



# Comunicar

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**Artivism:**  
Art and social engagement  
in a digital world

**Artivismo:**  
Arte y compromiso social en un mundo digital



English Edition





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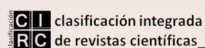
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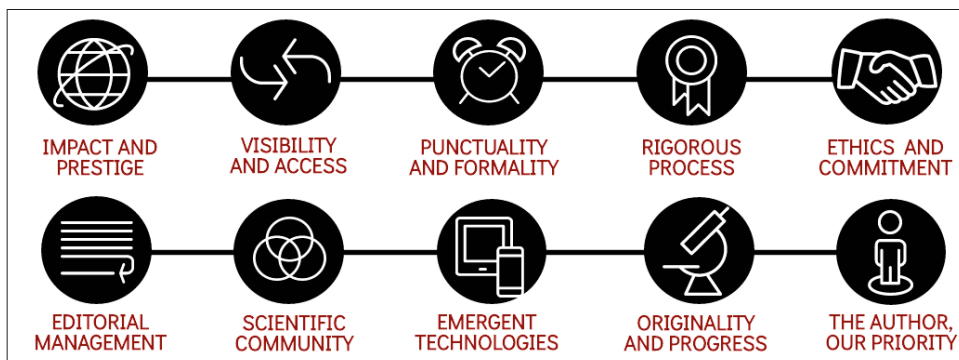
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- Scientific Reviewers internationalisation: 21 countries.
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Comunicar 57

# Special Topic Issue

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Artivism:  
Art and social engagement in a digital world

Artivismo:  
Arte y compromiso social en un mundo digital










# Artivism: A new educative language for transformative social action

Artivismo: Un nuevo lenguaje educativo para la acción social transformadora

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## ABSTRACT

This study describes the concepts, historical precedents, language and fundamental experiences of artivism. It shows the research activities from two main universities (Complutense de Madrid in Spain and Nottingham Trent in UK) as well as other cultural institutions (Élan Interculturel from France and Artemiszio from Hungary), which have explored the educational potential of artivism as a new way of achieving social engagement using innovation and artistic creation. The paper defines precisely artivism as a new language which appears outside the museums and art academies, moving towards urban and social spaces. Artivism is a hybrid form of art and activism which has a semantic mechanism to use art as a means towards change and social transformation. The analysis collects some central experiences of the artist phenomenon and applies semantic analysis, archiving artist experiences, and using urban walks and situational research, analyses the educational and formative potential of artists and their ability to break the classroom walls, and to remove the traditional roles of creator and receptor, student and professor, through workshop experiences. Finally, it reflects upon the usefulness of artivism as a new social language and an educational tool that breaks the traditional roles of social communication.

## RESUMEN

Este estudio describe los conceptos, antecedentes, lenguaje y experiencias fundamentales del artivismo, a partir de las actividades de estudio en la Universidad de Nottingham Trent y en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, con la colaboración de otras entidades culturales como la francesa Élan Interculturel (Francia) y Artemiszio (Hungría), explorando la capacidad educativa de nuevas formas de compromiso social mediante la innovación y creación artística. El artículo acota y define el artivismo como un nuevo lenguaje que surge del desborde de la creación artística académica y museística, hacia los espacios y lugares sociales. El artivismo, hibridación del arte y del activismo, tiene un mecanismo semántico en el que se utiliza el arte como vía para comunicar una energía hacia el cambio y la transformación. El análisis recoge algunas de las principales experiencias en artivismo mediante diversas técnicas –estudio de ejemplos de artivismo mediante análisis semántico, realización de archivo de fenómenos artivistas siguiendo metodologías de paseos urbanos e investigación situacional, y estudio de la capacidad didáctica y formativa de los artivistas y sus trabajos por su facilidad para romper los muros de las aulas e invertir los roles de creador y espectador, alumno y profesor, mediante experiencias en talleres– para de esta manera reflexionar finalmente sobre la utilidad del artivismo como nuevo lenguaje social y como herramienta educativa, capaz de romper los roles tradicionales de la comunicación social.

## KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Artivism, innovation, social change, educommunication, revolution, integration, arts, language.  
Artivismo, innovación, cambio social, educomunicación, revolución, integración, arte, lenguaje.

### 1. Artivism. Conceptual basis

At the dawn of the XXI century, Artivism (a blending of art and activism) arose spontaneously as a global language. It evolved from urban and graffiti art, and situationism, all of which were creative forms from the twentieth-century (Ardenne, 2008; Andreotti & Costa, 1996; Abarca, 2017; Szmulewicz, 2012). With the new century, a communicative explosion stretched beyond technological media, towards urban spaces. Cities became full of conquered spaces regained for expression. The genres, expressive modes, and communication tools, which a massive transcoding (Manovich, 2005) has blended into a new common space, laid the basis for experimentation and transformation of the ways of communicating.

Artivism is based on the recovery of artistic activity for the purpose of immediate social intervention (Expósito, 2013). As explained by Abarca (2016: 2-3), it has specific features that make it eminently ephemeral and practical in its permanent balance between visibility, durability, and risk. As this expert says, “working with a specific context implies playing with the meanings and connotations of the objects that compose it. As with any other form of public art, the final result of a work of urban art is always the sum of the meanings proposed by the artist and those of the elements that were in place”. If the art fulfilled standard functions of transmission of ways of doing things in times long past, of representing the human space, of anchoring social and cultural dynamism in profound perceptions (Coomaraswamy, 1996; Campbell, 1992; Maslow, 1988), the arrival of artivism took a new look at the old concepts by fighting the mercantilist and elitist status of artistic activity.

By applying methodologies of urban walks and analysis in situ (Clarck & Emmel, 2008; Pink, 2007) in our cities, we find an anonymous, ephemeral, collective and dynamic art that invades spaces and spheres of activity traditionally reserved for expressive omission (urban areas, means and places of transition and transport, non-places or sites that have lost their meaning (Augé, 2009), empty containers and moments or times that have lost their function (Sánchez-Ferlosio, 2000), all of which are transformed into the voice of a new, young and creative society.

In the words of Lippard (1984), artivism is not an “oppositional” art (it does not try to criticize or systematically oppose anything) but works with alternative images, metaphors, irony, humor (Fernandez-De-Rota, 2013), provocation or compassion, to generate an informative process. It is both an “outward” and “inward” art, according to Lippard. What distinguishes it from simple political art is the progressive character, under development, which leads it to work within contexts, to be directly involved in the public social space and to represent in direct contact with the recipients (Gianetti, 2004).

Simon Sheikh (2009), with the same idea, indicates that activist art subverts the very notion of the aesthetic object, entering into a process of involvement more important than the creative process itself. In progress and dynamic, artivism changes materials and media, practices and styles, roles and rituals, and ceases to be idiomatic in the art world, to become pragmatic in social life (Sheikh, 2009).

The language of artivism is multiple and generative; it does not respect fixed cultural rules. As Abarca points out (2016: 5), “thanks to the unregulated nature of their practice, urban artists can ignore the limits dictated by private property that determine where they can or cannot act. A work of urban art can simultaneously cover two or more contiguous surfaces belonging to different owners, thus ignoring the division of matter and space demarcated by money. Urban art can, therefore, make visible how these limits of action and physical boundaries are arbitrary and cultural. It can return space and matter to its natural state when everything was for everyone’s use, and nobody owned anything”.

Artivism coincides with the most extensive and complex institutional and political crisis in the whole world, in which disenchantment and the dissolution of political symbolism (Dayan, 1998) have led to a lack of faith in traditional political processes.



Figure 1. From the Madrid-born Artist SpY, Painting in Stavanger (Norway) (<http://spy-urbanart.com>).



Our thread will go diachronically from an analysis of the background to the phenomenon, to the study of the language of activism, specifically addressing the socio-political functions of this language, and finally showing observations obtained from workshops with students that illustrate the formative potential of activism.

## 2. Background and first experiences

To understand the phenomenon, we must trace the emergence of political and rupture art in the context of this century. Activism has its roots in the artistic avant-gardes of the early XX century (Dada, Futurism, Surrealism) (Riemchneider & Grosenick, 1999). Throughout the twentieth century, new names for art such as performance, happening, body, land, video or conceptual art, have implied an essential element of activism: “the dematerialization of the artistic object” (Valdivieso, 2014: 7): “The background of activism should be sought within what we might call counter-cultural movements of leftist activism, such as the situationist International (France), the Hippies (USA), the Indiani Metropolitani (Italy), the Provos (Holland) or the Spassguerilla (Germany); all of them emerged in the decade of the sixties and seventies of the last century. In the Spanish case, these practices of creative activism were not articulated until the eighties and nineties within groups such as Agustín Parejo School or La Fiambrera”.

The conceptual art of the mid-twentieth century provides another critical feature, according to Hodge (2016: 186), “they argued that the final product itself is not as important as the process, so that artistic gifts are irrelevant to their goals... conceptual art is an artistic form that confronts and questions the idea of producing

traditional works of art (...) it has always challenged the established ideas of production, exhibition, and contemplation of art (...) Conceptual artists focus on their ideas and produce an art strange to traditional painting and sculpture that does not need to be seen in a gallery. They deliberately create works that are difficult to classify according to artistic traditions (...) they often reflect their frustration and irritation towards society and political issues”.

One of the trends of XX century art gradually evolved towards a type in which the art object is not the essential element, but placed more importance on the process of generating the work and removing the commercial value of the created object. Contributing to this are the social movements that appear at the end of the XX century, such as the “alter-globalization movement” or “anti-globalization”, which, by the end of the century, generated a new protest vocabulary that would be applied in different contexts of activism.

In 2014, Julia Ramírez-Blanco, in her work “Artistic Utopias of revolt”, proposes a genealogy of community protest environments, as an art of liberated space, a space taken up by activism to grant social, community or political functions.

In “Art, liquid?”, Bauman (2007: 43) reflecting about the third culture, describes this new art: “Liquid modernity is a situation in which distance, the lapse of time between the new and the discarded, between creation and scum, have been drastically reduced. The result is that destructive creation and creative destruction converge in the same act”.

All the social movements of the beginning of the XXI century are already, in the words of De-Soto (2012), “open source revolutions where knowledge, techniques, practices, and strategies are learned and replicated with improvements”. For these movements, the essential language is activism. Let’s analyze how it works.

**Activism is a global phenomenon of growing importance. Although its background goes back decades, the significance it has acquired as a language close to social life and new generations is something entirely new. As a means or language of social transformation, it can serve to give new energy to the needs for expression in cities and current urban environments. Its formative value and its capacity to break the limits of the classroom and to involve young people in its practices are discussed and shown in this article.**

### 3. The language of activism: Semantic analysis

Of the activist forms that we have analyzed and will use in the examination of their social and educational functions, a rich range of expressions have been obtained that use art as a way of channeling ideas. In these, the individual or collective artist, anonymous or identified, recovers a function of correction of a social imbalance (Gianetti, 2004). The strength of activism lies not merely in its aesthetic avant-garde, but in its catalytic power to point out injustice, inequality or emptiness in human development. This is the common attribute of activism, where the language it uses is a fundamental feature.

The re-semantic action (to create or rescue new meanings) of the objects, spaces or buildings in the artistic phenomena that we have recorded, functions to revitalize the world of human sensations and cognition. It leaves a trace of the necessary humanization of life in large cities, whose psychological transformation and alienation (Simmel, 2002; Appadurai, 2001) has led to non-places and spaces without meaning, stealing the individual's capacity to participate.

The groundbreaking, revolutionary and transformative dimension is used here as a way to find a new language. The truncated meanings, the violation of aesthetic categories and conventions, and the break with the traditional order are used to regain communication with the social world.

As analyzed by Kombarov (2017: 2), expert in the work of the activist Pier Pavlensky, whose performance in Moscow is shown in the illustration above, activism is a means of effective expression because it does not individualize the meaning, but "divides it", that is to say, by breaking or splitting it into precise planes unlike the usual ones, it re-signifies human presence. Kombarov considers activism as a new language different from the media, the advertising world, and the cultural industry. This new language appeals to subjectivization, to the use of the body, and other diverse communication systems to avoid the loss of meanings.

The language of activism often implies the use of the artist's subject as a means for the disruption of abstraction, or to avoid the loss of representative capacity, and to recover individual freedom of expression. According to Kombarov, the total subjectivization and use of the body and its capabilities in space brings the subject into the public discourse empty of humanity, saturated with imaginary manipulation. In the work of the artist Pavlensky, the positioning of the artist's body, and the presentation of the subject in the urban space is a process to generate a new human presence. In this process, the subjectivity of the artist is used as a bifurcation system of political discourse, to make it reach the receiver: "The structure of subjectivity is bifurcated: subject is understood as the sensational subject of desires and bodily needs, and on the other hand, the desiring subject finds himself in the discourse, denoting his biological level through the symbolic" (Kombarov, 2017: 4).

This language allows using bodies or objects (Barbosa-de-Oliveira, 2007) as a sensory channel to transmit intellectual experiences that materialize with force: they recreate a space, an object, a subject. These processes link the recipients with the artist in new ways (Kombarov, 2017: 5). As this author understands, the truth, in the process of progressive loss of representative capacity implied in mass society and mass communication, hardly appears anymore, except as an event.

Activists generate events because they break the structure of conventional communication, erupting into the social space to attract attention and inoculate thought in their recipients. They do it through emotionalization, subjectivization, the rupture and invasion of spaces, or through adapting non-artistic means and times to artistic expression.



Figure 2. "Carcass" by Pier Pavlensky. Performance in Moscow (2008).



In this performance by Pavlensky, the Russian artist sewed his mouth to make a photo session in the Red Square in Moscow, expressing not only political content but an entirely new language. What we see in this artist is the re-establishment of the power of the body to transmit the desire for freedom. The repressive act is denounced here with beauty, integrity, and clarity. As Lethaby (2017), of the British Arts and Crafts movement, said in the XIX century, preceding activism, “art is liberated humanity, and everything else is slavery”.



Figure 3. Pavlensky, Performance “Stitch” (Courtesy of Vyacheslav Kombarov).

#### 4. Activism as experiences of autonomy, resistance or disobedience

Activism is a current language of independence and freedom. In our research activities, we have recorded hundreds of activism experiences around the globe. We will now highlight some essential prototypes from our archive to study their cases. A clear example is Banksy, graffiti artist, political activist and unidentified film director, who carries out his work from Bristol in the United Kingdom anonymously. The artist defines graffiti as the revenge of the lower class or guerrilla that allows an individual to wrestle power, territory, and glory, in front of a larger and better-equipped enemy. Banksy’s works have addressed various political and social issues, including anti-war, anti-consumerism, and anti-fascism.



Figure 4. Banksy. Artist’s website ([www.banksy.co.uk](http://www.banksy.co.uk)).

Banksy attacks various rules of conventional art. The first one is the authorship of the artist and the cult of the ego. The anonymity of the author, and the always transgressive character of his pieces, which appear on surfaces and spaces of all kinds and all over the world, ends with the convention of art in museums and places of worship. With this communicative power, he draws attention to realities and situations, as he has recently done in the border territories dividing Israel and Palestine. In addition, it fulfills the requirement of ephemeral art, which has been erased or eliminated in many parts of the world. And it is entirely outside the market.

Especially compelling is the case of China where, under apparent calm, powerful forms of activist protest have been developing. One of the most famous is the Chinese activist Ai-Wei-Wei. Another crucial example is that of the activist Wang-Zi. As a gay man, something considered a crime in his country; he has resorted to the popular art of paper cuttings that constitute a collective cultural memory, to represent the life and emotions of the gay individual. Wang-Zi has been incorporating new forms of artistic expression into his repertoire.

In Spain, the economic crisis of recent years has become a true incubator for activism. Luzinterruptus, a collaborative and anonymous group created in 2008 and working in large cities such as Madrid and Berlin, is characterized by interventions in the public space using light as raw material. In 2014, they carried out their protest

action in Madrid “The Police Is Present”, in rejection of what is popularly known as the muzzle law, referring to the Organic Law of Protection of Citizen Security, approved by the Popular Party in July 2015.

The artists of this group work with the luminous flux and its supports, and their performances are always associated

with this element. To protest about the presence of police in the streets, they generated a visual *trompe l’oeil* with illuminated boxes on cars. The playfulness, surprise, and creation make us visualize the idea of artists. As indicated by Clark & Kallman (2011), “in an increasingly alienated public space, these displays, which recover the artistic voice, bring us closer again to the “*civitas*”, to the “active democratic citizenship space”.

A similar Spanish example is that of the collective Basurama, founded in 2001, which is an example of activist creativity that has centered its area of study and action on production processes and the generation of waste involved. The “Agostamiento Project” was a site-specific contribution to the “Abierto x Obras program” that took place in the old cold storage room of the Slaughterhouse in Madrid. The collective proposed an interior landscape created by planting 7,000 sunflowers that had been cultivated next to the inhabitants of the “Gran Vía del Sureste”, in the “Ensanche de Vallecas”, an iconic neighborhood of the real estate bubble. Their creation, in the words of Basurama, “is an invitation to chat and eat sunflower seeds, looking to the future from the darkest place”. This project was made in Madrid in 2016.

The rediscovery of public space or the shared world allows artists to illuminate social life. With it, the artists get “a spatial reconfiguration of the perceptible and the thinkable, as a promise of a new territory of the possible” (Segura-Cabañero & Simó-Mulet, 2017). Following these outstanding examples analyzed from our files, let us proceed with an explanation of the links between activism and educational contexts to which we may have access.

