they adapt to the social context they are in on the basis of their own interests. Besides, bearing in mind that we are embedded in a communication system anchored in representation, appearance and public approval (Guardiola, 2018) and that young people's daily lives and privacy are intertwined with networks (De Ridder & Van Bauwel, 2015), it is only to be expected that the boundaries between these spaces should become blurred.

Social media furnish a very specific and different context and young people adapt to create and publish the content which interests them most. As Guardiola (2018) argues, when we align the intimate with the displayed, intimacy sheds all its private aspect and we consequently become subject-images. At the same time as we represent ourselves in a tangible way, we are looking for the other to identify what we are most keen to emphasise so as to be a cut above the rest. This view is closely bound to the individualism and neoliberalism prevailing in contemporary society, where what is sought is personal recognition in order to be viewed favourably – and in the case of social media in the form of a "like" – by others (Guardiola, 2018).

Content creation tied to identity leads to greater pressure to build and maintain self-image, especially in the case of young women and their relationships (Tortajada & Araüna, 2014). Tortajada and Araüna contend that young women are aware of the self-representations and the rules of the game which are triggered on social media, yet this does not spare them from bearing the consequences and having their own self-image conditioned.

Postfeminism: representations in the social media age

When we bring the gendered gaze into the representation of identity, we find ourselves in a situation where feminism has shifted from being an identity which is ridiculed to one that is fashionable among young women (Gill, 2016). Thus, a new feminist visibility and representation is generated in media culture which in turn presents a new way of addressing the multidimensionality of gender representations and discourses in the media. In postfeminism (Gill, 2007), contradictions are constantly made visible; for example, young women are empowered through 'Girl Power' discourses, yet their bodies are presented as sexual objects. Postfeminism accordingly seeks to explore the changes in media representations of new femininities (Figueras, Tortajada & Willem, 2017).

These new patterns of media representation of women are closely related to two factors: feminism and neoliberalism (Gill, 2007). Gill maintains that this concept dovetails extremely well with everything entailed by neoliberalism as an ideology which constructs individuals as rational, calculating and self-regulating entrepreneurs whereby the individual should take responsibility for their own life story. This is what Ana de Miguel (2015) calls "sexual neoliberalism", a social and symbolic structure which notwithstanding progress in gender equality continues to shape people's lives according to whether they are men or women.

When postfeminism is harnessed as a critical concept, this reveals a number of contradictions in the changes which have taken place in the media representations of this new feminist visibility (Caballero-Gálvez, Tortajada & Willem, 2017). It is crucial to note that postfeminism informs this research as an object of critical analysis to capture empirical irregularities and not as part of the identity or values of the subjects examined (Gill, 2016).

With this in mind, Rosalind Gill (2007) contends that postfeminism ought to be viewed as a sensibility which seeks to unpack the distinctive features of gender articulations in contemporary media (and by extension on social media) and thus call attention to the contradictions of postfeminist

discourses. Here Gill defines nine traits in postfeminist media discourses, five of which are set out below as they underpin this study:

i) Femininity as a bodily property: one of the most striking aspects of postfeminist discourses in media culture is their obsessive preoccupation with the body. In current representations of women, femininity is about bodies, about visible appearance. In reference to what is feminine, De Miguel (2015) asserts that it can be summed up in what makes women feel attractive and sexy, and a sexy body is tied to the main source of feminine identity.

ii) From sex object to desiring sexual subject: women are no longer depicted as passive as before but rather as active desiring sexual subjects, although paradoxically it is they who choose to present themselves in an objectified way (Gill, 2007). This is the representation of the woman who appears in the perfume advertisements: heterosexual, sexually autonomous and young, who plays with her sexual power and embraces a sexual agency of her own. The critique of these media discourses and the implicit danger of these representations is that sexual objectification is construed as a choice and not as an internalisation of the male gaze (Figueras, Tortajada & Willem, 2017).

iii) Individualism, choice and empowerment: this particular trait fits in perfectly with the neoliberal and consumerist individualism to which young women are connected. Accordingly, freedom of choice can paradoxically be bound to objectification without entailing a contradiction for women (Caballero-Gálvez, Tortajada & Willem, 2017). The problem is that "women continue to interpret coercion as free choice both with stiletto heels or the cult of the body and also in the choice of non-technological studies" (De Miguel, 2015, p. 37).

iv) Self-surveillance and discipline: the body, and by extension the person in the postfeminist media context, is subject to monitoring, labour, surveillance and transformation by women themselves in order to depict successful femininity (Gill, 2007). In Gill's view, what marks out the present day as distinctive in terms of self-surveillance are three features: firstly, the dramatically augmented intensity of self-surveillance (alongside the disavowal of this regulation); secondly, the expansion of self-surveillance beyond the body into even the most intimate spheres of women's lives such as sexual practice, career, home, finances, etc.; and finally, the need to remodel one's own psychology and inner life.

v) Irony and knowingness: irony in postfeminist discourses has a twofold role; it is used to express sexist and homophobic sentiments while also claiming that what was said was not actually meant (Gill, 2007).

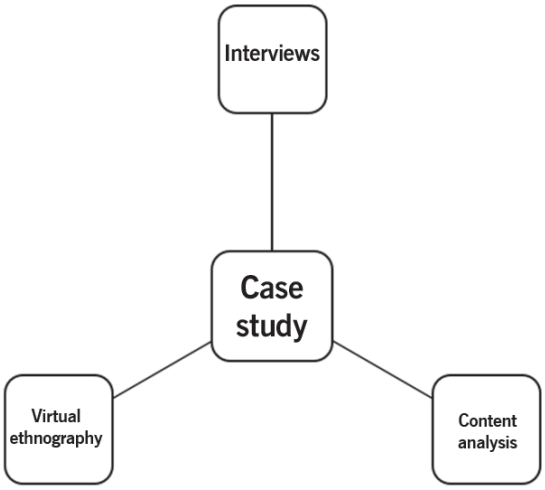
2. Methodology

In order to unpack the self-representations of young women on social media and whether they tally with a feminist discourse in physical space, a case study was conducted with young women aged 18 to 25 from cultural groups in Catalonia (Spain) with no specific feminist leaning or motivation and in which both men and women participated.

This case study's methodological triangulation (Figure 1) taps a number of research techniques to address this research's purpose. Firstly, in-depth interviews were conducted with six young women taking part in mixed cultural groups in Catalonia with no specific feminist leaning or motivation. Although this study does not purport to be representative of all Catalan young people but rather is a specific case study, efforts were nonetheless made to diversify the profile of the participants. To this end, groups were selected from a number of towns with different socio-economic contexts; the project was presented to the young women in the groups; they were asked to participate, and finally the young women participants were selected on the basis of several intersectional variables such as social class, sexual orientation, academic background or religion. In total, six interviewees between 18 and 25 years old were chosen: two were lower class, two lower-middle class and two upper-middle class. Five of the young women were studying or had studied at university and one had done vocational training. The interviews were designed to ascertain the feminist stances of the study subjects in order to compare them with their self-representation on social media.

Secondly, a virtual ethnography study was conducted alongside qualitative content analysis of the profiles of the young women interviewed on Instagram. Seven Instagram profiles were reviewed over the course of a year as one of the six young women interviewed had two completely separate profiles. A total of 135 posts were analysed (not reels, IGTV or other types of content owing to their fleeting nature) from the seven profiles surveyed throughout 2019, the year in which feminist protests surged in Spain as a result of the 'Manada' court ruling, the rise in femicides and the mass demonstrations on

Figure 1. The study's methodological triangulation



Source: Authors.

International Women's Day on 8 March. The selection criterion was to examine all the posts in which the young women took centre stage in the images. This enabled us to see what image of themselves they conveyed on Instagram and restrict our analysis to their self-representation.

Consequently, qualitative content analysis was chosen to deepen the richness of the data (Izcara-Palacios, 2014), which not only interprets manifest content, i.e. what can be seen, but also takes the interpretation further and analyses the hidden content, i.e. what cannot be seen with the naked eye. This means that the research can start from a number of categories tailored to its purposes while it can also be tweaked and is open to review and adding new relevant analytical categories which emerge from the analysis of the documents (Bryman, 2012). It is in this respect that Andreu-Abela (2002) draws a distinction between manifest and latent content, defining the former as what the creator wishes to communicate and the latter as what they intend to convey. All this becomes meaningful within a context in which the data are developed. Accordingly, three types of variables were identified to analyse the images (Figure 2):

i) **Contextual**: they provide context. In this case, they help to frame the data and allow for the creation of meanings (Krippendorff, 2004). Specifically, we sought to understand young women's perceptions of feminism through the six in-depth interviews we conducted. To this end, two categories were considered: feminist self-perception, i.e. whether the young women consider themselves feminists or not, and feminist attitude, i.e. whether they are active or passive in terms of issues such as protests, actions and studies.

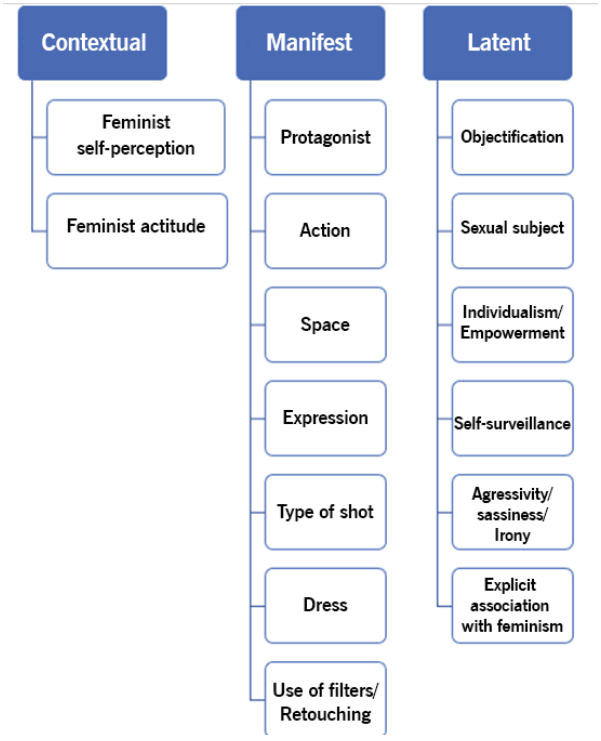
ii) **Manifest**: these variables address everything which can be seen in the image and provide information about what the creator is communicating (Andreu-Abela, 2002). The categories for this variable are: prominence of the image, the action of the protagonist, the place where the image is, the expression of the person, the type of shot shown in the image, the type of clothes worn by the subject, and lastly using filters or retouching the images. All these variables are designed to gather information about how the young women present themselves to their network of followers, what they prioritise when posting an image and what aspects they consider important when self-representing.

iii) **Latent**: the latent variables are used to reveal the hidden content of the images (Andreu-Abela, 2002). Six categories were used for this purpose, five of which come from Gill's (2007) concept of postfeminist sensitivity described above in the theoretical framework while a final category was added afterwards to round off the project's needs. The first category is the objectification of young women, i.e. whether femininity involves bodily ownership. The second is the sexualisation of the young women, seeking to find out whether they adopt the attitude of sexual subjects. The third drills down into whether these images are based on individualism and empowerment. The fourth looks at self-surveillance, about whether the young women are aware of the construction of the image and agree with it. The fifth category looks for aggressive, sassy or ironic attitudes in the young women. Finally, there is the category of explicit association with feminism which addresses whether there is any explicit reference in the image to feminism,

Instagram was chosen for analysing the young women's posts because it is the social media site which has grown most in users in recent years (IAB Spain Research, 2022; IAB Spain Research, 2019) and 71% of its users are under 35 (Statista, 2022). Instagram is now an online venue which is part of the everyday life of young people and also another setting in which young people build and negotiate identity (Araüna, Tortajada & Capdevila, 2014. p. 171).

The young women participating in the study signed a consent form to take part in the research and authorised the research team to examine and publish their photographs in academic publications. However, it was decided to apply a number of filters to the images included in this paper to preserve their anonymity.

Figure 2. Study variables classification



Source: Authors.

3. Results

Based on this study's two initial premises, namely social media's identity aspect (Fernández-Planells, Masanet & Figueras, 2016) and a new feminist visibility (Gill, 2016) driven by the upsurge of feminism, the results of this research make it possible to grasp how the feminist discourse of the young women taking part in the study is tailored and transferred to their representations of

themselves on Instagram as a virtual venue which is part of their daily lives.