## 5. Educational functions. Activism workshops

Once the prototypes were known, we developed experiences in activism workshops for young people. After several weeks working with activists and young university students, activism turned out to be a fundamental educational form, in addition to a language and way of communicating and expressing autonomy, dissidence, and opposition. If, as we know, the revolution of the XXI century is above all an educational revolution, in which the learning communities obtain their education from breaking the limits in classrooms, in search of new identities, new ways of understanding meanings and adopting new educational roles (Wenger 1998; Aparicio-Guadas, 2004), activism offers us a new channel for educational communication.

Indeed, education, which has been in crisis for over a decade must abandon the hindrances identified by researchers (Aguaded, 2005): the



Figure 5. Work of Wang-Zi (VärldskulturMuseerna: <https://bit.ly/2rick3d>).



Figure 6. “Calendar” Work of the Chinese artist Musk Ming ([www.muskming.com](http://www.muskming.com)).



absence of freedom, the “writing-centrism”, the mastery of theoretical knowledge, students in a passive and receptive position, and rigidity in positions and academic roles (Aguaded, 2005: 30). Instead, in the “educommunication” leading up to the halfway point of the XXI century, the approaches to education proposed by authors such as Paulo Freire and Mario Kaplún rule, in which not only communication and education are seen in intimate relation, but with a liberating purpose of global civic education (Middaugh & Kahne, 2013; Pegurer-Caprino & Martínez-Cerdá, 2016). In the processes in which educción advances towards constituting a liberating element and a generator of active communities capable of empowering themselves, activism can provide all the necessary elements to re-signify teaching and move away from the formation of mercantilism or the extreme reification of culture.

As De-Gonzalo and Pérez-Prieto, who collaborated with us in the workshops as leading artists, state in their work “La Intención” (2008), these are some of the normal educational functions of activism that are effects of this part of our work:

1) Activism integrates the individual in the symbolic construction of reality, away from the passive positions to which global communication, digital technologies or advertising and political indoctrination lead. Activism is immediate social intervention, participation, and active awakening. Culture is fundamentally experienced (La Intención, 2008). And art is of great interest for those phenomena that engender what these authors call “generative chains” (2008). These generative chains are effectively produced in workshops with young people, renewing in them the impulse towards the conservation and generation of culture, that is, producing true education.

2) Activism generates in people languages to express themselves, becoming emitters, and not just recipients of messages. The manufactured, constructed character, the craftsmanship of activist interventions teaches how to proceed to participate, moving away from the traditional forms of art and leading to the disappearance of their effect on everyday life.

3) Culture is a necessary food for human socialization. With it the individual is freed from competitive, passive, commodified views of life, adopting a playful, hedonistic, shared or generous vision of it. Activism is a social ethics literacy, which leads to a “non-individualistic autonomy” of the person (2008). In the world of art, the simple political idea of the search for equality is transcended, in favor of an idea not of egalitarian unification, but of similar creative expansion of the diverse, in a qualitative and attributive equality.

4) In the end, activism guarantees the integration of the individual in a construction of collective spaces and contexts, which is both individual and marked by the creative personality of each human being in their different capacity. Art and creation have personal traces, and at the same time, they are collective and collaborative contributions. It is again a transcendent function of the individualistic/social dilemma of the non-artistic ways of conceiving social life.

Artistic literacy has to do with the ability of art to re-establish and channel human expression. As Abarca (2016: 8) indicates, “a work of urban art allows the viewer to measure the physical dimension of the environment by projecting its own physical dimension on it”. The creative environ-



Figure 8. Basurama (<https://bit.ly/2JXExDt>).

ments generated in activism humanize spaces (Garnier, 2012) and involve young people, as we can see in the workshops we have organized. Creativity expands in a network among young people (Hernandez-Merayo & al., 2013). This art regains its educational function because it gives young people an active and participatory role.

The sociopolitical literacy of activism works at deep levels of human experience, beyond the construction of the usual maps of meaning and universes in which the media, political institutions, economic and productive powers



Figure 7. Luzinterruptus (<https://bit.ly/1w4GZPw>).



emit their dominant imaginaries (Castoriadis, 1975). At this deep cognitive level, art can establish new ways of facing the human experience (Toro-Alé, 2004; García-Andújar, 2009). And, when it triggers actions such as the construction of a collage or the painting of a wall in an urban garden, what we appreciate is how it anchors cognition and direct action in a unique educational link. As Abarca (2016: 9) reiterates, “urban art is, therefore, a call to action. It makes the viewer aware of its own power. It brings us back to the time when each person could reorder their environment as much as the potential of their body allowed before the moment in which the power of a few began to determine the limits of action of all others. It evokes that inherently human reality, repressed by the alienating environment in which we live”.

The process of converting activism into a form of social literacy has multiple beneficial results. This is a series of results from our research that we wish to highlight here, obtained from the direct participation of young people in our activism workshops:

- It directly connects with the need for practical integration and participation of young people sentenced today to passive roles and rejected by the professional world.
- It rescues the normal functions of art towards its de-commodification and recovery of a spontaneous and non-speculative character.
- It breaks academic and professional barriers about who can or cannot intervene, reversing the traditional roles of cultural expression.
- It re-signifies urban spaces degraded or without personality.
- It acts at the level of fundamental cognitions of the environment in which we live. It undoes the tendency to fictionalize social life, encouraged by the rise of digital media, indicating the immediate material dimension of human existence.
- It connects the life of young people with material and pragmatic aspects that make them co-responsible for the social structure and urban context. It invites participation in their creative environments and transmits to young people the spirit of rupture and liberation that always accompanies dynamic initiatives of social action. These results derive from the concrete experiences of artists, students and researchers in the activism environment. In educational contexts related to citizen participation, social action and the development of communication, activism liberates an entirely new capacity and energy.

## 6. Conclusions

Our study establishes concepts, linguistic descriptions and cultural and educational functions of activism, with examples on a global scale, and explores its potential as a new formative language.

The development of analyses, archive, and experiences in workshops has allowed us to justify the importance of the activist phenomenon in real contexts of education and social life.

As Lippard (1984) observes, activism tends to see art as a mutually stimulating dialogue, and not as a specialized lesson or an ideology imparted from above. Its dynamism, its expressiveness, the rupturing structure of its language, makes it an art for non-artists, an instrument of creation for the non-creative, and therefore, an ideal way toward change and social evolution. It is a new form of freedom.

According to Valdivieso (2014: 20), the attention that the “official channels” of the world of art have been giving to activism lately entails a danger: the instrumentalization of protest movements, from the art system, and the reduction of these to mere artistic expressions, thus neutralizing and anesthetizing its political and social intentions through its “musealization”.

However, activism moves away from pure aesthetic art and approaches non-artistic expression, to environments and non-artistic media, as Mullin (2017) says. It creates a dialogue with amateurism, with the hybrid and heterodox spirit. It introduces rupture, the carnivalesque, and mockery in traditional canonical styles. All this leads it to the reintegration of art in the social environment, and to enrich the conventional artistic medium with imagination and life, while putting it at the service of educational needs, which are vital today.

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# Artivism and social conscience: Transforming teacher training from a sensibility standpoint

Artivismo y compromiso social: Transformar la formación del profesorado desde  
la sensibilidad

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## ABSTRACT

This article incorporates research involving activist and pedagogical curatorships (2007-17) that were developed by contemporary artists, university professors, students from the Faculty of Education, practising teachers and students from nursery, elementary and secondary school. It intends to showcase a series of artistic research projects financed by public institutions, facing the challenge of transforming teacher training. These contemporary activism-based projects have been able to break academic barriers and obsolete routines in teacher training. One of the results of this experimentation has been materialised in exhibitions at renowned museums and contemporary art centres. They have managed to expand teaching models beyond the classroom space, as the emergence of the collective and the educational interest in the commons. A/r/tography was used as a research methodology that unveils the three interconnected identities of the “artist, researcher and teacher” as the person who, in his or her teaching practice, is capable of developing a creative practice with students through experimental processes in artistic research. A/r/tography generates a learning space where educational concepts can be broken. It is in this intermediate zone of intellectual incitement that curators propose activist projects capable of generating tactics of proximity between two apparently separate fields: art and education.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo consiste en una investigación sobre comisariados de carácter artista y pedagógico (2007-17) que ha sido desarrollada por artistas contemporáneos, profesores universitarios y estudiantes de la facultad de educación, docentes en activo y alumnado de infantil, primaria y secundaria. Pretende visibilizar una serie de proyectos de investigación artística financiados por instituciones públicas, con el reto de modificar la formación del profesorado. Uno de los resultados de esta experimentación se ha plasmado en exposiciones en museos y centros de arte contemporáneo de reconocido prestigio. Estos proyectos, basados en el activismo contemporáneo, rompen las barreras académicas y las rutinas obsoletas en la formación del profesorado. Han conseguido expandir los modelos docentes más allá del espacio del aula, como emergencia de lo colectivo y del interés educativo en lo procomún. Se empleó la artografía como una metodología de investigación que desvela las tres identidades interconectadas del «artista, investigador y profesor», como aquella persona que, en su acción docente, es capaz de desarrollar una práctica creadora con su alumnado a través de procesos experimentales en la investigación artística. La artografía genera un espacio de aprendizaje para el quiebre de significados educativos. Es en esta zona intermedia de provocación intelectual, en donde los comisarios plantean proyectos artivistas capaces de generar tácticas de proximidad entre dos campos aparentemente separados, el del arte y la educación.

## KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Artivism, social transformation, citizen empowerment, teacher training, sensibility, curatorial practice, contemporary art, artography. Artivismo, transformación social, empoderamiento ciudadano, formación del profesorado, sensibilidad, comisariado artístico, arte contemporáneo, artografía.



## 1. Introduction

History is usually cyclic. Every 300 years, market-based societies restore themselves and generate an affective transformation of the capitalist regime to ensure their survival (Drücker, 2013). Simultaneously, in the wake of a collective revolution, the vindication of social movements results in the emergence of community engagement as an effect of the impact of fierce economic crises on our lives. Sloterdijk (2003) recognises that today's world needs an urgent revolution, able to correct the self destruction of human beings, the outburst of the "spheres of the quotidian": Those spaces lived and experienced, where failed attempts, crises, catastrophes, affections and personal conflicts take place.

On this same line of argument, South Korean philosopher Han (2014; 2016; 2017) analyses two key ideas to understand contemporary societies:

- An individualistic and self-reliant performance system, in which the subject is an entrepreneur of himself, who exploits himself and believes he is achieving realisation: 'He is undoubtedly free in that he is not subject to any other who commands and exploits him; but he is not really free, for he exploits himself, even though he does so with complete freedom. The exploiter is the exploited. One is both an actor and a victim. The exploitation of oneself is much more efficient than the exploitation of others, because it is linked to the feeling of freedom. In this way, exploitation is also possible without dominance' (Han, 2014: 19-20). Han reflects on the need for time of our own that the acceleration of the neoliberal system does not allow us. We need to stand still, with nothing productive to do, not to recover to get back to work but as a completely free time for ourselves.
- The problem of narcissism, the quest to be different and radical conformism (Han, 2017). This second idea addresses narcissism that prevents us from seeing the other and, without it, one cannot consolidate the feeling of self-esteem. We are what we are because that space of communication with other people flows. We reformulate our identity: "the more equal people are, the more the production increases; that is the current logic; capital needs us all to be equal". Perhaps we are in that era of radical conformism and it is the historical moment in which the system implodes again, the world short circuits, and we recover that citizen who does not consume or communicate uncontrollably (Han, 2016).

Democratic societies are tremendously individualistic, hyper-consumerist and technological; causing blindness towards others, which results in extreme self-centredness. One only needs to observe the tyranny of social networks in everyday routines, as contemporary forms of visibility, voyeurism and exacerbated exhibitionism, where the boundaries between the intimate, private and public are blurred, where the cult of the body and the ostentation of a happy life turn out to be the legitimisation of fictitious lives. Images and videos published online to be seen by others with a clear lack of commitment, sensibility and affective indifference towards others.

The project 'Selficity' (<https://bit.ly/MgRmKh>) coordinated by Lev Manovich from MIT, is a very good analysis of this situation. Over a week, they compiled more than 3,200 photographs published on Instagram in five different cities of the world: New York, Moscow, Berlin, São Paulo and Bangkok. They analysed the self-portraits, most commonly known as selfies, making a comparison between gender, age, facial expression, head inclination, eye and mouth positions as well as the percentage of people wearing glasses. They studied the aesthetic similarities between people of different parts of the world when facing a camera. Most selfies depicted young women, between the ages of 20 and 30, smiling, not showing anger and displaying open eyes. Meanwhile, men smiled less on their selfies, most of them had their mouths closed and exhibiting a lack of calmness (Tifentale & Monovich, 2015). This is the scientific proof of the intellectual intuition of what we observe around us, in our daily relationship with everything digital.

These frontiers between what is virtual and real require citizens in general, and teachers and students in particular, to make a commitment through activist strategies that deconstruct the superficiality of those 'spheres of the quotidian'. This activist commitment entails getting involved and inevitably complicating oneself as we get out of our comfort zone, of our own state of welfare, characteristic of developed, bourgeois countries with a completely comfortable, aseptic academic life and detached from social reality. Activism as a training and educational action methodology implies a way of being in reality, as a resilient educator, profoundly connected with the educational context to which we belong.

## 2. Contemporary activism for social transformation

Activism is a neologism derived from "art" and "activism", where the order of words has its rationale; the term describes artists who are committed to creative processes of an activist nature but not activists who resort to art as a form of vindication. Many have theorised about this term, and they associate it with protest art, but nowadays a

distinction is made between political art: reproducing ideological representations and activism, conditioned by a cultural positioning of thought through art. The latter utilises “guerrilla” methodologies (of public demand), but it is also true that it goes much further than the superficial definition of a one-time complaint action. Activism, understood as a complex artistic process, was influenced by the success of performance, feminism and queer theory which demanded more efficient communication strategies within the field of contemporary art, capable of demanding and institutionalising the non-existent rights of those groups in a situation of risk and social exclusion.

Felshin (2001) explains that this term necessarily emerged from the changes taking place politically, culturally and artistically, within the last decade of the 60's beginning of the 70's in the USA. It originates as a consequence of the mobilisation against culture and social vindication during the Cold War, the Vietnam War, racism, sexism and gender differences. They would all give way to the feminist movement, LGTBI protests, the difficulties of the Berlin Wall and the uncontrollable spread of HIV throughout the world. It is more than a simple demand; it attempts to develop a social transformation

in the face of a problem that affects people's lives, “through alternative images, metaphors and information made with humour, irony, indignation and compassion, with the aim of making those previously invisible and powerless voices and faces heard and seen” (Lippard, 2001: 57).

Public art, works produced in outdoor settings and urban spaces had been the precursors of Activism. Central and local governments in the United States financially supported these projects because, among other reasons, public art was used to speculate and revalue isolated spaces for development. So much so that in 1967 the US government created the “Art in public places program”, a series of projects subsidized with

state funds, to develop new artistic works in different spaces with a future real estate projection. It was then that this contemporary movement acquired a greater ethical commitment to the community, because they felt in their own skin that the political, social, cultural and economic were strongly linked to the lives of the people and the places they inhabited. Art and life began to share problems in public.

The activist peak took place during the 80's throughout the world, but mainly in the United Kingdom and the USA. New York was the place where feminist groups like ‘Group Material’ (1979) or ‘Guerrilla Girls’ (1985) emerged and in London ‘Hackney Flashers’, a group of ten professional women from the world of education, healthcare and broadcasting who revitalised the working class neighbourhood of Hackney both culturally and socially. Their first project, ‘Women and work’ (1975) was a photographic exhibition that criticised the stereotypical images of women's invisible jobs, depicting their professions accompanied by statistics of women's employment and the types of jobs they held in comparison to men. In 1978, the same group held its second exhibition, “Who's holding the baby?” a series of advertising panels that, through collage and photomontage, showed the multifaceted nature of women as people who have jobs, care for children, handle household chores, etc. (Heron, 2006). Other groups that also defended women's rights in different geographic regions included the “WAC” (Women's action coalition), “Homeless collaborative, Pony” (Prostitutes of New York).

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Artivism is a social sensitisation towards collectively shared problems that concern peoples' lives. It is at the root of artistic strategies, works and actions that influence politics and promote the defence of human rights in a given context. Many of the privileges we now enjoy have been the result of past struggles. Perhaps the difference between yesterday's and today's artivism is the transfer of information through virtual networks. Understanding these new communication processes is one of the challenges of the new alphabetisation. All these digital environments have a communal character, they are reconstructed from within, and the participants themselves, immersed in contemporary culture are the ones who set these collective mechanisms in motion. Many activist citizen projects and calls for proposals are generated through the network and it is difficult for politicians to "control" them. This global network enables the construction of virtual communities and new social ecosystems of struggle within cyberculture (Lévy, 2007) with the emergence of cyberactivism in different parts of the world. Through the aesthetics present in virtual media and platforms, it is the constituent basis for citizen participation, which is committed to freedom of cultural expression, transparency and divergent thinking.

**This activist commitment entails getting involved and inevitably complicating oneself as we get out of our comfort zone, of our own state of welfare, characteristic of developed, bourgeois countries with a completely comfortable, aseptic academic life and detached from social reality. Artivism as a training and educational action methodology implies a way of being in reality, as a resilient educator, profoundly connected with the educational context to which we belong.**

### **3. Artist antecedents of educational nature in contemporary art museums**

Artist practices have broken into museum space as collective pedagogical processes for reflection and public demand about educational problems through the arts. There have been two main antecedents to these practices: "The model. A model for a qualitative society" (1968) and "The dinner party" (1979): "Palle Nielsen's "model" for the Museum of Modern Art in

Stockholm was the result of the

social upheaval in May 1968 in Paris, in an atmosphere of tension and social indignation that sensitised the rest of Europe. The exhibition consisted of an adventure playground for children that "provided children with spaces and facilities for play, such as tools, materials and paint, costumes and masks of world leaders, and vinyl albums that could be played over a loudspeaker system" (Bang-Larsen, 2010: 149).

This was a construction built in wood with soft flooring, only accessible to children from 0 to 18 years of age. Parents enjoyed a series of conferences, meetings and other activities while their children played in the facilities. This space was an enclosure with security cameras that could be moved by children as they pleased using a remote control. There were different areas within the park: a foam pit, a dress up area, a sound area (with metal pipes, cans, drums and antique musical instruments, rock and classical music LP records...) where children could select and play records using large speakers located in the room.

"Nielsen's "Model" opted for a more subtle type of artivism, seemingly innocuous on the surface and conceptually aggressive at its core, an intellectual feat to introduce the Trojan Horse into the museum. It was not intended to be an artistic work with a vindictive effect that acted viciously to occupy media space as a provocative advertising claim. On the contrary, that wasn't really the concept of artivism. The artist staged a brilliant, highly intelligent scene, sweetened by the influx of children, the main characters of the work. He used the innocence of a park as a metaphor for the qualitative society he defended, the one organised and experienced by children. The installation glimpsed a rather more reflexive, ethical and intellectual artivism than a vindictive one, with the ultimate goal of social transformation through qualitative values present in the participation and intervention of children in artistic work: 'The pedagogical model has the ambitious purpose of inciting a debate about the role of artists in society. It is all about driving the public attention towards the isolation of an individual and the lack of opportunities to interact' (Nielsen, 1968, cit. in Bang Larsen, 2010: 163).

The second project 'The dinner party' was developed by the artist Judy Chicago in 1979, related to the feminist movement in favour of social justice. It was launched at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; however, since 2007 it has been part of the permanent collection at the Brooklyn Museum in New York. It consists of a large triangular table that occupies the entire room, with 39 plates reserved for 39 women of great significance in the history of humanity. Thirteen women are set on each of the three sides of the equilateral triangle. It is a symbolic tribute, in every sense, to the role of women in society. It embodies a visual rewriting of history from a woman's viewpoint. The architecture of the table, an equilateral triangle that represents proportion, balance and equality on all sides; thirteen women is not a casual number but a reference to the thirteen men who participated in the Last Supper and at the same time it is the number of the members of a witch coven in medieval times. Every single one of the places is reserved for an important woman in the history of humanity, with their names embroidered at the front of the table. The dishes display details of feminine genitalia, reminiscent of Georgia O'Keeffe's artwork.

Later on, educators and researchers have joined together to create 'The dinner party curriculum project' (<https://bit.ly/1BKxljg>) for K-12 students. This is an artist online project for children in primary and secondary schools through which they can visit the museum website and see Judy Chicago's artwork. Based on this work, dialogues can be started about feminism and its inclusion in the national curriculum, and students can develop research projects about the role of women in history and their scarce presence in it. Simultaneously, students and teachers can begin to understand the importance of artistic activism to transform small realities, through the use of metaphors and the role of symbolism in artwork, generating new interpretations and meanings in diverse contexts (Nordlund, Speirs, Stewart, & Chicago, 2011: 141).

These two artist projects achieved the unthinkable: they became models for curatorial practices such as art-based educational research projects (Eisner & Barone, 2012). Artistic laboratories of civic participation using a work-in-progress approach, critical of life and daily routines, intuitive and non-official, both projects intended to defend the idea of artistic learning processes, pedagogical training for citizens and cultural mediation within the art context.

#### 4. Curatorial-artist and cooperation practices for teacher training

Artist projects emerge from artistic mediation to advocate for the defence of universal rights, mainly rights to childhood and education protected by UNESCO. Within this international framework and as a result of the world-wide congress "Risks and opportunities for visual arts education" held in Lisbon in 2015 and organised by InSEA (International Society for Education through Art-UNESCO), a document was sent to CULT (Eça & al., 2015). Actions and strategies related to activism and the social commitment of Arts Education were proposed in defence of today's challenges: the empowerment of women and gender equality, environmental protection through the arts and peace and societal integration for the defence of human rights. From this position, teacher training is proposed as a disruptive methodology of artistic action through curatorial practices such as Arts-based Educational Research-ABER (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Irwin, 2008; Leavy, 2015).

A curatorial project "is presented as a commitment to the development of formats, methods, programmes, processes and procedures that do not simply deal with the adoption of education as an issue from a critical point of view, but as a way of legitimising art and the curatorship as critical and radical educational practices in themselves" (Soria, 2016: 27). Curating does not only imply the task of producing an exhibition, understanding it as a mere selection of works and other artefacts by the curator based on a previously prepared discourse. Curatorial practices in teacher training constitute a new form of dynamic institutionalisation, a relationship based on the intersection between museums, schools and universities, which legitimises artistic research in diverse pedagogical contexts, not exclusively curricular or formal. Therefore, curatorial-artist practices are currently presented as action and research projects within the field of Arts Education (O'Donoghue, 2017). This research shift stems from the creation of a pedagogical space for experimentation, questioning and criticism (O'Neill & Wilson, 2010), in which initial hypotheses are being developed on the connection between teachers, teachers-in-training, contemporary artists and students, sharing artistic ways of conceptualising and inquiring into educational situations.

These curatorial-artist projects have utilised an artographic methodology for teacher training, constituting themselves as ABER (Irwin, 2008; Irwin & O'Donoghue, 2012; Irwin 2013). According to Barone & Eisner (2006: 95), ABER derives from two inextricable criteria: on the one hand, it aims to intensify human actions associated with artistic expression, but with an educational and, consequently, formative character; and on the other hand, this type of artistic research is characterised by the presence of aesthetic qualities and design elements that accompany both the research process (photography, painting, performance, video, installation, etc.) and the final artistic product, in

our particular case, curatorships. Researching under this artistic perspective in education has the peculiarity that the researcher-curator uses procedures, techniques, documents and methodologies typical of the field of visual arts to delve into educational situations from the inherent tensions of an activist field in constant friction. Curators as intellectual agitators act under two parameters: innovation and imagination; they see themselves more as creative researchers than as mere methodologists applying prescriptive procedures (McNiff, 2004: 49-50). Outstanding among these are five projects aimed at raising teachers' awareness towards new educational and social challenges.

#### 4.1. Educational space, stimulating space?

Galician Centre of Contemporary Art (CGAC), Santiago de Compostela, 2007 (Agra & Mesías, 2011) (<https://bit.ly/2rATIAG>). It constitutes the first curatorial project of a pedagogical nature in Spain that resulted in a shared reflection and a questioning of what educational space means as a shared public space. Teachers in initial training were involved in experimentation with photo-activist actions that defined, analysed and displayed the aesthetic, organisational, political, administrative and structural problems that exist in schools, starting with the faculty itself, and how these affect teachers and students.

#### 4.2. Educational autopsy

Unión Fenosa Contemporary Art Museum (MAC), La Coruña, 2010 (Mesías-Lemma, 2011) (<https://bit.ly/2G79pPa>). This has been a collaborative research project that begins in the classroom as an intersubjective space to transcend to a reflection and artistic dialogue between teachers in training, contemporary artists and practicing primary and secondary school teachers. Educational Autopsy found the way to move through the fissures and bends of educational institutions, not leaving them as impossible, but rather appropriating their resources to reposition them back into the field of educational/academic policy. We are referring to teachers in training, that group of people who are being asked to be ambitious in their academic careers, moderately active in class and passive in institutional decision-making.

#### 4.3. Time capsules: Sarajevo's conflict Anniversary (1992-2012)

Ágora (La Coruña, 2012). Framed within "Gusts for peace" (<https://bit.ly/2I8H2Gn>). Time capsules were artistic objects that merged past, present and future. This merger of time periods allowed primary school students to work on the Sarajevo conflict from today's viewpoint, looking into the photographic mirror of Gervasio Sanchez. Through contemporary artistic processes of a photoactivist nature, students have developed different photographic actions that will become part of their teaching model based on ethics and education for peace.

#### 4.4. Atmospheres: for a change in education

Normal (La Coruña, 2015) (<https://bit.ly/2I89IF4>). Arts as defenders of a paradigm of resistance don't usually work within the educational system. Day after day, a politi-



Figure 1. Photographs by contemporary artist Jesús Madriñán, students of the Faculty of Education and students of CEIP "Emilia Pardo Bazán" Primary School.



cally instigated society naturally assumes the exclusion of creative learning within the classroom. “Atmospheres: for a change in education” are interactive spaces that submerge the public in a relational environment. They reflect on the lives and routines of individuals as a collective, the frictions between the personal and the communal across all social strata, including exclusion. These are artistic installations that invite discomfort, because they function as social agitators, as a project of possibility, which is politically incorrect and educationally transformative.

#### 4.5. Inhabiting what is common

Vicente Ferrer Foundation. India, 2017 (<https://bit.ly/2rAiOtu>). It took place at the Inclusive School for Speech & Hearing Impaired Children (India), from September to October 2017, as part of the cooperation and research project “Arts Education and Human Development”. This is an activism project that sought to transgress the lives of 40 functionally diverse girls between the ages of 5 and 14. These are artistic actions that deepened the empowerment of girls, their identity and self-esteem in a very poor region of southern India. All the actions originated from ordinary objects in their environment, but the work was done with them from an aesthetic and non-functional perspective of the object in question. The real democratisation of ordinary life for the inhabitants of this place was achieved.

#### 5. Artist methodology in teacher training

Through these artistic research projects, we have been able to rethink the initial and in-service training of teachers from an activist methodology perspective. This involves working from:

- Subjective processes that influence the (de)construction of the teaching model, given that it originates from the personal, as a motor of political action, and moves towards the commons. Borriaud (2006: 114) defines subjectivity as a “territory of its own derived from other existing territories”, shaping itself as a place for the difference that constitutes the concept of otherness. Subjectivity does not exist autonomously, it can only be understood in terms of its relationship with other human groups and with socioeconomic and information systems.
- The emergence of activist pedagogy linked to the social and educational challenges that can determine the struggle of teachers in educational centres. Activist pedagogy is frontier pedagogy. It starts from the regulatory deconstruction of teaching and learning processes to involve students in ethical, political, creative, culturally relevant and context-sensitive situations that affect people’s daily lives. Some authors claim that “practicing critical pedagogy is practicing activist pedagogy” (Few, Piercy, & Stremmel, 2007: 53); however, it differs from criticism in that the activist uses strategies and artistic actions of a non-conformist nature (Bubricki & Semaan, 2009; Koschoreck, Bryan, Campanello, & Mominee, 2010; Beyerbach & Davis, 2011). Labelling this teaching action methodology as exclusively vindictive teaching-learning processes is a reductionist, technocratic and partial vision of the very notion of activism.

Activist pedagogy responds to the need to transgress in teacher training in order to produce teachers capable of moving through the fissures of educational institutions. Through it, social justice and equity emerge, as positive values that teachers incorporate into their professional identity (Frey & Palmer, 2017; Rose, 2017). This methodology is capable of inviting people to “fight” through contemporary artistic processes. It implies giving students a voice, an interstitial space to question both what is explicit and hidden, capable of avoiding ideological manipulation. We can only alter teaching models when we manage to establish affective connections between students, collective creation and activist processes serving as a transformation of life.

Transforming teacher training from the activist perspective means assuming a risk ethic. It is the radical hope of believing oneself capable of changing routines, obsolete forms of action, decontextualized teaching models, resistance against injustice, from the standpoint of innovation, from that of micro-utopias, to constantly challenge and challenge ourselves, knowing of the possible erosion that this may generate in our teaching career. We have verified how through experience in activist projects we can train teachers with common traits:

- Micro-utopian teachers: passionate, involved, optimistic and energetic: micro-utopias invite “realistic” people to dream and bring about change and thus test the possibilities. Micro-utopias elicit new ideas, generate fascination in people, are not centred so much on grand representations but rather on the development of actions aimed at generating short-term responses, achieving a regeneration of the context through small alterations in it. They enable social transformation through passion, involvement, optimism and energy of participating teachers.
- They reveal the “hidden face of the moon”: They combat “social anesthesia” because they are not on the fringes of educational reality but intervene within it, to experience other ways of relating to the context, those that are not intended to be made public as they constitute the ‘hidden face of the Moon’ within educational institutions.

They propose different perspectives through art, breaking with the prevailing routines of educational policy and thus developing more inclusive propositions.

- They establish empathetic connections with their students and their social context: They are teachers who take into account students' scripts, and are capable of putting themselves in the shoes of each one of them, of their interests and of their way of understanding reality. Empathy derives directly from activism. It is inherent to it, from the moment in which an artist, an educator, is preoccupied with questions of a social nature that concern a social group. They are the agitators in the educational community.

- They create an environment of confidence to take risks: One of the handicaps is the thin line between teachers and the control of educational institutions, which is why the risks that both can take must fall within the framework of educational regulations. They take risks within the institutions by displaying their position as educators, far from political manipulation, in order to create a climate of trust within the classroom, of community cohesion and to mitigate, as far as possible, the risks that can occur at a personal and professional level. They are neither neutral nor indifferent to imposed educational policy. They have acquired integrity and coherence through the artistic actions they developed.

- They exert pressure on unyielding, unfair or imposed positions: They assume a role against totalitarian and populist discourses without arguments to contradict them or without the opportunity to do so. Their position is firm in the face of unyielding, unfair or imposed stances by the administration. For this reason, they seek irony and mockery in artistic interventions to attract the attention of a lethargic society and propose alternative forms of reality, appealing to social justice and mobilising ideologies that awaken students and other educators from lethargy.

## 6. Conclusions: Conducting research from an art standpoint to train sensitive teachers

When teachers and students in training get involved in curatorial-artist projects, in essence, they appeal to social and educational responsibility. Conceptualising curatorship as artistic inquiry is not a question of appropriating a radical educational discourse by approaching it with conventional academic means but showing the results in an exhibition-curatorial format (such as image cleansing) using the arts subversively. These constitute inquiry processes of horizontal cooperation with creative processes and these cannot and must not be distanced from the way of thinking and acting of the agents involved: educators, artists, teachers in training, students, etc. The common interests of all participants create spaces for debate as transformative practices in teacher identity. Once teachers experience these activist processes in their own skin, they are able to lead other collective projects based on community action for social change. This training model is the trigger for social responsibility among students and educators. They constitute proposals that account for the social and educational fabric that moves at very different speeds, as well as the people who are part of it, and are responsible for its transformation or conservation. The projects developed by these resilient educators enable spaces of artistic creation for their students to establish a multidirectional dialogue with personal experience, common concerns and free thought expression. They are made visible through artistic actions geared towards educational awareness and social responsibility, beyond individuality. Other researchers who have also developed activist projects involving students have come to the same conclusion, pointing out that "educators must recognise oppression, identify the current potential state of students and create safe spaces to research and fight for social justice" (Rhoades, 2012: 317). The essence of activism, from its origins and in its evolution, is a mode that moves along the edges of what is conventional, in the social clashes, in the subversive processes capable of combatting injustice, in the search for the commons, in the inter-creative and political learning environments, free culture, the defence of human rights, sensitivity towards others and hacker ethics. It is the combination of art that insubordinates against life and the difficult challenge of trying to transform it, at least on a small scale. While being coherent and respectful with this artistic tendency, we cannot use quantitative or qualitative methodologies to develop an aseptic, statistical or merely descriptive research study, detached from the action and experience of creative processes that activism demands. This trend only makes sense from the perspective of artistic research (McNiff, 2013; Eisner & Barone, 2012; Leavy, 2018) because, as Atkins (2013: 60) asserts, arts-based educational research challenges the comfort zone of many scholars. This creative inquiry impulse has been made possible by the influence of critical, feminist, participatory, democratic or ethnographic discourse, typical of the artistic fields (Janesick, 2003). It implies a more realistic way of exploring the educational complexity of the contemporary world. Researching with an artistic methodology means conducting research on the basis of the established tension between the aesthetic, divergent and non-conformist vision of activism and what it contributes to educational processes. Researching from an artographic perspective is always a new quest for strategies, methodologies

and actions that are implemented to gain in-depth knowledge of a subject in Arts Education. As a result of the curatorial-artist projects, we have verified how resistance and educational struggle are increasing and collective alternatives are being constructed within the training of new and active teachers. Curatorial practices have demonstrated the effectiveness of sensitive strategies to achieve a teacher training that is closer to contemporary art and activist pedagogy in educational contexts.

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# Artivism and NGO: Relationship between image and 'engagement' in Instagram

## Artivismo y ONG: Relación entre imagen y «engagement» en Instagram

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### ABSTRACT

Due to the increasing importance of acquiring technological tools in communication strategies, and while taking into account that non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) use Instagram as a potential activist tool to disseminate their initiatives and needs, the present article aims to investigate the form and content of photographs published on Instagram during 2017 by the 20 most relevant NGOs at the international level. Specifically, we study the choice of formal elements, such as the design and editing, the intended purpose and feeling of the message transmitted in the photographs, as well as the type of actor or actors in the images (including their role, number, gesture, sex and age). In addition, we study the use and the engagement generated by children's images. Content analysis, non-parametric statistical analysis with Chi-square test and variance analysis (ANOVA) are used as methodologies. The results of the study show how prototypical images used by NGOs (young children enjoying the benefits of aid with positive appearance and gestures) present content and formats that do not correspond to the type of image that generates more engagement from the target audience.