3.1 The discourses: feminist consciousness

Analysis of the interviews using the contextual variables defined in our study (see Figure 2) shows that all the young women interviewed defined themselves as feminists regardless of their age, social class or cultural group to which they belonged. They also claimed to be aware of the feminist cause and said that they try to change male chauvinist attitudes in their immediate surroundings. In this respect, they even felt that they make themselves tiresome and bore their peer group when they point out macho attitudes:

> *"I have some friends who are fed up with me because whenever they say something, I always tell them 'that comment is very sexist' and they say 'it's just a joke' and I say 'I don't care, it's a sexist comment full stop."*
>
> [Emma, 22 years old, cultural group A]

Even so, some of the young women interviewed did think they have a more passive attitude in other areas such as protests or searching for theoretical knowledge to underpin their stances. Thus they said that while they define themselves as feminists, they still let slip attitudes or sentences associated with the patriarchal system:

> *"I see myself as a feminist in everything, but I'm aware I let things slip, that sometimes some comments are not really feminist, but I realise, oops, I just said something stupid, it's so ingrained in us... but I think that realising this is a step forward in itself."*
>
> [Figaro, 23 years old, cultural group A]

> *"Everyone has their own feminism and there are some people who are pseudo-feminist but then their actions aren't feminist... I think that what happens is that humans contradict themselves."*
>
> [Alba, 21 years old, cultural group B]

The young women contended that the patriarchal system they think surrounds them and in which they have been brought up influences them in their daily lives, including in the digital setting.

> *"The fact you can't post nudes on Instagram, i.e. if you post a nude photo of yourself you have to cover your nipples, is a bit problematic for me (...) Why can't I show whatever part of my body I want to?"*
>
> [Audrey, 20 years old, cultural group A]

> *"If I go to Instagram, the first thing I'm going to find is probably some chick showing her arse to get more likes, and that's also a fact. If you're a woman and you want your profile to be noticed, strip off... that's another kind of machismo."*
>
> [Olga, 23 years old, cultural group B]

Consequently they feel they need to analyse themselves first in order to confront the attitudes which they have internalised throughout their childhood and which they see as far removed from feminism. As they say, they view feminism as an identity under construction where they are learning, correcting and adapting based on their own experience.

3.2 Self-representations on Instagram: building identity

Shifting the focus from examination of their discourses during the interviews to analysis of their self-representations on Instagram reveals a mismatch between their feminist positioning and the treatment of their image as women on social media.

Looking at the variables displayed in the interviewees' posts over the course of a year shows that the young women not only appear in but also take centre stage in most of the images analysed. In fact, there are only 23 posts out of 135 where prominence is shared with friends or family (17%). Moreover, and in keeping with this finding, young women basically take on two action roles. Firstly, there is the role of action subjects in which they are the ones who perform the actions in the images in which they appear (Figure 3, left); and secondly the role of objects in which they appear as the desired, the object of their followers' gaze, as exemplified in Figure 3, right.

On the whole, the place and context in which the photographs are taken does not appear to be an especially significant variable in the analysis since the location is not specified in over half (79%) of the images examined. This adds to the idea that they are the protagonists in the foreground and what is significant is their self-representation.

The most common type of clothing in the images is casual, underlining the everyday aspect of the social media site. There are also some images where they are shown sexualised (Figure 4, left), wearing see-through garments, lingerie or clothes which enhance their figure, and even in some cases semi-nude (Figure 4, right). However, they never show all of their breasts because they know that Instagram censors this kind of images. The young women thus tailor their self-representation not only to conform to their own standards but also to Instagram's terms and conditions of service.

The majority (98%) of facial expressions in the self-representations analysed are positive (Figure 5, left) or neutral (Figure 5, right). Hence the social media site is associated on the one hand with happiness and good times and on the other with the young women's passivity and docility. There is no interest in the downbeat side and the problems of the world but rather the construction of representation and the famed "posing" prevail.

Continuing with the examination of the manifest variables, the bulk (60%) of the analysed posts show some kind of retouching or filtering which can easily be related to the fact that all the posts feature self-surveillance representations, made and designed on the basis of controlling self-representation (Figure 6).

Figure 3. Role of action subject (left) and role of object (right)

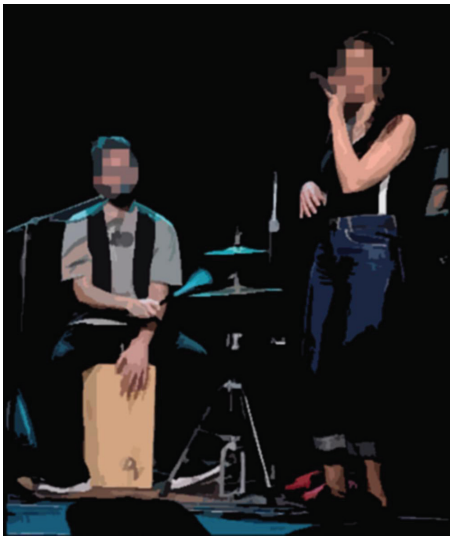
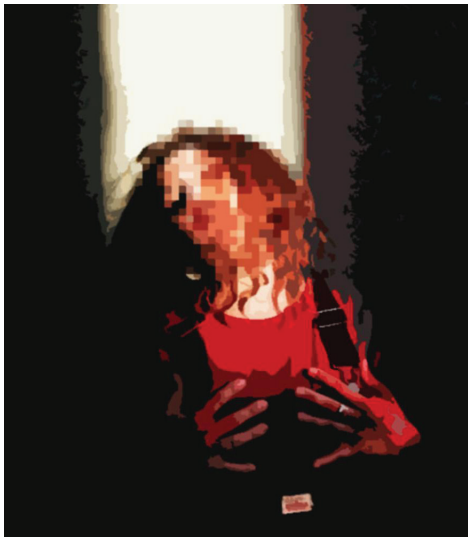



Figure 4. Sexualised clothing (left), semi-nude (right)

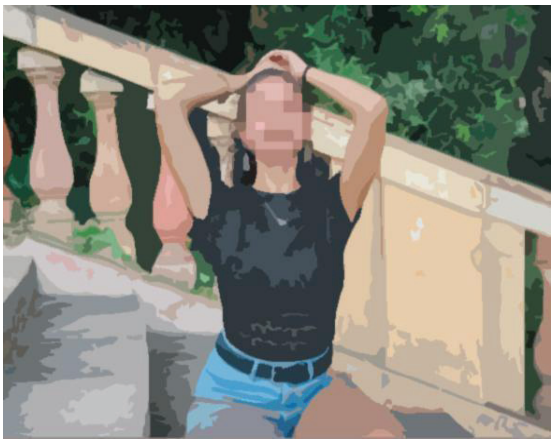
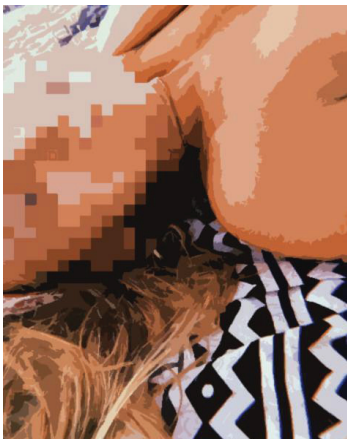
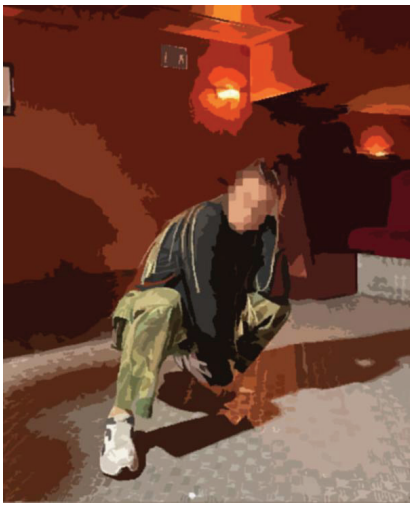



Figure 5. Positive expression (left), neutral expression (right)


Figure 6. Use of filters and retouching

Figure 7. Empowered self-representation (left) and object role (right)



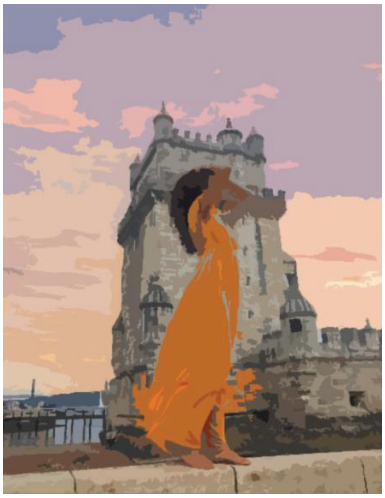


Figure 8. Femininity as a bodily property

Figure 9. Aggressive or brazen attitude

The latent variables show that the self-representations examined are anchored in the individualism and empowerment of the young women. In other words, the young women appear in the images mainly alone and with a confident attitude. They are shown not as sex objects but instead as sexual subjects (Gill, 2007) with their own sexual agency (Figure 5, left). Although the young women analysed see this way of representing themselves as an example of female liberation in a postfeminist rationale, this purported empowerment actually contributes to their own objectification. Indeed, in some (18%) of the self-representations analysed, the young women take on an actant role of object (Figure 7, right), representing themselves in passive and docile attitudes which are antithetical to a stance of empowerment.

It can also be seen how femininity becomes a bodily property. Put another way, through the bodies of the young women and the generally sensual postures they adopt in their self-representations, standards of femininity are used to reaffirm them as women in the self-representations analysed (Figure 8).

Only twelve (9%) images depict aggressive, defiant and sassy attitudes when represented (Figure 9), and even then there is no use of irony in the images as it is a feature more associated with discourse than image.

To conclude the analysis of the latent variables, only two posts explicitly associate their representations with feminism to mark International Women's Day on 8 March. In one of them the young woman is lifting up her jumper to display a T-shirt bearing the message "Proud to be a woman". Her attitude is upbeat and she is shown with her lips painted lilac and smiling. By contrast, the other self-representation is the only one to present a downbeat expression with a sad face and a falling tear. These two self-representations seek to engage with the feminist movement while still courting the gaze and approval of their followers.

4. Discussion

The results of the methodological triangulation reveal contradictions and paradoxes in the feminist discourse of the young women analysed and their self-representations in the content they generate on Instagram. These contradictions are framed within the traits described by Rosalind Gill (2007) to define and characterise postfeminism.

Although the main limitation of this paper is precisely the difficulty of extrapolating these results to Spanish young people, its results nevertheless do furnish a specific snapshot (localised in time and space) of the relationship between young people, using social media and feminist identity. This case study points to a complex situation involving contextual factors in society such as the capitalist system and the patriarchal structure coupled with the personal positions and attitudes with respect to feminism of the young women taking part in the study. The interaction between these aspects brings to the table concepts already put forward by other authors including postfeminist sensibility (Gill, 2007) and sexual neoliberalism (De Miguel, 2015). Hence the results derived in this case study enable us to pinpoint and characterise five features which define the complex interaction between feminist positioning via discourses and self-representation on social media:

1. **Internalisation of the male gaze.** The young women interviewed see feminism in terms of free choice and freedom of expression and thus their representations depict their choice to objectify themselves without viewing this in principle as contradictory but rather as a way of vindicating themselves as sexual subjects. Yet analysis from the critical postfeminist perspective of authors such as Angela McRobbie (2008) and Rosalind Gill (2007) shows that everything has to do with the mechanisms of coercion constructed by the patriarchy which make young women experience this "sexual freedom" as real when in fact they are still docile, passive and feminine (De Miguel, 2015). This is because Instagram is a social media site steeped in popular culture and as such it is intertextual, i.e. it draws on the images and conventions of a range of cultural industries (De Ridder & Van Bauwel, 2015). As such, it is not surprising that the content analysed reinforces the ideals of femininity and feminine standards propagated through legacy media (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019) or platforms such as Instagram itself (Feltman & Szymanski, 2018). The young women internalise and reproduce the ideals to which they are exposed, in this case ideals of femininity which reinforce hegemonic standards of beauty. It is also evident from the interviews that they are not aware of their self-imposed surveillance when thinking about the position, creating the expression and building the representation of their photographs. This would suggest they are not acting out of choice but rather have internalised the male gaze (Figueras, Tortajada & Willem, 2017).
2. **Contradictions between image and narrative.** The fact that there are only two self-representations alluding to feminism leads to the conclusion that while in general, and as they said in the interviews, feminism is part of them and they factor it into their daily attitudes and actions (McRobbie, 2017), nonetheless they do not feel the need to include it in the construction of their identity through the content they post on social media. The young women surveyed do not have a need to expressly display a connection to feminism when they represent themselves on Instagram. The image and the figure of the young women as empowered and sexually liberated subjects prevails over the message of condemnation or criticism of the patriarchal system they are part of (Caldeira, 2021).
3. **Objectification and sexualisation as a means of female empowerment.** The interviews reveal that the young women do not shun feminist discourse as unnecessary, as was the case in the early versions of postfeminism (Gill,

2016), but rather they are well aware they do not live in an egalitarian society. In their daily lives they question both their own macho attitudes and those expressed around them and perceive feminism as the goal to be achieved in this society. It is therefore disconcerting that not only do they continue to focus on the body, appearance and the canons of beauty in their self-representations but also their way of challenging the established system is, somewhat startlingly, through their objectification and sexualisation. The context provided by image-based social media sites furthers this seeming contradiction as the pressure to get positive feedback in the form of "likes" and comments from their followers prompts young women to depict themselves in an attractive and desirable way (Bazarova & Choi, 2014). Even so, it is a fact that young women are unconsciously promoting gender stereotypes and inequalities and end up abiding by patriarchal rationales (McRobbie, 2008).