### RESUMEN

Debido a la creciente importancia que adquieren las herramientas tecnológicas en las estrategias de comunicación, y teniendo en cuenta que las Organizaciones no Gubernamentales (ONG) utilizan Instagram como una herramienta con potencial activista para difundir sus iniciativas y necesidades, el presente artículo tiene como objetivo investigar la forma y el contenido de las fotografías publicadas en esta red social a lo largo del año 2017 por las 20 ONG más relevantes a nivel internacional. En concreto, se estudia la elección de elementos formales, como el tipo de plano o la edición, la finalidad del mensaje que se quiere trasladar o el sentimiento transmitido en las fotografías, así como el tipo de actor o actores protagonistas de las imágenes (rol, número, gesto, sexo y edad). Además, se estudia el «engagement» generado por las fotografías y el uso que se hace en ellas de la figura del niño. Se utiliza como metodología el análisis de contenido, el análisis estadístico no paramétrico con prueba de Chi-cuadrado y el análisis de varianzas (ANOVA). Los resultados del estudio muestran cómo la imagen prototípica que usan las ONG –receptor de la ayuda menor de edad, disfrutando de los beneficios de esta ayuda y con gesto positivo– presenta un contenido y un formato que no se corresponden con el tipo de imagen que más «engagement» genera entre los usuarios y seguidores.

### KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

NGO, Instagram, artivism, graphic activism, social media, pictures, engagement, childhood.  
ONG, Instagram, artivismo, activismo gráfico, redes sociales, fotografías, engagement, infancia.



## 1. Introduction and status of the issue

For decades, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been the primary vehicles from which humanitarian projects supporting the most disadvantaged groups have been carried out. The United Nations Organization (UN) has the most detailed official record of the number of NGOs. As of February 2017, the list had 13,137 organizations, with more than half (6,625) based in Africa (United Nations: Department of Economics and Social Affairs, 2014). When describing their fields of activity, the NGOs describe themselves as operating in the economic and social sphere (6,528), sustainable development (4,686), social development (4,686) and women-related issues (3,936). Other non-official sources, such as the International Forum of National NGO Platforms, (International Forum of National NGOs, 2012) estimates that there are 10 million non-governmental organizations around the world of all sizes and activities and equal to the fifth largest economy in the world – which provides an idea of its breadth and depth.

The term “non-governmental organization” was used in 1945 in Article 71, Chapter 10 of the United Nations Charter ((International Forum of National NGO Platforms FIP, 2012) with the purpose of regulating the concept of a non-profit organization independent of the state, and whose historical function developed as world-wide charitable and assistance associations, but without a legal framework that protected them. One of the main consequences of the process of separating them from states’ powers is that, in most cases, they did not have a truly effective voice for their work, for raising funds for their job beyond limited promotional activities, and for the invaluable support from private patrons with an awareness of helping others.

Today, all these organizations are faced with the challenge of developing effective communication methods that help mobilize citizens by engaging them in their social assistance projects. To this end, NGOs seek strategies that allow them to denounce social injustice and raise awareness of unmet humanitarian needs, as well as to communicate and disseminate the benefits of their projects and their activities.

In this regard, new technologies have modified ways of communicating (Aladro, 2011) by providing empowering and facilitating advocacy methods (Soengas-Pérez & Assif, 2017; González-Lizárraga, Becerra-Traver, & Yanez-Díaz, 2016; Cmeciu & Coman, 2016). Social networks, in particular, have provided NGOs with tools not only for social and group cohesion (Blight, Ruppel, & Schoenbauer, 2017), but also for the communication and dissemination with a still fully unknown and unrealized power (Byrne, 2010). The NGO, Save the Children Fund, for example, was able to reach more than 10 million people through Twitter in 2010 (Cooper, 2011) due to, among other factors, the impact of the earthquake in Haiti, dubbed the “First Disaster on Twitter”. For example, 2.3 million tweets with the words “Haiti” or “Red Cross” were published in just three days (Cooper, 2014) during the event. Similarly, during Hurricane Sandy, 10 disaster photos per second were uploaded to Instagram and a total of 1.3 million photos were shared on the platform under the same hashtag (Taylor, 2012).

Today, with limited human resources and at hardly any cost, a large number of NGOs make use of most of the major social networks such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Flickr, because they are a powerful showcase of unlimited scope to show their work.

The present research focuses on one of them (Instagram) because of its increasing relevance and notoriety, and for the interest of its main characteristic; the almost exclusive use of artistic images as a communicative tool.

Instagram is the social network that has grown the most in recent years. In September 2017, it reached 800 million users according to the latest data according to the company itself (Instagram for Business, 2017). 59% of users are between 18 and 29 years old, 33% are between 30 and 49. 60% have higher academic studies, and 63%, almost one in three, earn more than \$50,000 per year, an important factor for any NGO (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016).

As mentioned above, its distinctive element, and perhaps one of the reasons for this increasingly widespread use, is the use of image as the main communicative tool (Lee & al., 2015). This is especially relevant because, as previous research has shown, an image has a communicative power that is different from the written word (and much more so when present in other social networks such as Twitter). For example, Knobloch and others (2003) showed how information that incorporates images receives more attention from recipients, is better understood, and generates better memory. Likewise, because viewers tend to assume that images are a true reflection of reality, they give greater credibility to the messages, since a large part of the public tends to question information less when it is presented with images (Messaris & Abraham, 2001).

On the other hand, the possibilities of photographic editing offered by the platform allow all users to make artistic decisions that increase and enhance both the beauty and the impact of the images, such as, how to frame the subject, which filters to select, etc. Thus, it could be argued that Instagram becomes a means in which a demo-



cratization of photographic art takes place (Millard, 2016). Thus, from this perspective, NGOs with a clear intention of promoting social mobilization through social networks can consider contemporary “activism” as a new tool at their disposal. Felshin (1995) defines the term “activism” as the conjunction between the world of art and political and social activism that also participates in the community in which it is directed (for research related to activism, see Danko, 2018, and Delgado, 2013). Instagram not only allows artistic photography to be used in the service of activism, but also because of the interactivity of social networks, it allows participation (even as protagonist) in community dialogue. In fact, by mobilizing the use of Instagram, practically all of the main characteristics of activism can be found: procedural forms and methods for its implementation, denouncing social problems, encouraging participant self-reflection, creating and promoting a social conscience, seeking the public manifestation of the issue, expanding on-going projects, using available public sites, using collaborative methods, and wielding advertising methods to exhibit their own work (Santos, 2015).

This research focuses, therefore,

on NGOs use of the activist style on Instagram. In other words, through content analysis, it aims to study how NGOs use photographic images to communicate, denounce, provoke reflect, and create social awareness on Instagram. Questions to be answered include: What types of images are used? Are they focused on people, and, within that question, is there a greater presence of volunteers or aid recipients? To what extent and under what circumstances are children used for social awareness campaigns? What feelings are conveyed in the image? Do they rely on optimistic messages to arouse the conscience, or on the contrary, do they choose to show the realities of pain, suffering and urgency? Are these messages mainly used to offer congratulations for work well done, or as a wake-up call for the conscience?

This research also intends to study the extent to which each of the mentioned variables (independently or combined) generates greater “engagement” (as measured by the number of “likes” and comments) from the recipients, and therefore, greater communicative impact.

Thus, the research has the following objectives:

- Describe in a general way the main variables involved in the published images (type of actors employed, feeling transmitted in the photographs, etc.).

- Analyze the use of different variables depending on the purpose of the communicated message.
- Study the use of children in the photographs according to the different variables.
- Analyze and measure the engagement associated with each of the variables.
- Establish what the ‘typical image’ published by the NGOs studied looks like.
- Check if the ‘typical image’ coincides with the image model that generates the most engagement on Instagram.

From the objectives presented above, the following research questions arise:

- Are there common characteristics in the photographs published by the NGOs in terms of the purpose of the message to be disseminated?

How are children used in the published photographs? Is there any relationship between the purpose of photography and the fact that children appear in them?

- Do NGOs achieve their objectives from the published photographs? Does the most used type of image generate the most engagement?

**NGOs have found Instagram to be a new tool (with artistic possibilities) to communicate and mobilize their audiences. The present study analyses for the first time the content and format of the images uploaded by NGOs and Instagram users’ engagement. The results of this content analysis show that the most used images (an underage aid recipient with positive gesture enjoying the benefits of aid) is not what generates greater engagement in Instagram users and followers.**

## 2. Material and methods

In order to study the type of images used by NGOs and how they are used, a content analysis was carried out by Neuendorf (2002), for studies with a similar methodology (Berganza & del-Hoyo, 2006; Muñiz, Igartua, & Otero, 2006). To select the study sample, the 20 most relevant NGOs for 2017 at the international level were identified through NGO Advisor (NGO Advisor, 2018). Once identified, NGOs with an international profile in Instagram were found and all the photographs published in 2017 by each of these NGOs were downloaded. The total number of photographs obtained was 2,933. From this total, a random sample of 340 photographs was selected (the N necessary for a 5% margin of error and a confidence level of 95% according to the statistical equation for population proportions).

The data form used to perform the content analysis contained four fundamental parts. Although the study focused on what the image conveyed, when it was considered necessary, the text that accompanied each photograph was used to contextualize or to provide data not sufficiently made clear by the image alone (i.e., origin of the protagonists, their age, circumstances reflected in the message, etc.).

Although the comments published by the users in each of the photographs were used for the calculation of engagement, the content of these comments was not taken into account in this investigation.

- For each photograph, formal features and location data related to the photograph were analyzed, including the style of the image, and whether it was taken outdoors or indoors; if taken indoors, what type of indoor space.

- Analysis of message purpose: The photographs were classified from three points of view; first, depending on the purpose of the aid required (either a long-term project or an emergency call for a natural catastrophe); second, according to the intention of the message (i.e., whether the message seeks to promote and disseminate general activities of the NGO, provide examples of currently active aid and the actual results of donations, or the urgent reminder of uncompleted humanitarian work for which specific support had earlier been requested); third, whether the message is positive (with signs of happiness, active aid or ongoing projects), negative (wounds, pain, distress, concern for or the consequences of war, famines and natural disasters) or neutral (depending on the type of sentiment shown in the image).

- Analysis of the actors: the types of people (aid recipients or cooperators) that appeared in the images, in what number, and separately, their age, sex, and the aid recipient's gesture on one hand, and cooperators on the other, were studied independently. For a deeper study, an additional analysis was performed when children or babies appeared in the photographs. Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child is recognized for any minor under 18 (UNICEF Spanish Committee, 2006), for this research, a 'child' was identified as only to what is commonly recognized as a baby or child, and not adolescents or young people.

- Analysis of the artistic component: images were identified when some type of editing (i.e. cropping, filters, etc.) software was used through Instagram, or if they appeared unaltered.

- Engagement analysis: the "likes" and the comments of each photograph were codified for later analysis of the followers' engagement ( $n^{\circ} \text{likes} + n^{\circ} \text{comments} / N^{\circ} \text{followers} * 1.000$ ) (Laurence, 2017) achieved by each.

Once the data collected was encrypted, they were analyzed with the SPSS program, Ver. 24. For the subsequent data study, first, a descriptive analysis was carried out (frequency tables) and later, the possible relationships between the different variables were analyzed through contingency tables using a non-parametric statistical analysis with a Chi-square test and by variance analysis (ANOVA).

## 3. Analysis and results

### 3.1. Descriptive results

The following shows the frequency table of the analyzed variables (Table 1).

Regarding the artistic component, it was found that most of the photos analyzed (61.7%) had undergone some kind of editing, which supports the hypothesis that the NGOs are concerned with the aesthetic and artistic side of the images they share on the platform.

As for the image type, the mid-shot predominates (45.7%), followed by the wide-shot (33.7%) and the close-up (20.6%). When including the close-up and mid-shot together (for which differentiation in many cases does not correspond to a specific intention on the part of the photographer, but simply with a camera shot only slightly more or less open), it is concluded that essentially two out of three photographs use a close-up image to establish an identification between the Instagram user and the aid recipient.

As for the purpose of the message, in almost half of the analyzed posts, 43.8% were chosen to show examples and

benefits of active support. Examples of such messages are images showing construction of water wells, minors attending school class, environmental projects, and job training programs. In a smaller percentage (26.4%), users are shown the humanitarian work to be done. In almost a third of the cases, the purpose was advertising and broadcasting campaigns (29.8%), although sometimes without identifying specific projects.

When focusing on the analysis of feelings shown in the photographs, only 15.6% of the images transmit a negative feeling, that is, one that shows pain, anguish, anxiety, worry or wounds caused by man or natural disasters. However, in 68.8% of the images, there is a message of positive sentiment with hopeful, smiling or obviously happy faces of cooperation and of aid recipients with graphic evidence of the collaborative results. Finally, due to the inability to choose openly between a positive or negative sentiment, 15.6% of the images were determined to possess a "neutral" feeling. Thus, based on the aid recipients' gestures, it was determined that the feeling of happiness dominates (44.9%) versus neutral expressions (33%) and feelings of pain/suffering (15.4%).

Also very relevant is the type of actors NGOs chose to use in their messages and in the design of the photographs. In a majority of cases (68.8%), only the aid receiver appears, while cooperators or volunteers appear in 21.9%, and in less than one in ten (9.4%), both are present in the image.

As for the analysis of the aid recipient's gender, half are girls/women (48.7%), while in a noticeable disproportion, males appeared in 22.6%, and in the remaining 24.3% of the images, both men and women appear.

In regards to their age, 63.6% of the aid recipients shown were either a baby or a child, and 9.2% are young or adolescent. The elderly barely amount to 2.2% of the posts, and the remaining 23.7% were middle-aged individuals.

As such, contingency tables were used and a non-parametric statistical analysis was performed using the Chi-square test in order to identify possible dependency relationships between the analyzed variables.

**Table 1. Frequency and percentage of the analyzed variables**

Variable	Count	Percentage
<b>Image Type</b>		
Wide Shot	110	33.7
Mid-Shot	149	45.7
Close-up	67	20.6
<b>Purpose of the message</b>		
NGO Promotion	98	29.8
Dissemination of activities	144	43.8
Dissemination of needs	87	26.4
<b>Image feeling</b>		
Negative	53	15.6
Neutral	53	15.6
Positive	234	68.8
<b>Type of actors present in the image (Profile of the characters, not their number)</b>		
Cooperators	63	21.9
Aid receivers	198	68.8
Receivers and Cooperators	27	9.4
<b>Composition of actors (Profile and number)</b>		
More than one aid receiver	84	29.3
More than one cooperator	24	8.4
Aid receivers and cooperators	25	8.7
One receiver	116	40.4
One cooperator	38	13.2
<b>Gender of the aid receiver(s)</b>		
Both	55	24.3
Male	51	22.6
Female	110	48.7
Unidentified	10	4.4
<b>Aid receiver's gesture</b>		
Negative	35	15.4
Positive	102	44.9
Neutral	75	33.0
Non-identifiable	15	6.6
<b>Edited Photo</b>		
No	128	38.3
Yes	206	61.7
<b>Child aid-receiver</b>		
No	80	35.6
Yes	145	64.4
<b>Age of the aid-receiver</b>		
Baby or child	21	9.2
Adolescent/Youth	145	63.6
Middle-aged	54	23.7
Unidentified	3	1.3
Elderly	5	2.2



### 3.2. Analysis of the photographs according to the purpose of the message

Regarding the relationship between the image type used and the intentionality of the message, the data showed a significant dependency ratio ( $\chi^2(4)=14.988$ ,  $p=0.005$ ). Although the close-up is the type of framing that appears less (20%), its use increases to 31.8% when the NGO wants to show the viewer to what extent help is necessary by centering in a specific face.

Even more relevant are the differences ( $\chi^2(4)=125.416$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) relating to the sentiment and the intentionality of the published message. It is interesting to see how positive sentiment is most used by NGOs (80.6%) along with their activities and benefits (86.1%). However, when decrying the needs and work needed, the feeling most represented is negative (51.7%) versus neutral (18.4%) and positive (29%).

As for the differences in the type of actors present in the image depending on the purpose of the message, there were significant differences found ( $\chi^2(4)=79.31$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). In general terms, the central focus of the photographs is the aid recipient (69.1%), but the proportion is not uniform. While they are mainly used to raise awareness about the aid needed (97%) and the activities and benefits provided need to be promoted (68.7%), when promoting the NGO itself, they prefer to give prominence to the cooperators (51.3%) instead of the recipients (44.9%).

Significant differences were found when the analysis ( $\chi^2(8)=80.862$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) focused not only on the type, but also on the number of actors employed. One can see a tendency to personalize a single subject (in 53.4% of the cases by either a recipient or an aid provider), compared to an image of more than one cooperator, more than one receiver, or both categories (46.6%). Despite the fact that the differences are not as pronounced as in the previous ones, the same pattern is apparent: the beneficiaries of aid are used, in this case alone, when it is necessary to raise awareness about the need for aid. In this way, in over half of the cases (58.6%), the urgency of the needed aid is shown as being individualized toward the receiving person.

Regarding the relationship between the age of the recipient and the purpose of the disseminated message, it is significant ( $\chi^2(8)=21.388$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) that, despite the fact that the figure of the child is present in the majority of all types of messages (63.1%), it is at the time of requesting help and collaboration when the child is the protagonist to a greater extent (76.8%). If the age range includes youths and adolescents, the percentage rises to almost 9 out of 10 (85.5%) compared to middle-aged recipients (8.7%). Babies and children are also in the majority of the disseminated images that represent activities and project results (62.6%). Only when the message is related to the branding of the NGO do middle-aged adults (39%) appear most prominently. Finally, it is striking how seniors do not have a prominent presence in any form of NGO communication, never exceeding 3% in any message type on Instagram.

As for the gestures of the receiver, significant differences were also found depending on the purpose of the message ( $\chi^2(2)$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). In particular, the positive gestures (happiness, smiles) are most present and have a greater role in the messages destined to promote the NGO (42.5%) and the dissemination of activities and benefits (59.1%). The only message in which gestures of pain have a majority presence is the urgent announcement for help (40.6%) where only 21% of the actors are cheerful.

### 3.3. Analysis of the figure of the child in NGO communication on Instagram

When analyzing the use of images in which children appear, there are also differences depending on different variables. For example, with regard to the purpose of the message and the appearance of minors, the results show a significant difference ( $\chi^2(2)=14.750$ ,  $p<0.005$ ). When the objective of the published photograph is to make the NGO and its brand known, a child appears in only 42.55% of the images. However, when publicizing specific activities as well as the activity's results and highlighting the need for resources for different initiatives or projects, the child appears in 62.6% and 79.1%, respectively.

At the same time, the differences found in function of the protagonist's gesture were also significant ( $\chi^2(3)=8.564$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Most children display a negative gesture (pain, suffering, sadness, etc. in 77.1% of the cases) or positive (smiling, playing, etc. in 69.6%). The figure of the minor does not appear as frequently (52.1%) when the protagonist presents a neutral gesture in the published image.

However, when analyzing the presence of children depending on the sentiment of the image, no significant differences were found ( $\chi^2(2)=2.564$ ,  $p=0.278$ ). In other words, the presence of children is majoritarian regardless of whether the transmitted sentiment is negative (74%), positive (61.6%) or neutral (62.1%). Regarding the appearance of minors according to the plane used, significant differences appeared ( $\chi^2(2)=12.375$ ,  $p=0.005$ ).

While children appear in equal measure as adults (50%) in wide-shot images, children are present in the majority of mid-shots (67%), but are especially present in close-up images (80.9%).

Regarding gender, the results showed that an exclusively female presence was much higher (70.5%) in those images using adults than in those with minors only (37,9%) ( $\chi^2(3)=24.937$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). From this it can be concluded that middle-aged and elderly men are under-represented in the photographs used by NGOs.

### 3.4. Analysis of the differences in the “engagement” of the photographs

To calculate the effect of each of the photographs published in each account of the NGOs studied, the “engagement” of each of the photographs was calculated to check whether there were significant relationships between the content of the images and their engagement. To determine the statistical significance among the different variables, a one-way ANOVA model (Tobergte & Curtis, 2013) was used.

When the engagement of the images was analyzed according to the purpose of the message, the ANOVA results showed significant differences ( $F(3)=7.51$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Specifically, the images aimed at promoting the NGO generated more engagement ( $M=28.37$ ,  $DT=024.55$ ) than those in which the activities and their benefits are shown ( $M=18.61$ ,  $DT=13.74$ ) and those whose purpose is to announce urgent humanitarian and social needs ( $M=19.21$ ,  $DT=11.04$ ).

**It is precisely this commitment to the image with all the possibilities involved in editing, the selection of one type of message or another, the composition of the different actors that appear in it, the choices of a positive or negative feeling when transmitting, and the inclusion of filters, graphic details and other similar effects, which allows Instagram to be considered a platform from which to perform activism.**

In turn, the results showed significant differences in the engagement depending on the emotion transmitted by the image ( $F(2)=4.376$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). When the photograph showed a negative feeling, the engagement ( $M=15.59$ ,  $DT=8.75$ ) was less than when the feeling of the photograph was positive ( $M=23.44$ ,  $DT=18.81$ ) or neutral ( $M=21.24$ ,  $DT=18.02$ ).

In the same way, significant differences were also found in the engagement depending on the type of actors that appeared in the image ( $F(4)=13.51$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The images starring cooperators showed much higher engagement ( $M=32.90$ ,  $DT=24.05$ ) than those images in which the protagonists were the recipients of the aid ( $M=17.03$ ,  $DT=11.86$ ) or in which receivers appeared with cooperators ( $M=19.55$ ,  $DT=21.59$ ).

Significant differences were also found ( $F(5)=12.47$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) in engagement depending on the age of the aid recipient. Middle-aged people engaged the most ( $M=21.07$ ,  $DT=17.24$ ) followed by children ( $M=17.20$ ,  $DT=11.14$ ), while seniors generated the least engagement ( $M=6.84$ ,  $DT=4.78$ ).

The aid receiver's gesture in the images also significantly affected “engagement” ( $F(4)=17.33$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). When the protagonist of the image showed a positive gesture, the engagement was higher ( $M=20.07$ ,  $DT=14.94$ ) than when the person showed a negative ( $M=13.20$ ,  $DT=5.26$ ) or neutral gesture ( $M=13.98$ ,  $DT=9.13$ ).

On the other hand, no significant differences were found depending on the engagement and image type ( $F(3)=2.12$ ,  $p=0.96$ ), whether the images are close-ups ( $M=22.60$ ,  $DT=16.82$ ), mid-shots ( $M=23.86$ ,  $DT=18.70$ ) or wide-shot images ( $M=18.46$ ,  $DT=16.81$ ).

Likewise, when checking whether the presence of aid recipients as individuals or in groups had a different effect, no significant differences were found ( $F(1)=0.99$ ,  $p=0.32$ ). The same result was found whether the cooperator appeared individually or in a group ( $F(1)=0.002$ ,  $p=0.963$ ).

## 4. Discussion and conclusions

Social networks represent a platform for NGOs from which to mobilize society and disseminate information about the work they do. Of all these social networks, Instagram, because of its rapid growth and the prominence it bestows on the artistic image, offers different characteristics from all other social networks.

It is precisely this commitment to the image with all the possibilities involved in editing, the selection of one type

of message or another, the composition of the different actors that appear in it, the choices of a positive or negative feeling when transmitting, and the inclusion of filters, graphic details and other similar effects, which allows Instagram to be considered a platform from which to perform activism.

And that is what this research aims to analyze: to see what this new form of activism is and to what use NGOs make with it. As a starting point, it can be concluded that the typical post of an NGO in Instagram is that of an image of a possible aid recipient, usually in childhood, alone and female, posing in front of the camera in a mid- or close-up shot with a hopeful or at least neutral gesture, and as an example of the social activities and benefits that this NGO carries out while attempting to convey a positive feeling. In 62% of the cases, the image has some kind of editing.

This recourse of displaying only one aid recipient (usually accompanied by a text where personal data of the protagonist is provided) in a mid- or close-up image is probably due to the purpose of increasing the emotional burden of the message, and consequently, its efficiency. This strategy is in line with the theory known as the “arithmetic of compassion”, which states that the fewer the number of aid recipients appearing, the greater the intentions and the satisfaction of donating and providing aid (Slovic & Slovic, 2015).

But, even more significant than this first analysis and all the conclusions derived from it are the results obtained by combining some of these variables, allowing for a more precise idea of the use of photographs by the NGOs.

For example, when analyzing the presence of different characteristics according to the communicative purpose of the image, it can be concluded that when the purpose is to raise awareness in the Instagram follower for the need to help, the NGOs try to transmit a negative feeling, showing mainly the potential aid receivers, usually alone, in a mid- or close-up image, with a gesture of distress or concern. However, when its purpose is to promote the NGO or show the benefits of a project, a positive feeling prevails. Finally, the only type of message that focuses on the cooperators is when the purpose is to promote the NGO.

On the other hand, when analyzing the appearance of the figure of the child in the images, it can be concluded that their presence occurs especially in those messages destined to show the need and the benefits of the aid (and less in the messages intended to promote the NGO). In addition, they usually appear in close-up and mid-shots showing an emotional expression on their faces, either positive or negative.

But does this type of pattern have any direct consequences in the number of ‘likes’ and comments received (indicators commonly used to evaluate the possible effectiveness of the message emitted) among Instagram users?

When engagement was analyzed according to the different characteristics of the images, the results showed that the type of image generating greater engagement was composed of a middle-aged NGO cooperator or volunteer who, independent of the image type used, shows a smiling gesture in order to promote the NGO itself.

As a result, it can be concluded that, surprisingly, the ‘type’ image most used by NGOs is not the one that generates more engagement. It can be deduced that the traditional image so often used by NGOs, a recipient of help in an attitude of distress or suffering, does not generate as an intense interaction between Instagram users as do their own cooperators/workers in the promotion of the NGO. Whether provoking the phenomenon of “compassion fatigue” (Chouliaraki, 2006) or excessive information, the truth is that the followers of Instagram show greater involvement in positive messages and direct action.

This disconnect between what is done and what works to provoke engagement can be one of the reasons that explain why the engagement average of the photographs uploaded by NGOs (2.18% according to the data analyzed in the sample) is inferior to the general average among Instagram users (between 3% and 6%) (Laurence, 2017).

Finally, future research should establish what the relationship is between the interactions, or the engagement, in Instagram and the subsequent economic collaborations with humanitarian projects by the users – which is perhaps the main purpose of their presence in social networks.

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# Postdrama culture in Ecuador and Spain: Methodological framework and comparative study

La cultura del posdrama en Ecuador y España: Desarrollo metodológico y estudio comparado

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## ABSTRACT

This paper is based on a neo-functional constructivist theory, allowing us to understand that dialogue processes and social participation build culture with a dynamic and civic vision, as opposed to organic and more conservative visions. The main objective is to create a panel analysis of plays, from the point of view of drama (sense) and post-drama (nonsense), introducing cross-cutting concepts such as identity, interculturality and participation. The second objective, as a way to validate these panels, is to comparatively analyze the similarities and differences of two types of post-theater expressions in the Spanish language, European and Andean theater, particularly in Ecuador. This descriptive and qualitative research applies the analytical-synthetic method to approach the study of seven plays, with a dramatic and postdramatic model. As a result, the usefulness of the panels developed for this study on the elements of order and chaos is validated, as well as the ability to understand internal and external participation. As a general conclusion, it is observed that current Ecuadorian plays respond to a post-drama culture that uses elements of the single dramatic stage and distinctive indigenous factors.

## RESUMEN

El presente trabajo parte de la teoría constructivista neo-funcionalista como aquella que permite entender que los procesos de diálogo y participación social son los que construyen cultura, asumiendo una visión dinámica y cívica de la misma, en contraposición a las visiones orgánicas y mucho más conservadoras. El objetivo principal es el de crear un panel de análisis de obras teatrales desde el punto de vista del drama (sentido) y del posdrama (insentido), introduciendo de forma transversal conceptos tales como identidad, interculturalidad y participación. El objetivo secundario, y como forma de validación de los paneles, es el de analizar de forma comparada las similitudes y diferencias de dos tipos de manifestaciones del postteatro en lengua española, Europa y el teatro andino, particularmente en Ecuador. La investigación, con un marcado carácter descriptivo y con una visión cualitativa, ha utilizado el método analítico-sintético para abordar un total de siete obras con un modelo de análisis dramático y posdramático. Como resultado, se ve validada la utilidad de dichos paneles desarrollados para realizar este tipo de estudio sobre los elementos del orden y el caos, a la vez que para comprender la participación interna y externa. Como conclusión general, se observa que las obras ecuatorianas actuales responden a una cultura del posdrama que hace uso de elementos de la etapa dramática unitaria y de factores diferenciales de carácter indígena.

## KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Artivism, participation, drama, postdrama, Andean culture, post-theater, identity, indigenous culture.  
Artivismo, participación, drama, posdrama, cultura andina, postteatro, identidad, cultura.



## 1. Introduction and state of the art

### 1.1. Cultural industry, popular culture and mass culture

The development of information and knowledge technologies has modified the basic concept upon which artistic and cultural expressions are developed, allowing for a more powerful presence of citizens in creation processes. This participatory phase is underpinned by a concept of classical culture (Ruano-López, 2006), in which the arts and creative works are essential (Williams, 1994). In the Andean worldview of cultural ancestry, very present in Ecuador, each artistic expression is merely a way by which we can open ourselves to the reality of life or to the illusion of life (Oviedo-Freire, 2013); meaning, a way to “Live Better-/Good Living”, or a life of “Harmonious Coexistence” (“Sumakawsay-Vitalism”).

For the existence of a true popular culture, and in contrast with the structural-functional paradigm (of conservative nature), it is necessary to assume a second and more secure paradigm, the so-called neo-functionalist constructivist (Donati, 1995), which, contrary to the organic vision, assumes a civic and participatory character; that is, a progressive position. It would be through this discussion that the concept of cultural democracy emerges in a Latin American context of an “exuberant modernism with poor modernization” (García-Canclini, 1989: 65), understood as a place where plurality can coexist in a natural way through its various expressions. That is why this cultural democracy in its broadest sense moves away from contemplation to open spaces for participation (Salazar-Peralta, 2006). Faced with the vision that reality is transmitted and discovered, this concept assumes a position of construction, while the processes of dialogue and participation of a society build culture permanently, allowing the introduction of large citizen contingents in creative processes.

An explanation of this confrontation of paradigms is described by the Frankfurt School, which has Adorno and Horkheimer as the main references. These authors show how, speaking of culture depredation in advanced capitalism, the creation of all kinds of artistic work is characterized by three elements; firstly, the degradation of languages, quality and emancipatory potential; secondly, because of the impossibility of the participation of popular classes when building upon an elitist and oligarchic base; and thirdly, because of the world moving towards aesthetic barbarism (Briceño-Liñares, 2010) and, in this way, the cultural industry would be a sector “harmonized in itself and those among it” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1998: 165). The citizen, far from being able to assume a leading role, has only one way to relate to it: as a consumer.

What common elements exist between the Critical Theory presented by the Frankfurt School, its model of cultural industry, and the role of the individual and the cultural vision of postmodernity? Both trends defend a vision of multiform character, the right for people to shape their own stories and to live art broadly, as well as all types of activism, with a very deep critique of modernity. On the other hand, the main difference, besides its temporary vision, has to do with the subject itself: for the postmodern perspective, creation and art have to be centered on the individual; for Marxists, social activism and popular creation are oriented towards the community with an emancipating horizon (Seoane & Javier, 2000). In short, they converge in the critique of the reduction of what is beautiful in art to the appropriate: it works or does not work, according to what the cultural industry dictates. On the other hand, from the point of view of the so-called cultural capital (Ríos-Burga, 2016) by Pierre Bourdieu (with a constructivist vision, precisely), the very configuration of postmodernity discards any form of class culture accumulation, because it demands an order that is rejected at the start.

### 1.2. Global culture and activism

Nowadays, the construction of a cultural identity is no longer performed within the parameters defined by the nation-state. In this way, the concepts of acculturation, interculturality or transculturality are surpassed by the so-called concept of hybridization (García-Canclini, 2003), which in synthesis is understood as a “fusion of cultural elements in a multicultural contact situation; a synthesizing praxis synthesizer (...) that creates a new meaning and a new subcultural community from transgression” (Steingress, 2002). In this way, culture would combine elements coming from the local and from the global (‘glocal’), forming a deterritorialization of contemporary culture (Power, 2003). Nevertheless, this position assumes the globalizing logic as the only possibility, a context in which there is a collision between popular and global cultures, reducing the relationship between identity and culture, adjusted to the so-called modern model. In the field of Latin America, this modernity and its creation was linked to the concept of Nation in its most classic sense, to move in the sixties to the idea of development (Martín-Barbero, 1984) and nowadays to coexist with postmodernity and its representations.

Thus, the concept of “glocal” culture is assumed to be the best expression of a committed culture. The concept



of “glocalization” (Siles-González, 2010) starts at the ability to think in terms of the mechanisms and instruments of mass culture through the eyes of popular culture. While from the perspective of the Latin American cultural paradigm of communication for development (Salazar-Martínez, Portal-Moreno, & Fonseca-Valido, 2016) the preconceived relationship between popular and anti-system is destroyed, as well as the barrier between popular and masses culture (Pereira, Bonilla, & Benavides, 1998), allowing processes of hybridization and the introduction of demands such as gender, human rights or indigenism. In short: there are objective conditions for the development of a true cultural democracy that allows for activism through creation.

In this situation of manifestations of popular character, and also in the field of (post) theatrical creation, activism, or the art of activist character, is a mixture or a hybrid of the world of art and also of political claim (Felshin, 1995); a power that applies “criteria of participation and involvement that belie the distance between creator and creation or between public and action” (Proaño-Gómez, 2017: 3). It is not only limited to the staging itself, but it permeates its theoretical and even aesthetic

visions with the aim of resignifying the public space (Delgado, 2013) in a “post-political” perspective. An example of this is used by the indigenous movement to demand the visualization of its Andean worldview. At the strategic level, the appropriation of the media, of the technologies themselves and of certain tools are considered essential elements of cultural activism and of solidarity network formation, even at the transnational level in its most diverse manifestations (Salazar, 2002).