4. **Event feminism and slacktivism.** Feminism is evident in the young women's discourses and in their self-representations, especially in the International Women's Day demonstrations. They all take to the streets to demonstrate, although in no case do they get involved in organising International Women's Day events and in only two cases do they explicitly tie their self-representations to the feminist identity by posting an image of themselves on the same day. By using image-based social media sites such as Instagram and most of all by creating content which is not targeted at activism, feminist claims can take on overtones of individualised celebration, draining them of political content. Following these patterns, there is a risk that activism via these kinds of posts may become associated directly with slacktivism, which consists of supporting political and social causes using social media. This is often criticised because the ultimate goal is to look good, fit in with contemporary demands and elicit a positive response yet without needing to go into detail or address issues which have a real impact (Munro, 2014).
5. **Feminist identity under construction.** In the same way that the young women analysed see their feminist discourses as constantly evolving and being restructured, it might also be argued that their self-representations are also constantly evolving and being restructured. Instagram is a platform which allows us to use a range of strategies to identify ourselves in an online setting and also to define ourselves through the gaze of the other. Thus Caldeira (2016) argues that the current conception of identity is no longer based on notions of solidity and stability but rather on the idea of openness and constant change. With this in mind, it remains to be seen whether over time the young women analysed here end up identifying with patterns of representation which are further removed from postfeminism or, conversely, bolster this model of gender neoliberalism able to adapt and morph in relation to new ideas as they emerge (Gill, 2017).

Drawing on these five traits and the results derived from the case study, we can identify five challenges to be tackled by social actors engaged in helping Spanish young people to gain digital skills and make recommendations to address them (see Table 1).

Thus this paper not only makes it possible to (1) unpack the creation of content on Instagram by young women to compare the way they see and experience feminism and how they self-represent on this social media site but (2) it also provides a methodological tool which can be replicated in other case studies, allowing us to deepen the richness of the data (Izcara-Palacios, 2014) by interpreting manifest content, i.e. what can

Table 1. Challenges and recommendations for working with young people on social media content creation

No.	Challenge	Recommendations
1	Young women are not aware of the work and effort involved in creating content based on their self-image. Moreover, this content is monitored by self-imposed surveillance.	Raising awareness of the process of professionalisation behind content creation as a paid job would help to make a distinction between profession and hobby.
2	Young people are constantly exposed to ideal bodies and ideal lives, which translates into an idealisation of the self that leads to posting only the best version of the person. This in turn brings a lot of pressure and shifts away from reality.	Promoting media education from a very early age fosters people's critical capacity. This helps them to distinguish between construction and reality.
3	In order to receive more positive feedback from their peers, young women adopt patterns of self-representation very close to those posited by postfeminist representation, including a tendency to objectify and sexualise themselves.	Empowering young women in all areas of their lives, not just their bodies and appearance.
4	The feminist activism we mostly find on Instagram is individualistic, i.e. it adopts neoliberal standards and is often devoid of critique or content.	Besides making event activism visible, activism founded on collectivity, encounters, mutual support and online sorority should also be stepped up.
5	Social media provide young people with a space for experimenting with, defining and consolidating their identity. Yet at the same time they are not neutral, free or safe spaces.	Acknowledging and supporting these transitions young people also make in the digital setting will furnish a solid foundation for building and defining identity.

Source: Authors.

be seen, and also latent content. Furthermore, (3) it pinpoints the challenges and provides recommendations for social actors working with young people on content creation on social media.

At a time when the conversation about the impact of feminist ideas on the attitudes of people in general and young people in particular is on the agenda, the findings of this qualitative study, albeit with some limitations, show that the prominence of social media, and specifically of Instagram, makes the self-representation of young women more complex and contradictory in relation to the everyday practice of feminism. This study can be carried over to other social content creation platforms such as TikTok or Twitch which emerged with a bang during the pandemic and are in even earlier stages of development. The conclusions help to open up the discussion on how the online identity creation young women are building on social media platforms such as Instagram connects, meets or clashes with the feminist identity which today's young people are building in other non-virtual venues and in their offline narratives.

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QUADERNS DEL CAC

Audio description, subjectivity and film experience

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Abstract

This article examines the audio description (AD) of films in Catalonia. After reviewing the regulatory framework governing this practice, it highlights the contradiction between its demand for objectivity and the highly connotative nature of the film language. Then presents the results of a reception study which tests three AD styles with individuals with visual impairment: a conventional style and two interpretative styles, namely narrative AD and cinematographic AD. The findings show that the interpretative AD styles are a valid alternative which could help to improve the film experience of individuals with visual impairment.

Keywords

Audio description, Audiovisual Accessibility, Visual Impairment, Blindness, Film Language.

Resum

Aquest article tracta de l'audiodescripció (AD) de pel·lícules a Catalunya. Després d'un repàs del marc normatiu que regeix aquesta pràctica, es posa en relleu la contradicció entre l'exigència d'objectivitat de la norma vigent i el caràcter altament connotatiu del llenguatge cinematogràfic. Seguidament, es presenten els resultats d'un estudi de recepció que posa a prova tres estils d'AD amb persones amb discapacitat visual: un estil convencional i dos estils interpretatius, l'AD narrativa i l'AD cinematogràfica. Els resultats mostren que els estils d'AD interpretatius són una alternativa vàlida, que podria ajudar a millorar l'experiència fílmica de les persones amb discapacitat visual.

Paraules clau

Audiodescripció, accessibilitat audiovisual, discapacitat visual, ceguesa, llenguatge cinematogràfic.

"A spectator does not find herself 'receiving' a film: she finds herself 'living' it."[1]
Francesco Casetti

1. Introduction

Audio description (AD) consists in the verbal and auditory description of visual or audiovisual content. It appeared in the 1940s and 1950s with the weekly description of a film on Spanish radio, but did not start to gain ground as an audiovisual accessibility service for persons who are blind or visually impaired until the late 1980s (Orero, 2007: 112-114). In the early twenty-first century, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, dated 13 December 2006, recognises the importance of accessibility as a means of guaranteeing that persons with disabilities can fully enjoy their rights. This ushered in a new stage in which the range of audiovisual accessibility expanded, as did research and training in this field, mostly in translation faculties. The study presented in this article focuses on the audio description of films and audiovisual fictions. First, we shall examine the regulatory framework governing these products and the creation of this type of audio description in Catalonia. We shall then explain the connotative function of film language and its implications on creating audio descriptions. Finally, we shall present a perception study conducted with persons with visual impairment to test alternative audio description styles which offer more interpretation of the film language than conventional audio description.

2. The audio description of films in Catalonia

Spain's General Audiovisual Communication Law 7/2010, dated 31 March 2010, is in force regarding audiovisual accessibility matters in Catalonia; it stipulates that 'persons with visual impairment have the right for televised audiovisual communication, both free-to-air and state or regional coverage, to have at least two audio-described hours per week' (BOE, 2010: 14) and it calls for a gradual increase in these numbers up to 10 hours per week on public television stations after 2013

(*Ibid.*, p. 43). Likewise, the Catalan Law on Accessibility 3/2014, dated 30 October 2014, stipulates that 'the audiovisual media' and 'companies distributing cinematographic and audiovisual works' are responsible for 'gradually incorporating subtitling and audio description systems' (DOGC, 2014: 15).

According to the study by Rovira-Esteva and Tor-Carroggio (2018), in 2017 the presence of audio descriptions in Catalan was still quite limited. There was no audio-described content in Catalan on the private TV stations, and on the public stations, only the CCMA's TV3 and Super3/33 offered audio descriptions. However, it was under the 10 hours stipulated by the state law, with 8.9 and 8.3 hours offered, respectively, that is, a total of 801 audio-described hours on the CCMA's channels that year (Matamala, 2019). In 2018, in order to adapt the accessibility service for persons with visual impairment to the new forms of content consumption, the audio-described version was introduced to the programmes on demand, and almost 900 hours were audio-described (Matamala, 2019). In 2021, the figure went back to 807 hours (CCMA, 2021).

The 20 May 2021 version of the draft decree approving the Accessibility Code of Catalonia,[2] which is still being processed, stipulates that public TV stations must offer 15 hours per week of audio description and private ones 10 hours, thus exceeding the minimums stipulated in the Spanish law. The Code also seeks to regulate the range of audio description available in cinemas which hold more than 500 people as a whole and/or which have specific rooms that hold more than 250 people, but it ignores streaming platforms, even though they have become a prime actor within the current audiovisual consumption scene.

Therefore, we see that the current laws in no way guarantee universal accessibility for persons with visual impairment, but they are working towards more audiovisual accessibility and a larger supply of audio-described contents. Regarding the way these contents are created, in Catalonia we have no guide of our own on good practices, and the creation of audio descriptions is regulated by UNE standard 153020 (AENOR, 2005).

This standard (AENOR, 2005: 4) defines audio description as:

> *'a communication support service that consists in a set of techniques and skills applied in order to compensate the lack of visual information contained in any type of message. It provides accurate sound information that translates or explains so the receiver with visual impairment perceives the message as a harmonious whole and as similarly as possible to the way a person who sees perceives it.'*

In this definition, we see how the stress is on both understanding the information, guaranteed by 'sound information that translates or explains', and the experience of the person with visual impairment, who has to 'perceive the message [...] as similarly as possible to the way a person who sees perceives it'. Despite the initial intention of the definition of the service, the regulation itself primarily focuses on what information must be conveyed more than on how it should be conveyed, so it ignores part of the experience of the persons using the service.

The main recommendations issued by the UNE 153020 standard for preparing an audio description script are the following (AENOR, 2005: 7-8):

- The audio description should be offered in the same language as the production (except in the case of audio-subtitles; see Matamala, 2019: 231-232).
- A prior analysis of the work must be conducted to see whether it is suitable for being audio-described, that is, whether there is enough space to include 'information bites' in the soundtrack, as well as to analyse the type of work, the topic and the audience to which it is targeted.
- Care must be taken to offer the right amount of information: too much may saturate and too little may cause anxiety.
- It advises prioritising the information needed to understand the topic over aesthetic information and providing information following the spatial-temporal rule, that is, offering information on the *when*, *where*, *who*, *what* and *how* of each situation.
- The script should be written in the third person using words whose meaning is precise and with a fluid, direct style. It bans using words like 'we see...', which distance the users from the film and futilely reminds them that they cannot see it.
- It asks for objective descriptions that do not express any subjective viewpoint or add or cut information.
- The standard does not mention the film language or how it should be described.

Just like other advice, the demand for objectivity is also common in other recognised or official European guides. For example, the French *Charte de l'audiodescription* states that 'the audio-describer should not interpret the images but describe them' (Morisset & Gonant, 2008: 2, translated by author), and the British style guide (Ofcom, 2021) advises producing descriptions that only provide information on what can be seen onscreen (Ofcom, 2021: 7). Nonetheless, we can see that the issue of objectivity is thorny: the *Charte* is as unequivocal as the Spanish regulation, but despite this resolutely objective approach, it says that 'describing a work means [...] conveying its message so the verbalisation sparks emotion' (p. 2), which is a surprising paradox when the objective is quite clear but the means allowed to reach it are limited. Regarding the British style guide, it outlines its requirement of limiting audio descriptions to the information on the screen, appealing to the judgement of the audio-describer: it cites the example of a weighbridge with the two towers (p. 7), which we could call '*Tower Bridge*' if the iconic bridge in London actually appears onscreen, even though no signs or subtitles tell the seeing audience this. The example is not about the interpretation of a complex meaning of the image but instead shows us that in a decision taken on how to describe, it is inevitable that the audio-describer's subjectivity will come into play.[3]

In recent years, the excessive requirement of objectivity in audio descriptions has been questioned in numerous studies,

while the stress has shifted to the need to audio-describe the film language. Here we could cite the studies by Kruger (2010) on audio narration, Fryer and Freeman (2013) on cinematographic audio description, Orero (2012) on the importance of film analysis for audio description, the description of auteur cinema by Szarkowska (2013) and the audio description of framing by Wilken and Kruger (2016). This trend towards criticising the requirement of objectivity, as well as the opening of a new and more functional approach to decision-making in audio description, stressing the importance of film analysis, is reflected in the guidelines developed more recently, which are not official but are presented as valuable tools in the training of audio-describers (Remael et al., 2014; Fryer, 2016; Valero Gisbert, 2021).

In this article, we shall also present audio description proposals that are alternatives to the conventional ones and interpret the film language. However, before delving into the details of these modalities, we shall examine how the film language works and why it is essential to interpret it in order to convey its meaning in the audio description script.