The text promotes the development of the neo-functional constructivist paradigm applied to culture, within the Social and Human Sciences, to incorporate it into the analysis of drama and post-drama in the (post) theater context, creating a new instrument to collect and interpret data. This takes the form of two panels that are applied to certain Spanish and Ecuadorian plays, introducing cross-cutting concepts such as identity and participation, typical of a new global and committed culture.

This way, through a new model of national literacy, impactful art and communication are configured, a committed social activism that is reproduced in the field of cinema, theater, literature or other types of artistic expressions, standardized or spontaneous, within the public space. This form of art breaks the classic models while destroying the molds of order and promoting a culture of chaos. Thus, beauty would be subordinated to the political claim itself (Colombres, 2005), where art and its techniques become figuratively mere instruments and not a goal in itself. The citizen is the protagonist in the story, and simultaneously participates in its creation, to see him or herself represented in situations of risk and social injustice (Ortega-Centella, 2015).

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Justification, objectives and methodology

The object of study of this qualitative work is the postdramatic organization, the post-theater, and its relevant manifestation in the plays “Gólgota Picnic”, (2011) and “Muerte y reencarnación en un cowboy” (2009), by Rodrigo García; “Eldorado”, by Marius Von Mayenburg (2014); “Barrio Caleidoscopio”, by Carlos Gallegos (2010); “Cucarachas”, by Virgilio Valero and Cristian Cortez Galaecio (2014); “La fanesca”, by the company Malayerba (1984) and “La flor de la Chukirawa” (2007), by Patricio Vallejo Aristizábal.

This selection is justified by the interest that the comparison provokes within the post-theater in the Spanish language, regarding their creations in Ecuador, Andean territory on the one hand, or, on the other hand, those generated in Spain, culturally closer to Europe. A play of German origin is added to this group, “Eldorado”; the relevant social meaning of which is also a topic of the Andean pieces that are proposed in this list. The purpose, therefore, is to see how European and Ecuadorian influences, Spanish and Andean to be precise, approach various

crucial and determining issues, and what artistic and architectural attitudes they use. For this purpose, in addition to the relevant bibliographic review, the analytical-synthetic method will be used: first, there is a decomposition of the plays in several parts; afterwards, the common characteristics are synthesized, as well as the divergences, in order to draw conclusions. This research assumes a descriptive character, since it studies a concrete object through the development of two models of analysis to show the existing characteristics.

According to the criteria justification of a research project, this article is socially relevant because it analyzes a determinant field for cultural industries; it has theoretical value, since it works with several paradigms of the Social Sciences and incorporates them into the conception of drama and post-drama. Finally, it is methodologically useful, because it creates a new instrument to collect data, in this case, for the analysis of post-theater works. The main objective within this methodological use is to create a panel of analysis of plays from the point of view of drama (sense) and post-drama (nonsense), transversally introducing concepts such as identity and participation. The secondary objective is to comparatively analyze the similarities and differences of two types of post-theater manifestations in the Spanish language.

## 2.2. Content analysis and observation sheet

The technique used will be content analysis through the application of two methodological models: dramatic and post-dramatic. The first is Western tradition (the search for meaning), up to 1970; the postdramatic, from 1970 to the present day, starting from the ideas of juxtaposition and parataxis, the “nonsense” of the meaning. The development of the panels was carried out through dialogue with peers in the period 2015-17 within the Theater Group of the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador.

These two models belong to the analytical field of theater and post-theater, to the world of drama (Orosa, 2012) and to the contemporary universe of post-drama (Orosa, 2017, Orosa, 2018). There are five segments in which the dramatic model is divided: plot tools, dramatic organization, tension of the drama, narrative factors inserted into the dramatic construction and, finally, the technical-formal dimension. The dramatic identity more typical of the West as a conceptual inspiration, the so-called “glocal” culture, exists around these tools. It is not a static, closed identity model, but a series of technical tools, an open model whose single presence determines the identity and essence (participatory, the result of a centuries-old popular culture) of the classical model. On the other hand, the postdramatic analysis panel contains those patterns that are observed in the field of intuitions and irrationality of chaos, typical of our time and the result of the inspiration and mentality of the moment.

When constructing the plot (panel of dramatic analysis), for example, our own conceptual and emotional

dramatic identity turns into constant elements, the turning points or knots of the plot, the sentimental projections or the organization or selection of the facts of the play. The selection of facts refers to those events that the author chooses to tell the story, in order to produce the desired effect. It is well known that dramatic knots are turning points in the plot of the play that allow the story to move forward. Similarly, the dramatic action in terms of unity (a protagonist in search of an objective), the contexts

**Table 1. Dramatic analysis panel**

Indicator	Component	Category
1	Plot: dramatic turns. They are turning points in the story. Sentimental projections: emotions. Argument fact selection: not the hero's entire life or legends, but only the necessary events to cover the topic of the play.	Plot
2	Dramatic organization	External: blocks or acts Media: themes, movements (exhibition, conflict, resolution) Unit of action (a protagonist who seeks an objective)
3	Dramatic tension	Conflict or confrontation (obstacles that separate the protagonist from his goal) Activation: characters, intellectual discourse (background themes in the play), stylistic discourse (prosody), spectacular speech (the show or artifacts on stage), music. Stylistic discourse: rhythm, phonetics, emphasis or isotopies, voice tone, support images or ideas, agon.
4	Narrative organization within the drama: Existing or nonexistent. Type of narrative organization.	Buildings or narrative organizations involved in the field of drama (own arrangements of the “novel” that appear within the drama).

of exposure, conflict and resolution, or external division of acts are more or less definitive variables in the field of dramatic organization. The dramatic tension, then, is based on this stage –and, even today–, on the two columns of attention or interest that affects the viewer, the conflict and, on the other hand, the activation, that is: characters, stylistic discourse, intellectual discourse or, also, spectacle and musical discourse.

Fourthly, the narrative constructions and their organizational dispositions are also a part of the architecture of the drama and the post-drama (intensively for the latter). This refers to the dispositions that have come to narratively organize the novel throughout history and, also, the organizations of today. And, finally, the formal or technical architectures, which are the most abstract of this dramatic tradition stage (Orosa, 2012). The use of these tools shapes the existence of that identity, a conceptual sense that flees from the chaos, the Western Common Dramatic Space. It is the order of the West in search of dramatic meaning.

In the last thirty years of the twentieth century and until today, this dramatic conception is only present in contemporary plays to a certain extent. The use of some variables of this model (dramatic) confers order to post-drama plays –wherever it may be– in a universe dominated by the architectural juxtaposition or parataxis (Orosa, 2017), which some call meaningless construction. When the tools of drama in the five dimensions that were previously pointed out were used to converge towards a process of composition or organic unity, nowadays, in the post-drama hour, these compositional and constructive tools are only used to a certain extent, usually minimally, to give way to non-univocal or explicit manifestations dominated by the personal imaginary of the author or the public (also director/s). These are expressed in terms of expressive dispersion, with disciplines or centrifugal signs for which the word nonsense is only a conglomerate of images, sounds, texts, screens –sometimes contradictory–, to which some elements of Western tradition in search of a lost time, of a certain order, could be occasionally added.

The architectural identity of post-drama lies and brings its origin from its chronotope, that place and time from which the action is contemplated and from which the process is narrated, which is a lens with contemplative and metasensitive roots. The postdramatic analysis panel reflects some of the variables or patterns of the open model, the post-drama, namely: the non-causality of the action, absence of hierarchies of any kind, the disappearance of elements or autarchic signs in the work of art –like the text, for example–, the confrontation of disciplines in the scene –absence of harmony–, the self-referentiality, the microscenes to the detriment of the macro-stories, the collage of different scenes and many others that can be observed above. To finish, and from the methodological point of view, the differential factor for Ecuador / Spain lies in whether the Andean note is capital when it comes to differentiating

the post-theater of both cultures and which are the essential variables of this Andean spirituality. See in this sense Trentini (2013), Oviedo Freire (2013), Lajo and Ñan (2005) and De-la-Torre and Peralta (2004): first, the concept of “ayllu” (family), which does not include only human beings but also all living natural elements. Another principle is reciprocity,

**Table 2. Postdramatic analysis panel**

Indicator	Component	Category
1	Time	Absence of chronological or linear times Temporal fragmentation of characters, architectures Kairos or present time Disregard or controversy over the concept of “reality” Plot change to conditional or to future possibilities
2	Theme and text	Textual autarchy (the predominance of the text is denied) Visuality and multidisciplinarity of the show besides the text. Thematic fragmentation or “dramatic” actions on stage Juxtaposition of ideas against organic unity Apparent irrationality, self-referentiality Collage Multiplicity and multiperspectivism Repeating the opposite of what it looked like before
3	Characters	Constitution of characters tends to fragmentation or puppets in the hands of the author
4	Scenes	Incoherence of disciplines and events as well as non-hierarchical horizontality of themes or discourses Sensory communication with the viewer Relations between text and scene not autarchic nor interpretive Reiterations of scenes Microscenes Daily routines and absence of macro-narrative
5	Dialogues and language	Non-logical organizations and provisions The truth and the exclusivity of the word are questioned No to the causal logic
6	Participation and result	Sensitive and emotional communication with the viewer Reflection on the world

friends and family sharing work in each productive activity without the use of money ('minga'). And, thirdly, the Andean concept of development and quality of life. In this sense, the accumulation of wealth for the future has very little importance against the possibility of living a good life in the present ('Sumak Kawsai').

### 3. Results

From the aesthetic-architectural and thematic point of view comparisons and analysis are established among the referenced plays to observe the presence of identity elements coming from the dramatic tradition in the Spanish language, from the post-drama world and from participation and the global culture / committed culture in these artistic works.

In the first place, a variable is highlighted: the existence of texts written in these plays within the world of drama tradition. The dimensions of European texts are longer than those of the corresponding Andean texts, but even so it must be noted that all these plays are based on texts, which, in Spain, or in Europe, may seem quite normal (popular culture), given the strength and intensity of the writing, but not so much in Ecuador or in other Andean countries, where the local culture is more a visual civilization than written, at least to an extent. In fact, the length of Ecuadorian texts, in general, is significantly less than that of Europeans. It is considered that this factor would be and is important at the time of introducing order, meaning, a certain hierarchy and composition in post-theater production. This does not mean, necessarily, that textual autarchy is present in both cultures, since in this case one would be talking about drama and not post-drama. However, the mere existence of a text places us in a somewhat conservative attitude within the post-drama and, at the same time, also contributes (the existence of a text) to establish a bit of order or meaning in the field of artistic creation.

Regarding the disposition of the plot and its canonical tools, that is, those used in a habitual way and with constructive character in the West (order, composition), it is observed that all these plays try to convey something: the melody, the existence of a plot theme belongs to the world of sense, order, to the logos of the common dramatic trunk in Spanish language (of which both cultures participate). In the "Golgotha Picnic" play, for example, or Rodrigo García's "Death and reincarnation of a cowboy", the selection of thematic facts puts the post-postmodern mentality and its critique of postmodernism in the hands of a Christ as intelligent and attractive as heterodox as a relevant idea in the text. That has been object of protests and repulses by many Christian groups in various parts of the world. The text of the "Reincarnation..." also approaches the problems of love, sex, the triviality of the world in which we live, betrayal, rebellion; in short, recognizable topics that become part of the crystallizations of dramatic action, in the style of Western drama. The same could be said of Von Mayenburg's "Eldorado" (a social play where this political problem is confronted as a pretext for a post-drama construction that escapes a univocal concept of what reality is, clearly representing the postmodern mentality). It similarly may be said for "Caleidoscope Neighborhood": loneliness, integration, others, difference or fear; "Cockroach": the problem of Ecuadorian immigration treated too realistically for the European post-drama; "The fanesca", on traditional topics such as justice, the coexistence of different ethnic groups and cultures in Ecuador, sadness, death, racism, war; or "The flower of the Chukirawa", which also addresses issues such as those already seen, as well as the mother-child relationship, war, poverty, among others. This traditional position, by the construction and selection of the facts and the tools used (texts, arguments), also speaks to us of activism, the political struggle to which art is lent in order to serve a better and fairer cause in the society of our time. The dramatic elements of poetic tension and style discourse: rhythm, phonetic balance, isotopies, images or ideas of support, agon, are still used in these plays in order to get a sense of meaning in the unbalanced and chaotic world of post-drama, who also shuffles his architectural charts in these works. Therefore, referring to the plot, it is observed in this chapter how the elements used in Ecuador and Spain belong to popular culture of western style, in order to give meaning and order to these post-drama constructions, in its social and political struggle for a better world, the criticism.

In terms of organization and dramatic tension, the use of elements typical of the tradition of drama, namely, conflict and those of activation, is constant, although the meaning with which the use of these elements is stated is different to popular culture of dramatic style. The conflict, above all, lacks the finalist or teleological sense of the tradition to move to another more vitalist or existential tradition, but with conflict at the end, and use the tools of the tradition of drama as a constructive element of compositional character (order).

The use of narrative elements, understood as an organization, both in Spanish and Ecuadorian plays, is inserted profusely in the course of the drama, especially in the texts by Rodrigo García, where his stylistic discourse and the stream of consciousness are spectacular at times. The denunciations that fire these texts against the West and their



conservative policies, narratively speaking, are striking because of the intensity of their cries and the calls for reflection that serve or would serve to achieve a better world. Activism, denunciation, politics and the use of elements typical of Western popular culture permeate works in their narrative aspect.

So far, it has been observed how both Ecuadorian and European / Spanish works do not disdain the use of elements of the dramatic tradition to make order in their works, while using the activism and inspiration in popular cultures of Western identity as a constant to cover their constructions.

If careful look is taken at the elements of post-drama, which appear in the second panel of analysis, it may be seen how the variables of chaos (identity also of the culture of our days, both in Ecuador and in Spain) are undoubtedly present in these works: linear times breaking, elections of time “kairós” or present, fragmentation of the construction, the characters, the dialogues without classical logos, approximations to reality showing their extravagance more than their strong realistic character (less in some

of the Andean plays), thematic fragmentation, juxtaposition, plot change to conditional, microscenes, daily routines, collage, irrationality... There are many elements that show their postdramatic identity, which would differentiate Ecuador from Spain only because of the indigenous culture and its spiritual variables, a differential factor that these artists take from popular inspiration and project to all of the orb (local culture with global projection). See the example of “The flower of the Chukirawa”, whose heavy, liturgical, mystical atmosphere, Greco-Andean as we would say, is an unbreathable constant throughout the play.

**In recent studies and open to future research (in the field of Latin America), following the current research path, other nations that participate in the Andean culture display the common notes of drama and also of the post-dramatic movement, as well as the cultural peculiarities of indigenous style continue to appear as a constant.**

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The assumption in this work of the neo-functional constructivist paradigm has been shown to be useful for three reasons: first, it allows us to understand culture from a dynamic rather than a static perspective; secondly, it is the most appropriate way to analyze global cultures under the principles of identity and participation from the epistemological point of view; finally, it allows for an analysis of schools as being uneven, as Marxist and post-modern, to draw relevant conclusions. In this sense, the concept of “glocalization” starts at the premise, of the ability to think in terms of the mechanisms and instruments of mass culture through a view of popular culture. This shows how the plays under study make use of indigenous cultures or of so-called metamodern cultures as local cultures, to give identity to the scene and to throw their own productions towards a wider destiny.

The application of both models, dramatic and postdramatic, to the analysis of the plays of Ecuador and Spain diagnose the existence of a common trunk of (post) dramatic (in Spanish language) label, which makes use of the elements of order, in some cases, and of the variables of chaos and “nonsense”, in others, to express popularly the concerns and feelings of the culture of our time. As a general conclusion, it is observed that the Ecuadorian plays studied respond to a post-drama culture that makes use of elements of the unitary dramatic stage and differential factors of indigenous character.

Both Andean and Spanish texts use elements of the drama tradition, as a result both cultures, Ecuador and Spain, try to give a certain order to the cultural chaos in which they develop. That is to say, architecturally speaking, the link between these plays and the tradition of order, of meaning, is more than evident through the use of tools that situate us, albeit slightly, in what we would call the stage of the drama, the human story, socially and politically, makes use of classic-dramatic elements that would also be part of this cultural stage and of traditional stamp.

The constructive elements of post-drama also appear intensely in the texts, resulting in the contemporary culture, in its Andean or meta-modern manifestations, unfolding itself to its liking in a post-dramatic world.

Within the common trunk of post-drama tendencies lie the metamodern manifestations in Spain and the

productions in Ecuador, of Andean stamp. This is the fundamental distinguishing feature of both movements of the post theater in the field of the Spanish language: the indigenous spirituality, as a mystical movement, has a liturgical worldview based on the harmony and integration of the world, solidarity or the so-called “Good Living” which involve friendship, peace, coexistence in harmony, protection of the community as a family; and, if there is a rupture of the established order, the mystic and the Andean universe will be definitively compromised. Then, this differentiating element is evident in all the selected works present in Ecuador, mainly in “The flower of the Chukirawa” and in the show “The Fanesca”.

In recent studies and open to future research (in the field of Latin America), following the current research path, other nations that participate in the Andean culture display the common notes of drama and also of the post-dramatic movement, as well as the cultural peculiarities of indigenous style continue to appear as a constant. We refer to groups such as Yuyachkani or Theater Maguey, in Peru; or companies such as Theater of the Andes or High Theater, in Bolivia.

Finally, the use and utility of the panels developed to extract relevant conclusions is validated, although it is left open to future researchers for full validation. Through them, it is shown how concepts such as participation, identity and metamodernity or the political channeling of arts can be analyzed with an openly social purpose.