3. The connotative value of the film language and its implications for audio description

One way of analysing films is by considering them texts: they are audiovisual texts composed of information conveyed via two modes, verbal and non-verbal, and two channels, auditory and visual. Films spring from the intentional and complementary use of these modes and channels to convey information (Zabalbeascoa, 2008: 24). When part of the information is missing because the viewers do not have access to one of the channels, it has to be provided with alternative information via the channel available. As discussed above, in the case of visual impairment, relevant information has to be provided via the auditory channel.

In turn, according to Wollen (2013: 102), information can have different values: iconic, indexical or symbolic. An icon represents itself, in the way that the image of an apple can represent an apple. An index indicates how, for example, the image of a column of smoke conveys the existence of a fire. Finally, a symbol represents a thing through convention, the way a cross represents Catholicism. According to Monaco (2000: 166) metaphorical symbolic equivalents are widely present onscreen and cannot work as they do in literature. In contrast, indexes are a valid alternative for cinema, as they can be expressed in different ways. He cites the example of heat, which can be represented by a thermometer, a droplet of sweat or a mirage, as well as by warm colours. Films work very well in the indexical sphere, as they generate valid connotations within the context of each film. This idea that each film reflects its own conventions is recurring in different film scholars, such as Monaco, as well as Metz (1964: 59): 'we do not understand a film because we understand its syntax; we understand the syntax of a film because we understand the film'; and more recently, Carroll (2008: 118): 'there is no film vocabulary; no set dictionary of moving images. There are as many films as things, and likewise as many possible combinations for photographing from an infinitely large number of camera positions.' On the other hand, according to Monaco (p. 167), some connotations are so recurring that they become conventions. We could cite the example of complementary two-shots, a film technique that consists in alternating close-ups of two characters looking at the camera to express the idea that they are looking at each other. This type of convention is interpreted unconsciously and immediately when watching a film—and when listening to an audio description.

Unlike icons, which represent themselves, and symbols, whose meaning we know or recognise via a convention, understanding the meaning of an index requires interpretation. If we revisit the example of heat, a droplet of sweat running down the character's cheek could mean that it's hot, but also that she is nervous or has just made a physical exertion. But when we watch a film, our eyes capture more information, and the heatwaves in the air and warm tones of the photography join the droplet of sweat to convey the idea of heat. In the words of Schmid (2014: 22), viewers interpret films 'by combining the verbal, visual and musical signals to shape a semantic, sensual and emotional impression which captures the maximum symbols, icons and indexes from the multimedia cinematographic "text"'. According to Plantinga (2010: 94), all of these elements can be conveyed by all the components of the film language, the composition of the moving image of the camera, including editing, colour and music.

This small overview of how the film language work clearly reveals the complexity of an activity that may seem as simple as watching a film. This complexity has implications for making good audio descriptions beyond the denotative sphere and the basic elements of the story: beyond the *when*, *where*, *who* and *what*, as we also describe the *how*.

To exemplify this, below we present three audio descriptions of the same clip from the film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), drawn from a broader descriptive study which compares the British, German and Spanish audio description of this film, which take three different approaches to describing it (Bardini 2020a). *Slumdog Millionaire* occurs in three time frames, which converge in the denouement. Before reaching this point in the film, the present is set in a police station, where the main character, a young Muslim Indian man from a lower caste named Jamal, is watching the recording of the TV game 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire', in which he was participating until he was arrested for presumably having cheated. The recent past is a TV game where we see Jamal answering all the questions correctly thanks to the distant past: experiences from his life which appear as flashbacks between the questions. In the clip we are focusing on now, Jamal is at the police station, even though the film does not remind us of this at the time: what we see is a transition between a flashback and the return to

the reality of the moment, to the TV set. In the foreground and behind Jamal's half-head in the background, we see an oblique, blurry image of the audience and the host. This is a subjective shot which seeks to convey the sense that we are looking through Jamal's eyes and have us feel what he is feeling: a great deal of difficulty returning to reality after recalling a very harsh memory. This shot is a transition between memory and reality, a logical connector in the film discourse which only lasts a few seconds. This is a prime example of the indexical function of the film language, and we can see the difficulty this poses if we want to offer an objective audio description. First, offering all the information described above so that individuals with visual impairment can make their own interpretation of it could mean breaking the suspension of belief. Secondly, the free space available for the information bite of the audio description is brief and prevents all the information from being shared. This situation has been resolved in different ways in different audio descriptions, as we shall explain below, and as reproduced in Table 1.

The British AD provides an iconic description of this clip, that is, a description of what can be seen, while failing to mention either the film techniques or how to interpret them, as the majority of audio description style guides recommend. The essential information on time and place is provided, but the emotional part of the message is lost. In contrast, the German AD chooses a cognitive (or indexical) description; that is, it interprets the film language in order to extract its meaning and capture it in words so that the audio description users have access to it. In this case, the emotional dimension of the subjective shot is conveyed in the audio description, and this is possible thanks to the interpretation. Finally, the Spanish AD provides a creative description, an interpretation that goes beyond the information offered by this clip in order to instead provide a narration that conveys both the narrative and the emotional elements of this brief scene.

In the descriptive study of the AD of the film language in these three audio descriptions, we were able to see how the more interpretative AD techniques (the cognitive and the creative descriptions) were largely the most appropriate ones for conveying both the meaning and the emotions and sensations associated with the film language in the audio-described version of each clip studied.[4] These techniques only affect the clip we are examining, but their repeated, intentional use also affects the general style of each audio description. Based on these observations, we sought to define alternative AD styles to test them with persons with visual impairment and check whether including more interpretation of the film language, counter to the rules currently in place in Catalonia, made it possible to offer them a better film experience. In the next section we shall present these styles and our experimental design, before going on to the results of the study and the conclusions of the article.

4. Interpretation of the film language in audio description: users' opinions

4.1 Conventional and interpretative audio description styles

In order to conduct our study on the reception of audio descriptions of the film language and the film experience with persons with visual impairment (Bardini 2020b), we wanted to define three AD styles: a conventional one, which corresponds to the current audio description practice in Catalonia, and two alternative, interpretative styles. All three are defined in Table 2.

In order to apply these styles to a real case and test them with persons with visual impairment, we choose the short film *Nuit Blanche* (2010) by the Canadian filmmaker Arev Manoukian, a film with no dialogue that makes extensive use of the film language to convey its message.[5] *Nuit Blanche* explores a moment of attraction between a woman and a man when their eyes meet, each on the other side of a street, in a black-and-white aesthetic reminiscent of 1950s Hollywood films. Part of the film occurs outside reality: from the time they make eye contact, the image turns to slow motion as the man and woman walk toward each other. The woman, who was seated in a restaurant, comes out through the window, which shatters into thousands of shards which surround her like a halo. The man crosses the street and a car hits him—but the car suffers more, as the man just leans to one side and then returns upright and keeps walking towards the woman. They meet in the middle of the street, enveloped in bits of glass that float and glimmer, and just before the denouement, they are about to embrace and kiss

Table 1. *Slumdog Millionaire*: clip in three ADs [TCR 00:21:50]

British AD	*Present day. Jamal sits on the studio stage opposite the host.*
German AD	*Im Studio. Abwesend betrachtet Jamal die applaudierenden Zuschauer. Er löst sich aus seinen Gedanken.* [In the studio. Jamal absently looks at the spectators clapping. He is coming back from being lost in thought.]
Spanish AD	*En el presente, en comisaría. Siguen viendo el vídeo del concurso. Jamal parece olvidar sus recuerdos y volver a la realidad.* *[In the present, in the police station. He is still watching the video of the game show. Jamal seems to forget his memories and come back to reality.]*

Source: Author.

Table 2. Audio description styles

Conventional audio description Denotative AD, which describes what is seen onscreen in the iconic sphere, thus avoiding any mention or interpretation of the film techniques used. The main goal of this AD style is to provide an objective description of what is seen so that persons with visual impairment can reconstruct the meaning of the images themselves.
Cinematographic audio description: Interpretative AD, which strikes a balance between iconic description, the use of film terminology and interpretation of the film language. The use of technical terms primarily comes into play to describe specific cinematic elements, such as camera movements and editing techniques. Furthermore, when the describer deems it relevant, it also provides an interpretation of the meaning of the film techniques used.
Narrative audio description: Interpretative AD, which concentrates on interpreting the film language and integrating the visual information in a fluid, coherent narration. This AD style does not always describe everything seen (or not at the exact time when it is seen) but instead seeks to verbally recreate everything that the film language enables viewers to feel and understand.

Source: Author.

each other. At this moment, the music stops and we hear the noise of the street; the camera goes back to normal speed and the image of the two faces about to touch fades to show the woman smiling as she is seated in the restaurant. In the next and final shot, the man, who is standing on the other pavement, is looking at the woman. Below, Table 3 shows the three audio descriptions of the denouement of this short film, which are highly representative of each style.

In order to create the three audio descriptions of *Nuit Blanche*, which are not entirely different because multiple factors influence the users' preferences, we started with one common version written by the audio-describer Carme Guillamon as part of our project, and then made specific changes to it according to each style's approach. We should note that our study focuses on the AD script, and special attention was paid to offering a similar vocal experience in all three versions so that this aspect did not interfere with the participants' experience with the different versions.

As shown by the different elements highlighted in Table 3, the three audio descriptions took different strategies to describe the denouement of *Nuit Blanche*. The conventional AD, which is essentially denotative, tells that the image goes back to normal speed, as well as the location of the main characters. This information, along with the film's change in soundtrack, are sufficient for the persons with visual impairment to deduce that the situation in the film is returning to reality. Nonetheless, the cinematographic and narrative audio descriptions verbalise the 'return to reality' because they believe that this interpretation will facilitate the experience of persons with visual impairment, who may focus their cognitive capacities on other issues that emerge about the characters in the denouement, what happened or what will happen next. The responses to these questions are more subjective interpretations and depend on each person's personality and experience, while the interpretation of the return to reality is an exercise in film reading. This situation also occurs just before that, when the conventional version limits itself to saying that the main characters 'close their eyes and their lips draw closer', but the interpretative versions say that they are 'about to kiss'. On the other hand, with the goal of always getting the audience to grasp how the film feels so they can experience it more intensely, the cinematographic audio description adds information on the cinematographic shots and the movements of the framing, while the narrative description highlights certain aspects that are secondary to the story but contribute to the film's atmosphere, such as the wind blowing. Next we shall see how the persons participating in the study received these three versions.

4.2 Experimental design of the reception study

Forty-five persons with visual impairment affiliated with ONCE (Spanish National Organisation of the Blind) and/or members of the ACIC (Catalan Association for the Integration of Blind Persons) participated in the study. The ONCE offices in Girona, Lleida, Vic, Manresa and Reus participated. The interviews were held in groups of two to five people and sought a variety of objectives. First, the idea was to offer the participants the possibility to enjoy a film for a while and to discuss it together; thus, it was designed as an enriching cultural activity, as in many cases they had to travel to the office solely for that reason. Despite the researcher's presence and the fact that the interview was semi-guided, this relaxed atmosphere encouraged conversation among the participants and allowed more information to emerge as the discussion unfolded. Nonetheless, in order to avoid any contamination between the different participants' responses when collecting responses on the questionnaire, abacuses were designed that could be used for all the binary and scaled questions. In order to analyse the data collected, we adopted a quasi-experimental model of comparison between non-equivalent groups (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006: 216) because of its suitability for studying natural groups, given that the groups and the dates of the activity were chosen according to the participants' availability, and each group was assigned one AD version in such a way that the total number of people who had listened to each version was balanced at the end of the study.

Table 3. AD of the denouement of *Nuit Blanche* in three styles

AD1: Conventional audio description	++00045901+00051303 [...] As they are nearing each other, they close their eyes and their lips draw closer. ++00053001+00054120 **At normal speed**. The woman is sitting at the Café de Flore and is smiling at the man looking at her, who is wearing a hat and carrying a briefcase.
AD2: Cinematographic audio description	++00045901+00051303 [...] As they are nearing each other, they look at each others' lips and close their eyes, about to kiss. ++00053001+00054120 The framing focuses in on their lips, which are about to touch. They then vanish, and **we are back in reality at a normal speed**: the woman is sitting in the Café de Flore smiling at the man, who remains standing on the pavement. They look into each others' eyes.
AD3: Narrative audio description	++00045901+00051303 [...] Facing each other, they look at each others' lips and close their eyes, about to kiss. ++00053001+00054120 **Suddenly, everything goes back to reality**; the wind is blowing; and the woman is seated at the Café de Flore, smiling. The man, wearing a hat and carrying a briefcase, is still standing on the pavement. They look into each others' eyes.
Legend: **Bold**: signs of the return to reality. Square box: interpretative elements. Underline: cinematographic elements. Dottet underline: narrative elements.	