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# Video activism: The poetics of symbolic conflict

## Videoactivismo: Poética del conflicto simbólico

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### ABSTRACT

The relationship between signs and human action is one of the most-widely studied theories in art and communication. Humans are constantly producing new discourse and new discursive devices, and the issue of the relationship between signs / action not only remains open but is branching off and forming hybrids towards other materials. This work explores one of its branches. We performed a theoretical inquiry on the foundations of video activism, with the aim of achieving a conceptual definition. Firstly, the purpose of the study is defined and the historical background and basic sources of influence described in order to trace a map of its fields of application in teaching practices and empirical research. The results, therefore, come from a bibliographic review of academic as well as artistic and activist sources, which were based on sections of the differentiating features they respectively recognize and self-recognize to be an activist. Six identified features are described: the intervention function, the hybrid code, against domination, disruption, disavowal, and subversion, which are aimed at establishing processes, procedures, subjects and the specific forms in which activism has an impact on society. The article also refers to selected cases as a conceptual sample of the theoretical assumptions made and to describe their capacity for transformation.

### RESUMEN

La relación entre los signos y la acción humana representa uno de los asuntos más estudiados en el campo del arte y la comunicación. Y el ser humano no para de producir nuevos discursos y nuevos dispositivos discursivos, por lo cual, la pregunta sobre esa relación signos/acción no solo sigue abierta, sino que se ramifica e hibrida hacia otros materiales. Este trabajo explora una de sus ramas. Realizamos una indagación teórica de los fundamentos del videoactivismo, con el objetivo de realizar una delimitación conceptual. Para ello, se define el objeto de estudio, se describen los antecedentes históricos y fuentes básicas de influencia que permiten trazar un mapa de sus campos de aplicación en prácticas docentes o investigaciones empíricas. Se presentan resultados de una revisión bibliográfica de fuentes académicas, y también artísticas y activistas, a las que se ha interrogado a partir de una rúbrica sobre los rasgos diferenciales con los que respectivamente reconocen y se autorreconocen como activistas. Se describen seis rasgos identificados: función de intervención, código híbrido, contra dominación, disruptividad, desautorización y subversión, que pretenden fijar los procesos, procedimientos, sujetos y forma específica en que el activismo impacta en la sociedad. En paralelo, el texto remite casos seleccionados como muestra conceptual de ratificación de los supuestos teóricos, con los que describir su capacidad de transformación.

### KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Art, critical thinking, political theory, new media, audiovisual activism, audiovisual art, protest movements, audiovisual creation. Arte, pensamiento crítico, teoría política, nuevos medios, activismo audiovisual, arte audiovisual, movimientos de protesta, creación audiovisual.

## 1. Approach to the issue

Amongst the universe of discourse of all kinds that flows through society and affects how people behave, we find the specific field of video graphic creations, which is in full bloom. In one month, more audiovisual content is uploaded to the Internet than the entire production of the largest US television network in a 30-year span. A third of the time a user spends online is taken up by video watching. Every 60 seconds, 72 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube. Mary Lister for “World Stream” provided this illustrative data in January 2017.

This high-density video sphere generates two social phenomena loops around the production of images: 1) Saturation pathology (invisibilization); Styleme epidemic (poetic fusion). These two loops provide the basis for a theoretical assumption (Ruiz-Olabuenaga, 2012: 14) that contributes to clarifying the concept of activism and therefore its understanding.

### 1.1. Invisibilization loop

The Invisibilization loop is paradoxical: the intense production of images prevents them from being seen. More and more images are produced to present events or ideas and production itself becomes an obstacle to the product being viewed. In the words of Román Gubern, “the iconosphere is so dense and abundant, it makes the image invisible” (Martí-Font, 2014). This density causes iconic pollution according to Fontcuberta (2011), “which firstly resulted from the development of new visual recording devices and, secondly, from the enormous proliferation of cameras — either as separate devices or housed in mobile telephones, webcams and surveillance equipment. This submerges us into a world that is saturated by images: we live in images and images live through us and give us life”. This is why the effect of relations with others through images has become a common practice and a part of life.

### 1.2. Poetic fusion loop

The Poetic Fusion loop is epidemiological: Different ways of making audiovisual products become contagious. Medical biology recognizes and assumes the relationship between human overcrowding (overpopulation) and the propagation of epidemics (Toole, 2000). In the audiovisual field, overpopulation is also beginning to accelerate contagious epidemics, with the resulting emergence of global representation codes that, in the words of Dudley Andrew, for example, reach the point of eliminating the possibility of independent cinema: “The very idea of independent cinema has been altered by what is now a fully global network that makes every film quite dependent” (Galt & Schoonover, 2010: 9).

In the audiovisual field, we already have studies that explore different forms of contagious rhetoric. Amongst other features, video activism accompanies specific video productions created marginally, outside corporate structures (Mateos & Rajas, 2014: 15) and it has been observed that it is now beginning to move even further. Mateos (2013) explains how certain characteristic stylemes of street protest video activism begin to appear in audiovisual productions used by the business press to report such events. A paradigmatic example is the video pieces used by the renowned newspaper “El País” to cover the 2012 daily events of the general strike in Spain in “real time”. Of the 26 news capsules published by the newspaper, 10 were activist poetics in “raw production”. (Raw material, without post-production, which, in professional circles, is known as “camera raw”. This has been made popular by eyewitness video activism, spontaneous and unplanned production with unstable focus, deficient image, and sound quality, negative photographic space, the absence of continuity and spatial coherence and a lack of narrative structuring). This transfer of “raw” style from activism to business journalism confirms the theoretical approaches to the reality that, in different fields (scientific philosophy, narrative, aesthetics), it is defined as social product, the result of a convention on the discourse (Nietzsche & Vaihinger, 1972; Kuhn, 1975; González-Requena, 2003): Something is considered as true according to the way it is generated and presented —in this case, in an unpolished way—.

Accordingly, video activism at the beginning of the 21st Century, with its influence on the standards of audiovisual journalism, illustrates the idea expressed by Oscar Wilde at the end of the 19th century, which many believe to be his favorite text, “The decay of lying”: Truth is a question of style. Mateos showed that business information truth in 2012 was changing the style by incorporating features of video activism consisting of anonymous street recordings; features intended to strengthen its appearance of authenticity.

## 2. Objectives and purpose of the study

Let's now return to the video sphere, bearing in mind these imitation trends that are intensified in overpopulated

environments. In addition to the data on the flow of videos presented above, we must include the video sphere's multipolar condition. Open distribution platforms such as YouTube unify content from a range of sources of diverse kinds and functions that are served to the general public in an equivalent format appearance. This is how we approach the issue subject to this theoretical study: the issue is an epistemological one; it has become difficult to distinguish between what is and what is not activist discourse. The same thing occurs between discourse-noise and discourse-sense, or between an authentic image and a trick video graphic production.

With respect to truth, the quoted references to Kuhn, Nietzsche and González-Requena, as well as the specific studies on image (García-Martínez, 2006; Comolli, 2009; Chéroux, 2013), have taught us that from science to art, the truth has always shrouded by different titles subject to contextual conventions, depending on culture, time and place –according to Wilde– a question of style.

As far as art is concerned, the militant culture, supported by a tradition of critical epistemology, particularly the School of Frankfurt and inspired by

Marx, teaches us that there are no barriers: art can come from anyone and not just an “enlightened few” and is not something beyond the reach of society as a whole (Linares, 1976: 12-13).

Concerning activism: how can we determine and identify the activist nature of a video graphic creation in the midst of this super populated video sphere, full of rhetoric pollution? We believe this to be an important issue because, as we have known since the foundation of structural linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure, signification is possible thanks to the difference.

**This has been made popular by eyewitness video activism, spontaneous and unplanned production with unstable focus, deficient image, and sound quality, negative photographic space, the absence of continuity and spatial coherence and a lack of narrative structuring). This transfer of “raw” style from activism to business journalism confirms the theoretical approaches to the reality that, in different fields (scientific philosophy, narrative, aesthetics), it is defined as social product, the result of a convention on the discourse.**

### 2.1. Purpose

The purpose of this theoretical exploration is to determine the “activist” nature of video graphic art practices. The idea is to define the basis of poetic activism. “Poetic” referring to the use of forms of expression to make sense (not a lyrical genre, but rather what is understood by contemporary theoretical poetics starting with the founders such as Dolezel and, later, the semiotics of culture: discursive construction); “activist” referring to the contemporary activist and artistic proposals that, according to Bourriaud (2008), do not create works or messages, but rather forms of relating to an environment.

### 2.2. Subject of study

Artivism has certain roots in the artistic forefronts of the 20th century (Delgado, 2013: 70) and the countercultural movements of the 60s and 70s, deploying their own fundamental principles as of the 80s, with movements such as the VIH claims in the 90s (Goris, 2017: 14) and the anti-globalization movement, in particular. However, above all, in 2005, video activist practices experienced an unprecedented boom with the implementation of global video online distribution platforms. We are therefore dealing with an underdeveloped theoretical tradition in which theorists, critics, curators, and creators are not yet using the same categories; thus, the interest of this study as a contribution to the conceptual definition of video activism that can be applied to the construction of empirical samples and teaching programs.

We worked in the field of cultural practices designated by a neologism. This is why it is still easy to see the term accompanied by a definition in everyday communications.

Mercy Corps, in Portland (USA), is preparing a summer school campus (2018) for primary students that it calls: “Art+Activism=Artivism” with the following proposal: “Learn how to use your creativity to inspire people to take action and get excited about issues that are impacting our world”.

Activism, as it is used in the purpose of this study, is therefore at the very roots of the issue raised above, the sign-action relationship: referring to artistic practices (processes of creating sense) that seek a reaction (response in human conduct). However, this theoretical approach results in a much too broad spectrum of cultural practices. We could, therefore, say that the concept used by the Mercy Corps does not differ much from the common definition of advertising: a message created to persuade someone to do something (O’Guinn & al., 2015: 9).

The wording to promote the Mercy Corps activity helps to minimize ambiguity, by adding: “Art for activism, a.k.a. Artivism, raises awareness

about social issues through the arts, including visual arts, dance, music, creative writing, and theater”. Using this reference, we would now be able to establish a more accurate initial approach to activism: Artistic production designed to inspire people to take action (particularly) on social issues. However, many of the limits will still be blurred: what issues, what people, to what end, using what means?

The reason for this is that the subject of our study is still being developed in its own field and structuring itself amidst a general transformation of the arts (Laddaga, 2006: 7), which means that academic studies are pointing towards activism without an established definition of the concept.

This study carries out a bibliographical review of academic sources as well as those originating in the creative and activist field itself (manuals, catalogs, project reports).

### 2.3. Theoretical approach

This theoretical study focuses on a catalog of documentary sources asked to define the meaning of activist. It reviews the academic perception and activist self-perception from a social semiotic perspective, in other words, taking an x-ray of the mechanism of sense. We explore the discourse by applying Leone’s actantial structure (2012) taken from structural semantics of his “Semiotics of protest”: for what purpose, against what and with what means? We add two more observations to the procedure: with what code and which form of interaction?

## 3. Results

All the defining references we found on activism are directly or indirectly based on the specific social function of art that activists place at stake. We, therefore, considered the first description of video activism is that social function, which appears below together with another five descriptions identified in our theoretical exploration of the sources consulted.

### 3.1. Function of intervention

These artistic practices are intended to achieve a function outside the field of art: aesthetics with the political

Video activism, apart from creating audiovisual works, operates in the symbolic field of cultural practice as a crisis factor. It provides visibility for social representations capable of creating climates in which people are motivated to take part in shared transformation practices. These practices, by definition, imply changes that subvert social and political order: rules, hierarchies, and categorizations, in relation to the idea of “the distribution of the sensible”, developed by philosopher Jacques Rancière. This intervention by art into the social and political spheres undermines the legitimacy of certain benefits and privileges, with the possible detriment of the relevant social groups.



capacity to change something unrelated to art. Activism refers to “proposals conceived as a form of social participation and political expression” (Ortega, 2015: 102). “It could be defined as a political-artistic movement capable of re-establishing the social function of art (Gombrich, 2003) that commenced in the 70s, when the abandoning of mimesis gave rise to the birth of the art of concepts and ideas” (Stangos, 2006) (Ortega, 2015: 103). Along the same lines, Goris (2017: 15) considered activist a synonym of a politically committed artist. In other words, we are dealing with a function that places artistic practices in a crisis: it redefines these practices as mediating agents and places them in conflict with the autonomy of art. Activism is therefore located in the sphere Bourriaud described as a symptomatic form of contemporary art, relational art: “art that looks towards the theoretical horizon of human interactions and their social context, more than the statement of a symbolic, autonomous and private space” (Bourriaud, 2008: 13).

### 3.2. Hybrid code

All the conceptions reviewed highlighted the component of fusion or crossbreeding in activism, either because of the convergence of fields (political-artistic), the mixing of forms of discourse or the combination of techniques. This diversity is able to take place without affecting the identity of activist, thanks to the fact that activist practices are identified as those operating under the unifying umbrella of the political purpose of art, mentioned above, as a social interspace inspired by Marx, according to Bourriaud (2008: 15-16). It is the engine, not the design of the artifact that makes it activist. John Jordan, therefore, highlights attitude as a key idea in activism (Jordan, 2017: 1). This is why “Clown Army”, “Yes Men”, “Flo 6X8” and “Brandalism Collective” are also activists.

The idea is the encounter of agents that generate a relational framework with political effects, such as the one described by García-Andújar (2009: 101), “artists, groups, works, projects and ways of thinking that attempt to interpret artistic practices and the production of knowledge under the framework of a social and political relationship in the context in which they take place [in order to] become the platform of a cultural practice that returns a political capacity to aesthetics and is able to convert artistic practices into social transformation instruments”.

### 3.3. Against domination

In the Mercy Corps announcement of its school summer camp, we find an indetermination of the social issues in which activism could contribute to developing awareness. When the students attend tutorials at the university to design their final projects, they often fly the flag of the topic they have chosen as a final definition, boasting that it resolves the topic of their research. They are told that a topic only identifies an area and that the approach to the research is what really defines it: what is being asked, for what purpose and what type of research technique can achieve this purpose?

All topics can be addressed –both academically and artistically– from a conservative or transforming perspective. Therefore, it is not logical to think that a particular topic could be a key factor in defining activism. However, attempts in the specialized literature to list the subject matters of activism are not uncommon. Ortega (2015: 103), “a nomadic art that reflects upon social relationships and the different ways that art effects consumption”. Ortega, therefore, establishes a “categorization of the most representative artistic-political strategies that reflect on the abuses of consumerism, real estate speculation, individualism, political strategy, the vulnerability of certain sectors of society, the environment, cutbacks in health and education” (Ortega, 2015: 103). In overall terms, what we find as common in the different areas of intervention of activism mentioned by different authors is the fight against forms of domination.

### 3.4. Disruption

The working tool of activism is action. Using both terms, the descriptions of activist action converge on the common idea of disruption, the placing of a prior symbolic order in a situation of crisis. The final purpose is to create a cognitive or emotional basis for another chain of social action. This is why the compiled manual of Boyd and Mitchell (2012: 1) opens with the idea of Martin Luther King Jr. that human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.

In order to activate this symbolic effect in the social reality fabric, activism requires an analytical operation before intervening. Aznar and Iñigo (2007: 68) claim that “the results are long-term and the artist a catalyzing agent that researches and implements a series of related modes and mechanisms in the entire community that are aimed at strengthening its powers”.

The analysis is an essential step prior to making something visible. In this respect, activist artistic practices are aligned with the practices of social research with a critical perspective, since both believe that knowledge of the world must be acquired with a view to its transformation: “understanding the social through a process of re-evaluation, awakening and questioning of interests, ideologies and meanings” (Gordo & Serrano, 2008: 18). In this way, artists share with critical intellectuals the task of examining the structures of power, the very same economy of analysis for what Foucault calls “drawing up to a topographical and geological sketch of the battle” (1980: 109). This sketch is the artistic work.

As far as tactics are concerned, we have manuals and catalogues of cases destined to become classic references in the search for inspiration: “Emerging infrastructures” (“Infraestructuras emergentes”) (2009), “Re:imagining change” (2010), “Beautiful trouble” (2012), “Activism, activism and beyond” (2017), “Do it yourself” (2007) and “Beautiful rising” (2017) are just some.

When referring to tactics, Jordan (2017) points out the importance of a permanent renewal of the activism repertoire, due to the fact that the effectiveness of action erodes with repetition, as the social system develops antibodies and activist action becomes foreseeable and ceases to generate confusion and bewilderment amongst the agents of authority it questions, in other words, loses its impact. “That is why movements need to constantly innovate their tactics faster than the authorities are able to respond to them; including, of course, tactics to protect protesters from police violence” (Jordan, 2017).

In order to do so, the main basic tactic is disruption, an assault on what is established. However, the catalog of action ranges from physically blocking space to piling shoes in the street and the classic audiovisual documentation of recrimination of criminal acts; tactics including pacific disobedience or games, the dynamics of mimetization and parody. For example, in contexts in which protest is prohibited, action can be disguised. Such was the case of the ‘meetings of gnomes’ claiming rights for gnomes in Poland in the 80s. Also in Paris in 2015, with the projection of a gigantic image of hundreds of bodies on the facade of the French National Assembly during the Climate Summit Meeting, when demonstrations were prohibited, due to the terrorist attacks in the city some weeks before. According to Boyd, to protest, you don’t have to dress as a protester (Boyd & Mitchell, 2012: 126).