Source: Author.

Additionally, 100 seeing persons participated in the study. They saw the short film without any audio description and responded to the survey online. Despite the different protocols, several identical questions enabled us to compare the experience of the persons with visual impairment who saw an audio-described version of *Nuit Blanche* with that of seeing persons who saw the film without an AD.

The questionnaires were designed to evaluate different aspects of the participants' film experience and included comprehension questions on narrative elements; questions on the interpretation of the film language; and questions on the emotional reception, film experience and rating of the audio description. The questions on the narrative elements and film language had a multiple-choice format with a fill-in option; the questions on emotional reception had a multiple-choice format with scales, as well as a fill-in option; and the film experience and audio description were rated via four items on a six-point Likert scale. The six-point scale forced the respondents to lean more towards yes or no, so they could not remain neutral. On the other hand, the four items provided a more reliable vision of the rating, including different aspects: in our case, interest and comprehension, enjoyment, emotion and aesthetics.

The objective of the reception study was to verify the following hypotheses:

- To check whether the interpretative ADs fulfilled the purpose of being an audiovisual accessibility service, as well as their acceptance by users.
- To investigate whether the interpretative ADs allowed the film language to be better transposed into audio descriptions than conventional ADs.
- To investigate whether the interpretative ADs could offer users a better film experience than the conventional ones and to compare this experience with that of seeing persons who saw the film without an AD.

Below we present the most salient results.

4.3 Results of the reception study

The results of the study were analysed using qualitative methods (tagging and analysis of emergent themes) and descriptive statistical techniques, such as analysis of variance (ANOVA). This statistical method enables the comparison of means of independent samples to determine whether the effect of one variable is statistically significant. If the 'p' value obtained is lower than 0.05, this means that the null hypothesis can be rejected; that is, it establishes statistical significance of the variable's effect on the sample (in our case: audio description style). This method is appropriate for statistical analyses of small groups, and its use in analysing the results of audio description reception has become common practice (as in Fryer & Freeman 2013; Fidyka *et al*. 2021).

4.3.1 Comprehension of the short film

Comprehension of the short film was essentially evaluated

through two questions:

- 'Did you notice that the action in the short film departed from reality?', and
- 'Did you feel the attraction between the characters?'

A large number of positive responses were given, as shown in Table 4. In both cases, an analysis of variance between the three groups of persons with visual impairment revealed no statistically significant effect of the audio description style on the response to the question.

These results show that all three audio description versions, both the conventional one and the interpretative ones, are capable of conveying the essential elements so that persons with visual impairment can understand the film, with similar results to those of seeing persons. Even though this result is not statistically significant, we should highlight that there was a higher percentage of persons with version AD2 who did not notice the departure from reality, and we believe it might be interesting to research the reasons for this. It is a denser style because it adds cinematographic information, like 'the *framing* focuses in on their lips', and we cannot discard the possibility that while this information may help some people, it may confuse others. Having said this, the British study by Fryer and Freeman (2013) on a cinematographic audio description made more extensive use of film terminology in the description; in this case, the participants' reception was good and their comprehension was not affected.

Table 4. Comprehension questions

Did you feel the attraction between the characters?			
	Yes	**No**	**ANOVA**
AD1	81.80%	18.20%	F(2;28)=0.77; p=0.474 (p<0.05)
AD2	83.30%	16.70%	
AD3	100%	0%	
Seeing people	90%	10%	
Did you notice that the action in the short film departed from reality?			
	Yes	**No**	**ANOVA**
AD1	86.70%	13.30%	F(2;41)=1.47; p=0.242 (p<0.05)
AD2	64.30%	35.70%	
AD3	86.70%	13.30%	
Seeing people	79.20%	20.80%	

Source: Author.

4.3.2 Emotional impact

One important way to determine the emotional effect caused by the different versions of the AD was to ascertain the participants' mood after seeing the film. We mentioned subjectivity above, and it is clear that when talking about emotional reception there are as many nuances as there are people. This is why our goal when analysing the responses to this question was to ascertain not so much what they felt but whether they felt anything. The results are shown in Table 5.

The results show that 36.4% of the participants with AD1 did not notice any special mood after the film. In contrast, 100% of the people with AD2 and AD3 and 85% of the seeing people were emotionally affected by the film. An analysis of variance with the three groups of participants with visual impairment shows that there is a statistically significant effect for the AD version in this aspect (F(2;36)=7.38; p=0.002; p<0.05). A Tukey *post hoc* test shows that there is no difference between AD2 and AD3, but there is between AD1 and AD2 and between AD1 and AD3. This means that both AD2 and AD3, the two more interpretative versions, allow for a more intense visual experience than AD1, the conventional AD.

4.3.3 Rating of the audio description

The aforementioned aspects are also reflected in the rating of the audio description. The participants had to rate the audio description with four items on a six-point Likert scale. They were asked to rate the access that the audio description provided to four aspects: comprehension of the film, an enjoyable experience, an aesthetic experience and an emotional experience. The first two aspects can be considered general

Table 5. Emotional impact of the film

What was your mood after the end of the film?									
Group	**Cheerful**	**Happy**	**Sentimental**	**Admiring**	**Sad**	**Disappointed**	**Pensive**	**Nostalgic or melancholy**	**None**
AD1	18.2%	9.1%	45.5%	36.4%	18.2%	18.2%	36.4%	9.1%	**36.4%**
AD2	46.2%	38.5%	53.8%	46.2%	22.2%	11.1%	100.0%	44.4%	**0.0%**
AD3	86.7%	86.7%	60.0%	46.7%	40.0%	26.7%	20.0%	33.3%	**0.0%**
Seeing people	10.0%	11.0%	36.0%	13.0%	5.0%	6.0%	31.0%	34.0%	**15.0%**

Source: Author.

Table 6. Rating of the audio description [M (SD)]

Group	Access to comprehension	Access to an enjoyable experience	Access to aesthetic and stylistic aspects	Access to emotional aspects
AD1	4.3 (1.0)	4.9 (0.8)	3.4 (0.9)	3.4 (1.3)
AD2	4.9 (1.4)	4.8 (1.9)	4.8 (1.2)	4.8 (1.5)
AD3	5.3 (0.8)	5.0 (1.1)	4.3 (1.1)	4.7 (1.1)

Source: Author.

elements that should be provided in all films, while aesthetics and emotion are two aspects characteristic of the film *Nuit Blanche*. The results are shown in Table 6.

These results provide us with relevant information. First, the similar ratings of all three styles in the first two aspects show that both the conventional and alternative interpretative ADs guarantee satisfactory access to the film by offering the keys to understanding it and enjoying the experience. In contrast, regarding the aesthetic, stylistic and emotional aspects, which are primarily conveyed by the film language, we can see that the interpretative audio descriptions are rated more highly than the conventional one. Regarding the aesthetic and stylistic aspects, the ANOVA method did not show a significant effect at the level of $p<0.5$, but it did in the emotional aspects ($F(2;34)=3.57$; $p=0.039$). In this case, a Tukey *post hoc* test shows a difference between AD1 and AD2 and between AD1 and AD3, which confirms that the interpretative audio descriptions better convey the emotional aspects of the film.

Apart from the information collected in the responses to the questionnaires, the qualitative analysis of the content of the group interviews provided additional information of interest. One of the topics emerging from this analysis was the immersiveness of the experience.

4.3.4 Immersion in the audiovisual fiction

Robrecht Vanderbeeken (2010) defines immersion as:

> *'[...] a psychological phenomenon, specifically an imaginative experience, initiated and controlled through our senses. The spectator, the listener, or the reader (in one word: the immersant), should not merely succeed in holding on his or her attention to a work. (S)he should also be able to live the fictitious aspect of the work.'*

On the questionnaire, we did not directly ask about this aspect because we believe that it in itself could be the subject of study using psychological tools, among others. Nonetheless, immersion became an emerging topic because numerous people provided information on how they felt or did not feel immersed in the film, and we were able to observe different responses according to the AD version heard. For example, below are the comments of two participants:

- Participant 13, woman, AD3: 'It was very emotional, very. It reminds me of a book whose story carries you away; it's not a cold description.'
- Participant 38, man, AD1: '*The characters cannot convey emotions because they are a set of stills being narrated. It's the same as a book because there is a lack of interaction.*' [Original in Spanish].

These two people are comparing the AD with a book, but they had to contrasting experiences: the first one felt transported into the film, while the second one clearly did not. By analysing and tagging the comments along these lines, we have reached the results found in Table 7.

According to our analysis, approximately half the participants with an interpretative version of the AD (AD2 and AD3) and one-third with the conventional AD (AD1) indicated that they felt immersed in the film. In contrast, no one with the narrative AD (AD3), just one person with the cinematographic AD (AD2) and one-third of the group with the conventional AD (AD1) stated that they did not feel immersed in the film. This result, which should be further explored with additional studies, points to better immersion with interpretative audio descriptions.

Table 7. Immersion in the film

Group	Immersion	No immersion	No information available
AD1	5	5	5
AD2	7	1	7
AD3	8	0	7

Source: Author.

5. Conclusion

In this article, we have shown how the requirement of objectivity in the UNE 153020 audio description standard (AENOR, 2005), which is currently in force in Catalonia, contradicts the connotative nature of films and the interpretative nature of film viewership. In order to work towards a solution to this contradiction, we have proposed two interpretative AD styles, which we have then tested with persons with visual impairment along with a conventional AD. Our results show that the two audio description styles that offer an interpretation of the film language, the cinematographic AD and the narrative AD, provide access that is as satisfactory as the conventional audio description in key aspects of the film experience such as comprehension of the film and an enjoyable experience. Furthermore, in our study, these interpretative audio descriptions also enabled the participants to enjoy better access to the aesthetic and stylistic aspects of the film and to a more immersive and emotionally more intense experience. Given these results, we believe that narrative and cinematographic ADs are worth exploring in order to improve the experience of users of film audio descriptions. The only caveat in the case of the cinematographic AD is the need for an additional study to assess possible comprehension difficulties with this style, which is less dense and includes film terminology. As we await this study, we recommend creating cinematographic audio descriptions for films targeted more at cinephiles than at audiences at large.

Our research has focused on a film model with a prominent use of film language. However, similar to the reflection on creative audiovisual accessibility by Romero-Fresco and Chaume (2022), we believe that the approach we are proposing may be used in different types of films, and that the need may arise to define new audio description styles that meet the demands of the film style or the type of audio description to be offered. To reinforce the benefits of the interpretation and creativity of the audio description, it would be optimal to include the AD in the creative process from the very first conception of a film or any other audiovisual fiction, as Romero-Fresco (2012) advocates in his proposal to create accessible filmmaking.

In consequence, even though we understand that the requirement for objectivity in the UNE 153020 standard (AENOR 2005) seeks to protect persons with visual impairment from excessive interpretations, paternalistic descriptions or exposure to the audio-describers' personal opinions, we believe that in practice, this requirement has become overly limiting and does not provide persons with visual impairment with the best film experience possible. In short, we have to trust the ethical criteria of audio-describers and their ability to offer an informed interpretation based on their film and storytelling knowledge in order to optimally convey the narrative, emotional and aesthetic charge of the film in the audio description text.

Note

This research was granted the first prize in the XXXIII CAC awards for research on audiovisual communication.

Notes

1. Casetti, 2011: 53.
2. The documents on the approval process of this decree are available on the Open Government website https://governobert.gencat.cat/ca/transparencia/Organitzacio-i-normativa/normativa/normativa-en-tramit/dso/en-tramit/codi_accessibilitat. The document consulted (the most recent as this article was being written) is available at this address https://bit.ly/3DjBp1M (Consulted: June 21, 2022).
3. For a more comprehensive list of the most important audio description rules and guides published in different European countries, see Perego (2020).
4. In Bardini (2020a), we defined 14 audio description techniques, including iconic, cognitive and creative descriptions. Although we shall not delve into the details of this classification here, we do want to recall that an audio description technique is a way of conveying the message of a clip from an audiovisual text to the verbal language.
5. The production company Stellar Scene has made the short film available at this link: https://bit.ly/3Ng4L5R

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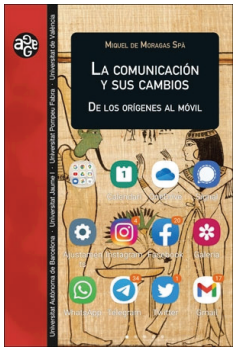
QUADERNS DEL CAC

Critical Book Reviews

Moragas Spà, M de. *La comunicación y sus cambios. De los orígenes al móvil.*
Barcelona: UAB, JI, UPF and UV, 2022. (Aldea Global; 44)
ISBN: 978-84-19333-10-0.



By Josep Lluís Gómez Mompart
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The latest book from Miquel de Moragas, Emeritus Professor of Communication at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, constitutes a good historical outline of communication. Its importance, current focus, and characteristics will soon see it become a reference work, as have others from the same Aldea Global collection, co-published by the UAB, UJI, UPF, and UV. This collection boasts the academic publishing quality label, promoted by the Union of Spanish University Publishers and backed by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) and the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT).

The two hundred pages of this book are a sound synthesis of the evolution of different changes in human communication, similar to other summary texts from renowned specialists in science. This is a scientifically mature work, the product of a lengthy career as a university teacher and researcher (at mostly Catalan and Ibero-American universities). The traits that reveal Miquel de Moragas' understanding and style are on full display: great subject knowledge, solid intellectual grounding, good research experience, capable judgment of an astute observer and conscious user, passion for social communication, and, lastly, an extraordinary ability to communicate.

Whilst not strictly a book on the history of communication, the theoretical focus is grounded in a historical perspective, not merely because it covers the whole period from the origins to the present day, but also because the thrust of the text is the type of changes that have taken place over the centuries and the respective social dynamics. Namely, Moragas interprets the rationale of the changes and their social, economic, cultural, and political changes. Both aspects are important enough because, as the author states, we must move away from the idea that all these changes are an exclusively modern phenomenon and reject technological determinism.

This approach makes for a diligent historical perspective (not universal, but Western). In other words, it has that feature that communication historians always note: the need to think of communication in historical terms, whilst remembering that humans have created and maintained social networks ever since we started living in communities. In the 21st century, we must talk about "digital social networks", to duly differentiate them from social networks prior to the internet. We must be careful with expressions such as today's "social media" because predigital means of communication were also "social". Only by doing so can one understand and be clear on the qualities of each part of the "*communication ecosystem*", which, all too often, is mistaken for the organisation of communication or the communication system, which are not the same thing.

The book is divided into ten chapters. After the introduction which explains the types of changes (disruptive, evolutionary, replacement, supplementary or hybridising, or pragmatic) and the consequent phases in which these changes are established or accelerate, the author devotes three chapters to summarising centuries and centuries of history; from remote ancestors (from the earliest writing to the printing press), from hand-crafted prints to the mass media, all the way to the inventions of the 19th century (signals, light, and sound). The following three chapters cover the 20th century, whilst emphasising the new media of popular culture, telecommunications as a pre-internet stage (1980-1996), and the dawn of the internet (1969-1996). Moragas then, in perhaps the two most thought-provoking chapters, tackles the 21st century media and the new realm of the internet (platforms and social media). Lastly, the book concludes with an extremely interesting chapter on the early effects of the 2020-2021 pandemic on communication. I consider this section a success, as it encourages future research based on various specific pieces of research that have been conducted around the globe in recent years and which will likely enable Moragas to go further and deeper into this important topic from his original perspective.

The author warns us that "it is advisable to avoid simplifications and the trend for nostalgia, in the sense of assuming that changes in the forms of communication are worse than earlier oral and written cultures (the rule of logos) without considering the contribution that that diversity [the convergence

of semiotic systems] has made to the advancement of human knowledge" (p. 173). Significant changes which have often had their roots the military domain (such as the telegraph, radio, telecommunications, and the internet) but which, since the 1950s, have been introduced and used publicly often coinciding with some "*mega event*", such as the Olympic Games. In this area, Miquel de Moragas, who is also a specialist in Olympic communication and founder of the UAB Centre for Olympic Studies in 1998, offers us some eloquent examples.

Whilst recognising the socially, culturally, and technologically beneficial aspects of communication changes, both pre-internet and in the digital age, the author does not hide the various problems in their use (instability, addiction, inequality) or abuse (control, biopolitics, privacy). His observations on platforms and algorithms are timely and worrying, especially on two critical issues in our advanced societies: the quality of journalism and democracy. What type of world and life are artificial intelligence and big data fashioning? Are we heading towards ultra-personalised information that shuts us off in bubbles, in the twilight of a shared world we all inhabit, as predicted by Éric Sadin (2022)? Or is our democracy, under a regime of digitalised information, already degenerating into an infocracy as Byung-Chul Ha (2022) states? Precisely for these reasons, Moragas advocates the enforcement of updated communication policies suited to the new communication ecosystem, which would include defending net neutrality, redefining the concept of freedom of expression, regulating the handling of personal data, transparency in algorithms, redefining public information services, and technological and media literacy.

Before I finish this review, I would like to draw attention to some important aspects of the narrative of the book: this is an open, light, and academic-style discourse (friendly but still critical), which barely use the royal "we" as it is mainly written in the first person. Occasionally, Miquel de Moragas even demands the cooperation of the readers, whilst inviting them to reconsider their own experience of communication.

Communication and changes in it. From its origins to the mobile phone appeals constantly to the memories of the reader, be they elderly, middle-aged, or young, and engages them in their own memories and how they have experienced or experience their own history of communication. In that regard, this practical experience of active reading, as Umberto Eco would say, enriches the content of the book and makes it a captivating read. As does the writing in Moragas' book, in his characteristic short sentences and very short paragraphs. The author has found a writing style that can blend into the textuality of the unique languages of the information society and knowledge today. The narration sometimes seems to surge forward, with brief pauses for feedback that help the reader to refind their place. It seems to go back and forth with a certain degree of repetition, a style that is a distinctive feature of spoken communication. Spoken communication is the greatest and oldest form of human communication, and something we also find nowadays in that form of oral writing that is Twitter, WhatsApp, and Telegram, and in the interactions of virtual assistants such as Alexa, Siri, Cortana, and so on.

For that reason, Miquel de Moragas has written a book that is not merely timely, but also useful for the public to understand the historical aspect of communication that we enjoy and suffer in our lives.

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Francès, M., Franquet, R., Torres, G. (Coords.)
Los retos de la televisión pública ante la multidifusión digital.
Barcelona: Gedisa, 2022. 373 p.
ISBN: 978-84-18914-35-5.

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Public service television in recent years has been marked by media convergence and efforts to adapt to the era of digital multicasting. This process of change has been aggravated by the social and health crisis caused by Covid-19 and the current geopolitical situation, which have increased distrust in the truthfulness, impartiality and objectivity of the information provided.

The book *The challenges of public television in the face of digital multicasting* (2022) introduces us to the paradigm shift of digital multicasting within the contemporary socio-cultural and geopolitical context, forcing us to consider new public policies for audiovisual communication and other strategies for transmitting transmedia content beyond traditional television. The coordinators of the volume, Miquel Francés, Rosa Franquet and Gabriel Torres, have extensive academic and research experience in studies on public television and changes in the different periods of information broadcasting. This book also praises and commemorates the long career and vocation of Enrique Bustamante in the fight for quality public service television.

Miquel Francés, one of the coordinators, opens the book with an introduction on the state of public television in a time of digital multicasting and the socio-political context in which we live, as well as outlining the points that will be dealt with in the book. Then, in two forewords by Patricia Corredor Lanas and Pedro Soler Rojas, Enrique Bustamante's intellectual biography is presented and his academic contribution is honoured, respectively.

The coordinators of the volume are a fine trio of authors who are highly experienced in the field of communication research and who have a broad knowledge of the subject under study, which can be easily observed in their contributions. The book has a logical and coherent narrative thread. It is divided into three parts that resemble the three traditional aspects of the audiovisual industry: public service television, contents and formats, and audiences.

The first section of the book refers to the structure, models and trends of public television in Europe. The researcher Carmina Crusafon reviews the public television models and how they are evolving in this time of transformation towards an uncertain future of audiovisuals. Professor Emili Prado continues by explaining the importance that legacy media still have, despite the challenges presented by this convergent audiovisual ecosystem. The authors Miquel Francés and Àlvar Peris observe the flow of content production on Spanish public television in a context of low audiences, lack of truthful credibility, financial instability and worsening due to the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic. Professor Mª Trinidad García Leiva then analyses the prominence, discoverability and visibility of certain contents, and reflects on the processes and options for public service audiovisuals in order for the content to reach the public in the digital environment. The chapter closes with an inspection by Professor Germán Llorca-Abad regarding the concept of transmedia for television and the implications of incorporating a certain transmediality into the entire communication process of an audiovisual project.

The second section focuses on the creation and adaptation of content and formats in the era of digital multicasting. One of the coordinators, Gabriel Torres Espinoza, begins with a descriptive and somewhat prescriptive review of the contents and formats of public service, including products that have had more transnational relevance, such as Turkish soap operas. Rosa Franquet, also a coordinator of the volume, together with professors Belén Monclús and Núria García-Muñoz, contextualise televised information in democracies and critique its strategic value in certain historical periods. Dr. Lola Bañón Castellón studies the mainstreaming of news, according to the different programming time slots, especially entertainment. The author Beatriz Narbaiza Amillategi concludes the chapter with an approach to the contents and proposals on how to attract young audiences to television.

The third section refers to audience projection, audiences and social stratification. The researcher Joan Enric Úbeda contextualises the historical periods of public television up

to the current television consumption through devices other than television. Professors Carmen Peñafiel-Saiz and Lázaro Echegaray-Eizaguirre review the adaptation of public television to the new audiovisual scenario, taking into account its commitment to public service and the audience's preferences. Doctors Guillermo Orozco Gómez and Darwin Franco Migues look at trends in media consumption, focusing on the transition from traditional ratings to the power of algorithms. This section is complemented by a study on the representation of culture in public service television media by Professor Patricia Corredor Lanas, at a time when platforms have already become consolidated within the audiovisual industry and public service must continue to guarantee cultural diversity and democratic pluralism.

The book concludes with an epilogue by Professor Agustín García Matilla, who reflects on the opportunities and challenges for RTVE in this era of digital multicasting. The author contextualises the state of public television and reviews the main factors that have contributed to its deterioration, as well as adding an extensive interview with the director of the Corporation, José Manuel Pérez Tornero, in which some of the ideas for the future of RTVE are discussed. The epilogue also pays tribute to Enrique Bustamante's contribution to public television and offers a series of conclusions and recommendations for the future of the corporation.

The book T*he challenges of public television in the face of digital multicasting* is a tribute to Enrique Bustamante and his extensive contribution to quality public service television. It also brings up to date the challenges of the multicasting era and incorporates the changes brought about by Covid-19 and the current geopolitical situation. Ultimately, the volume reflects on the new challenges facing public television in the face of digital multicasting in a highly competitive and complex panorama, and makes an academic proposal in which the potential and opportunities offered by the convergence of media are clearly shown.

Micó, J. Ll. *Titulars i reserves. Cròniques entre la derrota i la remuntada.*
Barcelona: Saldonar, 2021.
ISBN: 978-84-17611-67-5.

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This is an almost 300-page book that the author, Josep Lluís Micó Sanz —born in La Font de la Figuera (Valencia) in 1974 and currently chair at the Universitat Ramon Llull—starts by introducing the reader to the two notions captured in the title: what a *titular* is and how *reserva* should be understood. Within the context of this book, he does so by distinguishing these two concepts from other possible meanings. For example, *Titulars i reserves* could be a book about sports teams. But it isn't. The author clarifies the journalistic subject matter when he clarifies: 'The *titular* (headline) is the most important piece of the news item. *Reserva* (reservation) is an attitude of mistrust or distrust of someone'..

The book is organised into three main chapters that are painstakingly organised in chronological order and brimming with details, in which the author casts a very detailed eye on three case studies and the lives of their main figures. Each is very carefully treated distinctly, but as a whole they are a clear example of literary journalism on different realities which share a common thread: in each case the actors decided to conceal part of their existences: violence, prostitution and drug trafficking. They are the trials and tribulations of their main characters, which come from previous experiences, which also share a leitmotif: defeat.

The first chapter, entitled 'Consells per tallar una ceba sense plorar' (Advice on how to cut an onion without crying), uses reporting to condemn the harassment suffered by a family from Madrid who moved to a village during the pandemic. In the second one, 'Producte interior brut' (Gross domestic product), a female university student gets involved in high-end prostitution in order to pay for a prestigious master's degree. The third and last story, 'Gent que passa' (People who don't care), is an experiment that merges two such different genres as interviews and poetry. The author defines it as *poetic journalism*, and it echoes the condemnations found in many rap lyrics, a musical style where the content is the main feature, while the rhythm and tempo simply serve the main text.

All three stories are more like a hybridisation of genres, without a glimpse of the subjectivity common in *opinion*-based genres. The author builds the stories using multiple information sources, a technique common to in-depth reporting, yet at the same time he approaches the texts differently, similar to the way some chefs who fuse culinary cultures work. Micó prepares his dishes with genuine ingredients and meticulous technique and presents them full of mixtures.

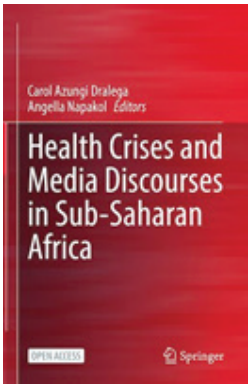
This book emerged from the experiences of a man who knows he is a small-town guy. Micó acknowledges that he may not have become a journalist had he not been raised in a rural setting. Just like *Química orgànica* (2019), another of his books, this one is faithful to an idea of journalism that the author likes: 'I try to do small-town journalism, even if I move about in and write for cities'.

Last but not least, we should note that the book includes a prologue by another journalist and university professor, Albert Sáez, in which he discusses the dichotomy between imaginary literature and observation-based literature—an idea he draws from Josep Pla's thinking—which resembles journalism. Pla includes this idea in one of his first books, Coses vistes (1925), published at what we could describe as the golden age of literary journalism in Catalonia, an unofficial form of literature which became popular at the time. Curiously, the expression is also reflected in Pla's last book, *Notes del capvesprol.*

Thus, in the prologue, Sáez wants to point at the style used by Micó in this book, whose essence can be found in the gaze at certain realities that the author examines in detail with a journalist's eyes.

Books Review

Azungui Dralega, C. and Napakol, A. (Eds.)
Health Crises and Media Discourses in Sub-Saharan Africa
New York: Springer Cham. 283 pages.
ISBN: 9783030951009
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95100-9



Health Crises and Media Discourses in Sub-Saharan Africa is an open-access book based on the health crises that occurred in sub-Saharan Africa prior to the COVID-19 crisis (Ebola, HIV/AIDS, cholera, malaria and even mental health problems). In any case, COVID-19, which is at the core of the book, is described as an exceptional situation. The World Health Organization's (WHO) January 2020 declaration of a public health emergency of international concern led governments all over the world to apply exceptional measures, even the media. And sub-Saharan Africa was no exception, although it also had to cope with peculiarities that other countries did not.

Based on this, the book gives a multifaceted vision of the changes and resistances that reporting on the healthcare crises on the continent have had to face from the political, economic, legal, technological and sociocultural standpoints. It explores issues like public health policies, the infodemic, the economic viability of the media affected, threats to journalists and social marginalisation, among others.

The sixteen chapters of the book account for the gaps that had to be addressed, the most important innovations stemming from the COVID-19 crisis in the region and the complexities surrounding the sub-Saharan media system at times of extreme health crisis. The publication is edited by professor Carol Azungi Dralega (University College, Norway) and professor Angella Napakol (Uganda Christian University).

Available here.

Martínez Pastor, E and Blanco-Ruiz, M. (Coords.)
Menores y medios sociales: miradas desde la educación, la creación y el consumo mediático
Madrid: Fragua, 2022. 244 pages.
ISBN: 9788470749667

The book *Menores y medios sociales: miradas desde la educación, la creación y el consumo mediático* studies the issue of advertising made by and for minors on the social media.

Children's and adolescents' consumption habits have changed compared to past decades, and a new media communication paradigm has sprung up. For some time now, the figure of the influencer has been generating new forms of communication between the content creator and users through messages, posts and/or videos. This phenomenon has fostered the emergence of new business models and, in some cases, the professionalisation of influencers who are minors. Based on this, brands and advertising agencies have developed a new line to ensure that their messages reach this audience which is much more clearly delimited and efficient, because this new figure prescribes not only tastes and fashions but also consumption.

Given this situation, the book coordinated by Martínez Pastor and Blanco-Ruiz, professors at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos and the Universidad Carlos III, respectively, offers a critical analysis of this new dynamic. Without falling into the apocalyptic trap, they do launch an alert signal on the need to update and protect minors from the new forms of digital creation and consumption, and more generically in this new emerging environment.

Available here.

Trappel, J. and Tomaz, T. (Eds.)
Success and Failure in News Media Performance. Comparative Analysis in The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021
Gothemburg: Nordicom, 2022. 360 pages.
ISBN: 9188855589.

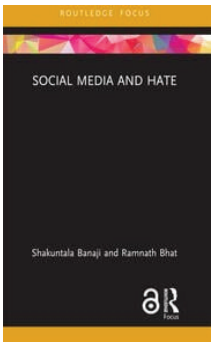
The Media for Democracy Monitor (MDM) of the Swedish institute Nordicom evaluates the performance of the leading media in mature democracies. Its methodology revolves around three basic dimensions: freedom, equality and control. In a diachronic, large-scale research project lasting 15 years, academic teams from around the world led by Nordicom evaluated the social output of the leading media via 30 prime indicators.

So, what impact, in the positive sense of the term, do the main media have in supporting contemporary democracies? Nordicom published individual country reports in two volumes in 2021. This third and last volume focuses on the horizontal results of 18 countries around the world. In 16 chapters, around 30 authors examine the successes and failures of the actions of the leading media.

Underlying challenges predominate, such as gender inequalities in the news, a high concentration in ownership and the dire consequences caused by the rising commodification of the news. Furthermore, new challenges, such as threats against journalists, disinformation and the erosion of resources for investigative journalism characterise the current state of the leading media.

Available here.

Banaji, S. and Bhat, R.
Social Media and Hate
London: Routledge, 2021. 140 pages.
ISBN: 9780367537272



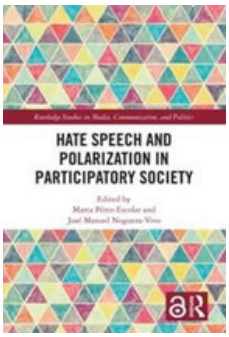
Social Media and Hate is a study on the relationship between disinformation and hate in social media in contemporary society. This essay claims that in certain contexts, social media like Facebook, TikTok, ShareChat, Instagram and WhatsApp generate discrimination and even extreme violence against certain groups. In the first part of the book, which is theoretical, the arguments are grounded upon a critical methodological evaluation of prior quantitative and qualitative studies on the practices and consequences of hate and sectarianism.

The practical part provides case studies on hate in social media and its effects on certain groups in India, Brazil, Myanmar and the United Kingdom. These apparently disparate cases highlight the similarities in the communication strategies, technical uses and ideologies of the hate campaigns against groups: people of African and Asian descent, indigenous communities, Muslims, Dalits (the pariahs in the caste system), the Rohingya, migrants, feminists, LGBTI communities and the dissident population in general. The book calls for a coordinated political response to the systematic hate against these vulnerable groups which would make the expertise and know-how developed in each case extrapolatable to others.

The book uses a mixed methodology with expert interviews and focus groups. Its intrinsic value is its multidisciplinary approach, as it contains contributions from cultural studies, community psychology, education, journalism, media studies, political science, social anthropology, social psychology and sociology.

Available here.

Pérez-Escolar, M. and Noguera-Vivo, J. M. (Eds.)
Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society
London: Routledge, 2021. 278 pages.
ISBN: 9781003109891



Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society is a group study of the role of the media and digital platforms in the construction of the discourse of hate and ideological polarisation.

The book conducts a semantic analysis of the meanings, implications and contexts of extremist discourse and the closed groups who generate it. As a result, it provides a detailed description of the effects of this phenomenon, which is putting peaceful coexistence at risk. Thus, the 16 chapters in the book analyse the metaphors, phraseology and deceitful rhetoric that are found and recur in different practical cases. The book's goal is to deactivate the harmful effect of these negative practices for society.

The book's multidisciplinary approach enables expert contributors to participate by examining the different forms of hate that appear in both the traditional media and the social media and digital platforms. The contents within the universe studied are the news from major media groups, fiction and social media in a wide variety of contexts.

Available here.

Tambini, D.
Media Freedom
New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2021. 224 pages.
ISBN: 9781509544684

A professor and senior researcher at the London School of Economics (LSE), Damian Tambini explores the role played by the social media in the latest elections and referenda in the United States, the United Kingdom and continental Europe. Given the new influence they have exerted on electoral behaviour, the author calls for an open debate on the freedom of the social media and to what extent and how they should be regulated for modern democracies. A supporter of an intervention in which public institutions would be the arbiters, Tambini asks that the actions learn from the past on how the press, radio and television were historically regulated.

Through this history-based approach, the author suggests a new social contract on freedom of the press which updates the one that has been in force since the advent of the Internet and the social media. The goal is to update the applicability of international human rights norms in terms of the governance of the media sector. Likewise, one of the ideas that Tambini suggests is questioning what is known as American exceptionalism, an ideological movement which believes that the USA should have its own regulations, on this matter as well.

Available here.

Journals Review

Media, War & Conflict
Volume 15 Issue 2, June 2022
ISSN: 1750-6352 e-ISSN: 1750-6360

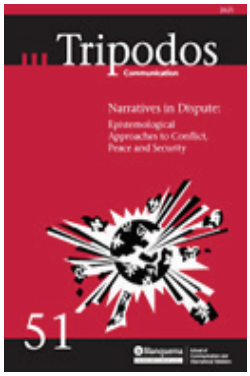
Media, War & Conflict is an international journal that analyses war, different types of armed conflicts and terrorism in an era when the media play an omnipresent social and political role. MWC explores the cultural, political and technological transformations in the relations among the spheres of the media and the military, journalistic practices, the new media and their impact on the diversity of audiences, policies and war outcomes. The journal encompasses approaches that range from the humanities to the media, political science, sociology, history and other disciplines.

In the latest issue, MWC presents a miscellany of articles with no specific core theme. The studies discuss the role of television, the press and journalist, Twitter, Wikipedia, state propaganda and the military use of statistics to build a discourse that legitimises war. The geographic regions analysed include Germany, the Netherlands, Turkish Kurdistan, Yemen, Colombia, the Islamic State and Gaza.

The featured article is the first paper in the journal, 'Different shows, different stories: How German TV formats challenged the government's framing of the Ukraine crisis' by Dennis Lichtenstein and Katharina Koerth. This paper researches the coverage of the war in Ukraine in Germany, a media system of an advanced democracy. Specifically, it analyses how trends like infotainment and globalisation are shaping news coverage. It questions how the different television formats frame the Ukraine crisis and question or approve of the German government's military policy in this conflict.

Available here.

Tripodos
Narratives in Dispute: Epistemological Approaches to Conflict, Peace and Security
No. 51 (2021).
ISSN: 1138-3305 e-ISSN: 2340-5007



Tripodos is the scholarly journal published by the Blanquerna Faculty of Communication and International Relations at the Universitat Ramon Llull. It encompasses all disciplines related to the world of communication: journalism, film, television, radio, advertising, public relations, Internet, etc.

The article 'Understanding Peace, Conflict and Security Through Alternative Narratives' by the editors of this monographic issue, Òscar Mateos and Rodríguez, presents the issue *Narratives in Dispute: Epistemological Approaches to Conflict, Peace and Security*. It argues that in recent years, critical peace studies has cast doubt on the approaches to conflict-resolution, peacebuilding initiatives and security strategies promoted by the leading international organisations. Critical research deems that this type of approach tends to be built from a top-down perspective with little participation by the local actors affected by the armed violence, and that it is often based on standardised strategies that do not bear in mind the complex nature of the conflict.

The scholarly articles in the journal examine postcolonial, feminist and poststructuralist issues and use approaches that question, deconstruct and cast doubt on the existence of these dominant narratives in understanding current conflicts. And on this basis, they develop alternative ways of thinking about peace processes and security.

This issue analyses topics like the discourses and processes of decolonialisation, war, violence and/or gender in Mozambique, Palestine and Amazonia, as well as the post-conflict dynamics in Northern Ireland.

Available here.

Central European Journal of Communication
Mediating Change, Changing Media
Special Issue 2022
Vol. 15 No. 1 (30) (2022)
ISSN: 1899-5101

Central European Journal of Communication is the scholarly journey of the Polish Communication Association. It participates in critical debates about communication and the media both in Central and Eastern Europe and globally. The journal publishes both theoretical and empirical research from a wide range of disciplinary approaches.

This special issue of the CEJC brings together communication studies related to a range of research topics like the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the representation of homeless persons and social protests and activism.

The publication has an international perspective, with studies centred in Europe (Czech Republic, Poland, Sweden, the Netherlands), Africa (Egypt) and Asia (Lebanon, China, Indonesia).

Given that the CEJC is a Polish publication, this issue features the article 'Politicizing Poland's Public Service Media: The Analysis of Wiadomości News Program' by Katarzyna Gajlewicz-Korab and Łukasz Szurmiński, both from Warsaw University. This study explores the tensions that have arisen within Poland's public service television regarding pluralism, participation and Polish government propaganda. Specifically, it presents the results of an analysis of the propaganda techniques used on Wiadomości, the leading public news programme on TVP1. The conclusions state that the public service news in general and this flagship programme specifically are controlled and manipulated by the government.

Available here.

Human Communication Research
Rethinking Communication in the Era of Artificial Intelligence
Volume 48, Issue 3, July 2022
e-ISSN: 1468-2958

Human Communication Research is a quarterly scholarly journal on communication issues and human symbolic processes. It is published by the Oxford University Press on behalf of the International Communication Association.

The main thematic areas of the HRC include language and social interaction, non-verbal communication, interpersonal communication, organisational communication and the new technologies, mass communication, communication for health, intercultural communication and communication development problems. Thus, it includes theory-based studies, the emergence of new theoretical communication models and innovative methods for observing and measuring communicative behaviour. It is multidisciplinary and encompasses the social sciences and applied psychology, sociology, linguistics and anthropology, as well as the different areas within communication studies.

'Rethinking Communication in the Era of Artificial Intelligence' by Shyam Sundar, and Eun-Ju Lee introduces this special issue devoted to the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in communication. It places the six articles in this monographic issue along two main axes of research: human-computer interaction (HCI) and computer-mediated communication (CMC). The main issues examined are persuasion based on AI, autonomous conversational agents, chatbots and artificial friendships, algorithmic knowledge management, selective (and artificial) amplification of news and fact-checking in the AI environment.

Available here.

New Media & Society
Special issue: "Scams, Fakes and Frauds"
Volume 24 Issue 7, July 2022
ISSN: 1461-4448, eISSN: 1461-7315

*New Media & Society i*s a scholarly publication which reports on research into problems related to the scale and speed of the new media and their rapid development. It is based on a wide range of disciplinary perspectives and both theoretical and empirical research. NMS includes contributions on the individual, social, cultural and political dimensions of the new media; the global and local dimensions of the relationship between the media and social change; evolution and contemporary communicative changes and related historical processes; and the implications and impacts of the relationship between research, politics and social life, focusing on the sphere of communication.

The topics encompassed in the journal include pairs of concepts like digitalisation and convergence; interactivity and virtuality; consumption and citizenship; regulation and control; innovation and Internet cultures; patterns and inequalities in digital habits; community and identity in the digital space; and digital space and time vs everyday life.

As of June 2022, NMS ranked first in Google Scholar Metrics, in the 'Communication' subcategory, far ahead of the second-ranked publication. Recall that the Google Scholar metrics offer the scholarly community a measurement of the visibility and influence of recent articles in scholarly journals that is quantified and established with artificial intelligence tools.

Available here.

Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura
Trends in the digitalisation of journalism
Volume 66 (2022)
ISSN: 2340-5236

Anàlisi is a scholarly journal published by the Department of Journalism and Communication Sciences at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). Its interests revolve around digital society, entertainment, the cultural industries and communication policies, as well as relations between communication and fields like gender, education, politics, game studies, transmedia narrative, advertising and data journals.

As Hada M. Sánchez Gonzales and João Canavilhas explain in the article that opens this issue ('Tendències en la digitalització del periodisme', or 'Trends in the Digitalisation of Journalism'), the context in which algorithms and other artificial intelligence tools are featured in news reports is tending towards platformisation, that is, a set of digital services that identify opportunities and validate strategies to develop work or economic activities via the user's interaction.

Thus, the issue contains a set of studies ranging from disinformation (the term desinfaketion is introduced), fact-checking and the regeneration of journalism, new (and necessary) competences in Journalism bachelor's degrees, news alerts on mobile devices as a new journalistic narrative and storytelling, AI as an artificial actor in podcasts and other sound-based narrations and journalism specialising in videogames on YouTube, among others

Available here.

Websites Review

European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)

<https://edmo.eu/>

The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) is a European association that brings together fact-checkers and researchers with expertise in the field of online disinformation. EDMO is physically located in Florence under the aegis of the European University Institute, and it has the support of outside partners like the Datalab of the University of Aarhus (Denmark), the Athens Technology Centre (Greece) and Pagella Politica (Italy).

Through its online platform, the Observatory provides information and a variety of resources on how to identify fake news. Worth highlighting are the initiatives reported in the space on fact-checking called Repositories, such as the European (and United Kingdom) map of fact-checking initiatives and organisations; the list of European scholarly research activities focused on disinformation; and the repository of European scholarly studies on digital media.

International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)

<https://www.poynter.org/ifcn/>

The IFCN is an international network devoted to fact-checking and defending the objectivity of news. To this end, the ICFN, which was created in 2015 by the Poynter Institute, offers the more than 100 fact-checking organisations worldwide legal support, training activities and gatherings, as well as diverse public financing opportunities via its platform.

Its website features the code of principles established by the IFCN, which lists the commitments that a fact-checker has to make to work with excellence; the section on "articles", which includes a collection of the latest advances in the field of fact-checking. And its own report entitled *State of the Fact-Checkers 2021*, in relation to a total of 86 organisations, which describes the form of organisation, the work system, the employment and the source(s) of financing, among other aspects.

Verificat

<https://www.verificat.cat/>

Catalan non-profit association (2019) whose mission is to combat disinformation and manipulation via the Internet. Verificat is a pioneer in Catalonia and has been recognised by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) and the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)..

The Verificat website contains a section called "verifications", which reports on the actions conducted in relation to the discourse of public representatives in Catalonia and Spain; the discourse of hatred and scientific disinformation on health and climate change; and the noise circulating via the social media.

It also offers training plans (Verificat Escola) designed for different audiences: working journalists; high school, vocational education, baccalaureate and university students; other professionals; and citizens in general.

School of the Culture of Peace (ECP-UAB)

<https://escolapau.uab.cat/ca/inicio/>

The School of the Culture of Peace (ECP) is a research centre on peace at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) which came out of the UNESCO Chair on Peace and Human Rights. The ECP, created in 1999, carries out activities to promote the culture of peace and the non-violent transformation of conflicts

Its website covers its main spheres of action, namely research, training and awareness-raising and intervention, and it reports on publications – such as the annual *Report on Conflicts, Human Rights and Peace-building*, which provides a global snapshot of conflicts and peace-building – and educational resources – aimed at reducing any kind of violence.

Globsec

<https://www.globsec.org/centre-for-democracy-resilience/#>

Globsec is a global reflection group headquartered in Bratislava (Slovakia) that is committed to improving the security, prosperity and sustainability of democracy in Europe and the world.

It is an independent organisation that continues the work performed by the Slovak Atlantic Commission (1993) to improve democratic systems in the digital age and to make them more resilient. With this goal in mind, it seeks a global debate based on scholarly research and experts in foreign policy and security.

Its website is organised into four sections: news, projects, publications of interest and the events that it organises.

Journalism Trust Iniciative (JTI)

<https://www.journalismtrustinitiative.org/es/>

The JTI platform promotes trustworthy journalism which can restore prestige and respect, and it transparently shares the methods and ethical principles of the profession. This initiative emerged from Reporters without Borders (RSF), a non-governmental watchdog organisation of the freedom of the press which is supported by the EBU (European Broadcasting Union) and Agence France Press (AFP), among others. The media are the main users of the JTI to self-assess their editorial processes and undertake an exercise in transparency, although it can also be used by regulators and the private sector (advertisers, distributors and digital platforms).

The menu of the JTI platform includes three phases. First, the media can conduct a self-assessment using an application which consists in an internal verification of its compliance with the JTI's own reference framework. Then it can choose to publicly disseminate the results of this assessment, which takes on the guise of a 'transparency report'. Finally, the last phase in the process consists in an outside audit by an accredited certification organisation which conducts an independent assessment. After successfully completing these three stages, the media receive certification and the JTI seal.

Europe's MediaLab

<https://europemedialab.eu/>

This is a reflection and action group created in 2003 and headquartered in Belgium which seeks to promote the health of the media in Europe. This think tank upholds the need to apply proactive media policies in order to defend media independence, media pluralism and linguistic diversity.

It also supports the media to ensure that European media policies improve their coverage of all areas in the territory (national, local, etc.) and to promote innovative projects in the media industry.

Its website features a space devoted to the innovation training programme Stars4Media. This project aims to accelerate innovation and cross-border cooperation among media professionals, and it receives financing from the European Commission's Creative Europe programme. It runs a consortium comprised of the Europe's MediaLab reflection group, the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Ithe World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the European Journalism Centre (EJC).

Observatory of Social Conflict (OCS)

<https://www.observatoridelconflictesocial.org/>

The OCS is the observatory of the Research on Conflict and Social Changes (ICCS) research group of the University of Barcelona.

The mission of the OCS is to generate and disseminate knowledge on the logics of conflict and social changes with a scholarly underpinning. Its website has a section on defining the term *social conflict*, which contains several scholarly texts. Another noteworthy section is the "Social Conflict Yearbook" which the OCS issues once a year; it contains a record of the main episodes of social conflict that occurred throughout the year and in-depth analyses of some of them.

Finally, the part dedicated to the journal Clivatge, the OCS's yearly electronic publication, contains a selection of the analyses, studies or results in its field.

Paper submission guidelines

Author instructions
Paper submission

The article must be presented in electronic support (PC and Word format preferred). Every page must be 3**0 lines approx. and body size 12**. The maximum length is a**bout 6.000 words**, notes and references not included. Articles will be accepted in **Catalan, Spanish and English**.

The first page of the document should contain the title of the article and the following details of the authors:

- Name and surname (academic name)
- Title and institution
- E-mail address
- ORCID identification code

The article must include an **abstract of 90/100 words** in the original language of the article and English, as well as a **list of at least five keywords**.

Submission
Articles should be sent to the following email address: quadernsdelcac@gencat.cat

The Editorial Board of the journal will make an initial review of the quality and suitability of the texts received. Those articles that are accepted will undergo a double-blind peer review process that they will have to pass before publication.

Cession of intellectual property rights and warranties
Texts must be original and unpublished works, which are not subject to the selection process of another journal. By submitting a text to *Quaderns del CAC*, the authors declare that these conditions have been met and accept responsibility for any breach of this guarantee. Likewise, they also authorise the Catalan Audiovisual Council to disseminate the text in the journal *Quaderns del CAC* and through the Council's website and social networks.

References and endnotes
The list of references and endnotes should be located at the end of each article. References in the text must be placed in brackets with the author's surname and year of publication: (Name, year).

The citation model must follow APA 7.0 criteria. If the document has a DOI, include it at the end of the reference. All URL addresses should be given with a shortened address such as http://bitly.com.

References examples:
- Books
Surname, First name initial/Institution (Year). Title. Publisher. DOI or shortened URL.

- Articles in journals
Surname, First name initial/Institution (Year). “Title of the article”. Name of the journal, volume (number), pages. DOI or shortened URL.

- Book chapters
Surname, First name initial (Year). "Title of the chapter”. In: First name initial, Surname/Institution (Ed/s.), Title of the book (p. Number of pages). Publisher. DOI or shortened URL.

- Web pages
Name of the institution or Author of the website (Year). Title of the information or space consulted. Shortened URL.

Tables and figures
Tables and figures have to be provided with short, descriptive titles and also be numbered in Arabic numbers. All footnotes to tables and their source(s) should be placed under the tables. They must be inserted not as an image but in an editable format (e.g. in Excel).

Colour figures, tables and graphs are admitted and they all should have the source well identified.

Books Review guidelines

Instructions for authors

Book Review guidelines

The aim of the "Critical Book review" section is to review the main new publications in the world of communication, especially in the audiovisual sector..

1. The works reviewed must be current; they must have been **published in the last two full years**, although an earlier book may be included if justified.
2. Reviews must be original and unpublished works that have not been submitted to any other journal.
3. Book reviews must be submitted on computer support (preferably PC and in Word format). The maximum length is **1,300 words**.
4. Reviews can be submitted in **Catalan, Spanish and English**. They will be published in all three languages on the CAC website in PDF format. They should be sent to the following e-mail address: quadernsdelcac@gencat.cat
5. The texts must provide the reader with a general idea of the content of the book reviewed, as well as a personal assessment of the interest of the work. Therefore, it should include a description and analysis of the work, as well as conclusions that point out to the reader the value and significance of the book.
6. The review must be headed by a title that summarises the content, followed by the bibliographic record and the author of the review, with the position and the institution to which he/she belongs
7. It is recommended that the author of the book be briefly introduced by means of a commentary on his or her career or most recent works.
8. The summary and content analysis is the most important part of the review, so it is necessary to explain the thematic field in which the work is situated, the perspective and objectives proposed by the author, and the fundamental thesis of the book and its development.
9. The critical evaluation is generally positive, but it can also be negative, in both cases an adequate argumentation is required. The reader must be informed about the value, interest and usefulness of the book reviewed. Details such as the use of sources, documentation, the bibliography used by the author, the formal presentation of the book, etc. can be included if necessary.
10. The citation model of the bibliographic record must follow the APA 7.0 criteria. If the document has a DOI, it must be included at the end of the reference. All URL addresses should be given with a shortened address such as http://bitly.com

    Surname, First name initial/Institution (Year). *Title* (edition.). Publisher. DOI or shortened URL.

11. Any quotations from the book reviewed should be written in inverted commas. The page number should be included in brackets after the quotation. "Text of the quotation" (p. XX).
12. By submitting a review to *Quaderns del CAC*, the authors declare that these conditions have been met and accept responsibility for any claim arising from failure to comply with this guarantee. They also authorise the Catalan Audiovisual Council to disseminate them in the journal *Quaderns del CAC* and through the Council's website and social networks.

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