Certain tactics have been the result of new mobile communications devices (e-mails, SMS, Twitter, Whatsapp). Such is the case of “flash mobs” –non-scheduled, spontaneous, disperse and contagious demonstrations–, called for a short space of time in a public space that is able to demonstrate dissent so quickly that they cannot be repressed and generate images that are subsequently distributed to strengthen the impact. In 2009, the “Newmindspace” group called a pillow fight in the heart of the Wall Street financial district that was seconded by thousands of people.

Spanish visual artist Yolanda Domínguez created an action in 2014 in which she called upon women to meet at Commercial Registries and register their bodies to highlight the “expropriation” being suffered by women from what others decide or restrict –through anti-abortion laws, for example– what they can do with their bodies. Anonymous women turned up at the same time at the registries of Madrid, Seville, Bilbao, Pamplona, and Pontevedra, and in doing so, those hundreds of people became activists that Wednesday, 5th February.

Certain techniques are more efficient than others to determine objectives. One of the advantages of these manuals and catalogs that should be highlighted, especially in the case of “Beautiful Trouble”, is the rationalization of the link between tactics, objectives, and principles.

### 3.5. De-authorization

The point at which all the authors studied converge is that anyone can become a creator. This is why “The Trapeze Collective” invites artists and activists to jointly publish work they call “Do-it-yourself” to encourage people to act and recover the control of their lives and “make governments and corporations irrelevant” (The Trapeze Collective, 2007: 1).

This empowerment of the people through art, according to Goris, particularly occurs under repressive regimes: “Repressive regimes can spark creativity and make people who would not usually consider themselves as artists seek ways to communicate that evade censorship. The production of Arpillera tapestries in Pinochet’s Chile testifies to this fact” (Goris, 2017:15).

Once activism had installed itself in a critical perspective, it was foreseeable that it would problematize the issue of authorship, given that, according to Linares (1976), the extension of authorship to the common people has been one of the defining features of the militant culture, developed along the lines of Marxist interpretation that art and

life do not move –and we should not make them move– in different directions. Video activism, in particular, has developed a range of forms that question the romanticist form of authorship, with a special sensitivity, that is capable of materializing artistic inspiration into works of art that are signed and grant the owner the right to commercially exploit them. Mateos and Sedeño (2015) distinguished up to 10 different formulas in which video activism questions this system: the 15th May statement, the common formula, crowd producer, disperse choir (“coro disperso”), the collective formula, multiple authorship, the aggregation of authorship, anonymity, the cyborg author and the inexistence of authorship.

The globalization of creative capacity is an issue that reappears throughout literature, from Marx to the last manual published in 2017. Ortega (2015: 103) links it to “the Josep Beuys definition of art, which established the idea that we are all artists and that art must, therefore, be converted and reinvented in order to cease being what it has been until now”.

However, beyond this foreseeable democratization of how creative genius is considered, the crisis of the industrial concept of authorship proposed by activism lies in the interstitial gen referred to by Bourriaud (2008): activism, as relational art, creates community and this creation itself constitutes the work of art. Therefore, authorship is dissolved. Ortega expresses it as follows: “the possible conclusions of our study indicate that activists, considered here as artists and spectators, share a broad conception of politics that enables the interrelation of the different micro narratives of authority that are also established in artistic discourse” (Ortega, 2015: 103).

**Video activism at the beginning of the 21st Century, with its influence on the standards of audiovisual journalism, illustrates the idea expressed by Oscar Wilde at the end of the 19th century, which many believe to be his favorite text, “The decay of lying”: Truth is a question of style. Mateos showed that business information truth in 2012 was changing the style by incorporating features of video activism consisting of anonymous street recordings; features intended to strengthen its appearance of authenticity.**

### 3.6. Subversion

In an instrumental way, activist activities can provide social mobilization with a number of energizing effects. According to Goris (2017: 16), to generate symbols, attract attention and resources and mobilize commitment. Activism truly reaches its target when it shakes the foundations of a certain symbolic order, which means that it takes place in terms of a battle against something: “to create public space, durations with rhythms that oppose the rhythm of everyday life, encourage human exchange other than the imposed areas of communication” (Bourriaud, 2008: 16).

This condition of resistance-opposition is shared by the entire militant art tradition. In 1968, the IV International New Film Festival in Pesaro (Italy) was witness to the premiere of an Argentinian film committed to the social struggle that had become a legend in the history of cinema, “The time of the furnaces” (“La hora de los hornos”) by Fernando Pino Solanas and Octavio Getino. Argentina was at the time suffering from the Onganía dictatorship, which had placed a great deal of power in the hands of the military regime and prohibited political parties. The film was shot and secretly distributed, with the aim of encouraging and sustaining the battle for freedom. The first few minutes of the tape are comprised of a percussion soundtrack, animated images, and graphics containing texts and short legends. At around the sixth-minute mark, these words appear: “No social order commits suicide”.

This idea synthesizes the basis of activist action: to intervene and force orders to “commit suicide”. It is a guerilla concept. We can see it in the words of an old Guatemalan guerilla fighter for the ORPA (Organización del Pueblo en Armas, Guatemala 1982-1996) who appeared under the name of “colleague Álvaro” in a CEDEMA document: “We know that social change is always violent. Nobody gives away what he or she has and considers property pacifically. No injustice disappears alone; it implies a fight”.

It seems logical to find this assumption of violence when we are searching amongst classic guerilla sources. We, therefore, searched for academic references not linked to direct fighting. With these coordinates, we remit to the work of one of the most internationally representative Spanish academics in the field of communications in social sciences, Manuel Castells, a sociologist that makes several claims in relation to communications and social change (Castells, 2007: 238-239): Firstly, that if the majority of people think in a way that is contradictory to the rules, the rules will change because people's opinion is a factor of change; secondly, that change will not necessarily be what the promoters want; and thirdly, that it will involve suffering, a lot of suffering, according to Castells. This author thus situates the area of impact of art on social change as that of public opinion. The battle is fought in this field, in the social production of sense. This is why Aznar and Iñigo (2007: 70) claim that: "Activist art not only takes place in the public sphere but particularly intends to produce a public sphere, which is where it activates the construction of consensus".

In the logic of another internationally acknowledged and consolidated sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, what we are here calling impact is structured through what he calls heretic subversion (Bourdieu, 2008: 123-124). In Bourdieu's opinion, political action exists because political agents have a particular knowledge of the world and act accordingly. Subsequently taking action in the world can be achieved by intervening in the way people understand that world; that intervention becomes one of political value since it reveals the representations that sustain the social order we want to change. This and whatever social order is able to remain and perpetuate itself as long as it is able to keep the arbitrary nature of these representations hidden. In other words, a social order remains because it imposes classification systems that appear as natural and thus ensure "the native adhesion" to the "doxa". The order remains because it conceals the arbitrary relationship between objective and mental structures. Political action commences with the denouncing of this tacit contract, in other words, with "heretic subversion" that does away with the "doxas".

Verson (2007: 173) presents cultural activism as a way of questioning the dominating perspective of the world. García-Andújar (2009: 100) speaks of conflict, rupture, "change that enables revolution capable of breaking down the prevailing hierarchical concept and focusing on developing a horizontal society". Stating (2009: 101) that: "As artists, we are convinced that we either become part in this new system of permanent loss, in which Western arrogance is resulting in a paralyzing ignorance, or we move on to a (permanent?) state of resistance, assault, and demolition". In the words of Ortega (2015: 103), activism intervenes to "alter the codes and signs that exist in the sub-conscience of society and develop certain strategies that consolidate new and possible political tactics".

In February 2015, a video activist recorded Celia Villalobos, the President of the Congress in Madrid, playing "Candy Crush" for an extended period of time, without listening to the President of the Government and also the President of her party who, at that time was speaking on the stand, just two meters away. This brings down a "doxa": that of hardworking politicians that justifiably earn ten times the national minimum wage.

The Lowe Cape Town agency created a video for the campaign against the use of animal fur for clothing and complements for the "International Anti Fur Coalition", in which we see three sophisticated and elegant young people talking in a bright restaurant, at a table with a spotless tablecloth, when one of the girl's mobile phone rings. In order to find it in her bag, she has to empty its contents on the table: bloody entrails, a heart, liver, tripe and, without thinking twice, picks up her phone with bloody hands, puts it to her ear and talks as if nothing had happened. This also brings down a "doxa": The glamorous bag containing blood and torture.

#### 4. Conclusion

Video activism, apart from creating audiovisual works, operates in the symbolic field of cultural practice as a crisis factor. It provides visibility for social representations capable of creating climates in which people are motivated to take part in shared transformation practices. These practices, by definition, imply changes that subvert social and political order: rules, hierarchies, and categorizations, in relation to the idea of "the distribution of the sensible", developed by philosopher Jacques Rancière. This intervention by art into the social and political spheres undermines the legitimacy of certain benefits and privileges, with the possible detriment of the relevant social groups.

The activist impact firstly operates by transforming people who take part in artistic practices; and then on how they relate to their environment, given that the artistic subject is social life itself. Therefore, the subject of the work of art expands.

In short, this study provides a set of boundaries that could be used to systemize the choice of samples for empirical studies, catalogues and training manuals: 1) The additional intervention function of art; 2) The use of a



hybrid code; 3) Action against structures of domination; 4) Disruptive logic; 5) De-construction of authorship; 6) Subversion against social political orders. Although these descriptions give us a definition, they do not exhaust the nature description of the video activist phenomenon; the results of this theoretical study are therefore available for completion and refining by other research.

For the time being, this characterizing framework allows us to distinguish activist objects from other practices merely disguised as activism that borrow certain visual rhetoric. Nevertheless, it leaves the door open to the possibility of analyzing the figure of art critics that sell their criticism to clients for a change of image. Jordan refers to this figure as “artwashers”. Other authors such as Martha Rosler, as an art critic, have been highlighting the difficulty of the survival of activism outside the borders the market of official protection. The poetics of “artwashers” therefore warrant a specific study.

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## ABSTRACT

Teenagers inhabit a virtual universe with their own model of entertainment, learning and communication. This research work defines the consumption, creation and dissemination patterns of online audiovisual content young students of Guipuzcoa have acquired in the fields of leisure and complementary information resources for school use, attending to three different variables: gender, grade (age) and type of educational institution (public or private). The research methodology focuses on a self-administered questionnaire filled out by 2,426 adolescents of secondary school (12 to 16 years old). The sample consists of a random selection of 120 student groups, which are distributed in 60 schools and 30 groups each course. The results verify the existence of monolithic and opposed male/female patterns in the way young people consume, create and diffuse leisure content. Video games are the central backbone of male consumption and creation, as long as girls prefer to take pictures and videos of themselves using smartphones and to share them on social networks. These practices repeat gender stereotypes, transforming the education in equality into a relevant issue. Finally, sources of information that are complementary to formal education, especially Wikipedia, are the main references among adolescents. Consequently, it seems essential to guarantee their solvency for appropriate knowledge acquisition.

## RESUMEN

Los adolescentes viven inmersos en un universo virtual en el que han construido un modelo propio de entretenimiento, aprendizaje y comunicación. El objetivo de este trabajo es definir los patrones de consumo, creación y difusión de contenidos audiovisuales de Internet en los ámbitos del ocio y las fuentes de información complementarias para uso escolar de los jóvenes guipuzcoanos, atendiendo a las variables de género, curso y tipo de centro. La metodología partió del diseño de un cuestionario auto-rellenable que cumplimentaron 2.426 adolescentes (de 12 a 16 años), estudiantes de los cuatro cursos de ESO. La muestra es una selección aleatoria de 60 centros de Guipúzcoa y un total de 120 grupos, 30 por cada curso. Los resultados corroboran que los patrones de consumo, creación y difusión de contenidos de ocio masculinos y femeninos son monolíticos y opuestos entre sí. Los videojuegos son el eje vertebrador del consumo y creación masculino, mientras que la toma y difusión de fotografías y vídeos de sí mismas es el de las chicas. Estas prácticas repiten los estereotipos de género, por lo que la formación en igualdad se perfila como un aspecto relevante. Por último, las fuentes de información complementarias a la educación reglada, principalmente Wikipedia, se imponen como referencia entre los adolescentes, por lo que es imprescindible garantizar su solvencia para una adecuada adquisición de conocimientos.

## KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Adolescents, use pattern, audiovisual content, video game, mobile phone, audiovisual creation, YouTube, social networks. Adolescentes, patrón de uso, contenidos audiovisuales, videojuego, teléfono móvil, creación audiovisual, YouTube, redes sociales.



## 1. Introduction and state of the question

Their widespread access to and use of new technologies has allowed adolescents to create a universe of their own, characterised by new patterns of consumption, creation and dissemination of audiovisual content. At the same time, this new paradigm poses a challenge for society, and a source of concern for parents and educators, as well as a challenge for the technology industry that influences the development of devices and the production and distribution of content. The objective of this study is to define the online consumption, creation and dissemination habits of adolescents in Guipuzcoa aged 12 to 16 for the purposes of leisure and school work, with a focus on differences between genders, grade levels, and school types. Consumption is defined here as the viewing of audiovisual products and the use of video games in a digital environment; creation as the production of basic content; and dissemination as sharing content via online platforms. Thus, in the context of leisure we analyse online consumption of video games, youtuber content, and tutorial videos, considering these three variables. The context of formal education is analysed in relation to the use of complementary sources like Wikipedia, tutorial videos, documentaries, forums, online texts, and websites with studies and notes. Last of all, the study examines the creation of content –what young people produce and how– and its dissemination –what platforms, networks or messaging apps they use– in each context. The study considers three Research Questions:

- RQ1. What are the patterns of adolescent consumption for leisure purposes?
- RQ2. What sources of complementary information do adolescents consult in their school work?
- RQ3. What leisure or academic content do adolescents create and how do they disseminate it?

In the so-called digital age, young people have been able to turn the Internet and social networks into their own vehicle for communicating and establishing relationships with their environment, creating what is known as the “network society” (Castells, 2006). Since the late 1990s, experts have been coining different terms to refer to these adolescents who navigate the Internet, process information quickly and acquire knowledge actively. The earliest definitions spoke of a “Net Generation” (Tapscott & Williams, 1998; Fernández-Planells & Figueras, 2014), of “Millennials” (Howe & Strauss, 2000), of “Generation @” (Feixa, 2000) or of “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001). Since the beginning of the 21st century, the generation gap has grown ever wider. Young people’s access to multi-function electronic devices with screens of all sizes has grown exponentially, giving rise to a generation of mobile and social network users referred to as “digital residents” (White & Le-Cornu, 2011), the “App Generation” (Gardner & Davis, 2014), or “Generation A” (Coupland, 2010).

These young people constitute a broad audience that has been able to develop its own audiovisual consumption and creation customs and practices in the context of an interconnected universe. In this new scenario, teenagers are “multi-tasking, connected, social and mobile prosumers” (Viñals, Abad, & Aguilar, 2014: 53) who have naturally adopted the tools and resources offered by the web in their everyday lives.

With the rise of the participatory culture and social interaction as its main points of reference (Aranda, Sánchez, Tabernero, & Tubella, 2010), the Internet has become the medium that best responds to their informational, educational and leisure needs, the last of these being based principally on entertainment and interpersonal relations (Buckingham & Martínez, 2013). In recent years, there has been extensive research into how young people interact with the digital environment, both in terms of their consumption habits and practices and in relation to new audiovisual content, video games, or the work of youtubers. In addition, their attitude towards the media and the impact of electronic devices like the mobile phone constitutes another prominent object of study.

Audiovisual consumption is moving progressively away from the television screen, despite its continued importance (Gewerc, Fraga, & Rodes, 2017), to give way to multi-screen and multi-task viewing. This incipient “social television” finds its best vehicles in the laptop computer and especially the smartphone, the quintessential electronic device for managing social relations between young people (Sádaba & Vidales, 2015; Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2016). The mobile phone has thus gone from being conceived of as a mere communication device to a “multi-use, interactive” tool that allows people to perform all kinds of everyday activities (Méndiz, De-Aguilera, & Borges, 2011: 78).

In this context, free of the limitations of sequentiality that characterise traditional audiovisual consumption, teenagers are choosing to consume audiovisual content on demand, for which YouTube is the most popular platform. Initially associated with the mechanics of video game operation, or “gaming”, this platform has managed to attract millions of young followers and amass millions of views thanks to “youtubers”, who create tutorial videos or video blogs on a whole range of topics (Chau, 2010; García, Catalina, & López-de-Ayala, 2016).

In addition to being consumers, teenagers model themselves on these public figures to become creators of their

own videos too, often exposing themselves publicly with no protection of their identity (Montes, García, & Menor, 2018). In the area of video games, on the other hand, the studies published reveal a slightly lower number of users among young people and the participation of a mostly male audience in products of a markedly sexist and/or violent nature (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Díez, 2009; Alcolea, 2014).

In addition to entertainment, engaging in social relations constitutes one of the main digital consumption activities among adolescents. Noteworthy in this respect is the irrepressible growth of social networks like Facebook or Instagram, used not only for social purposes but also as a source of news and information. The latest data provided by the Basque Youth Observatory (2016) supports the findings of earlier research (Livingstone, 2008; Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011; Boyd, 2014), confirming the high level of popularity of these kinds of platforms among young people. According to these figures, nearly all Basque youth (99%) aged 15 to 29 use a social network and go online daily. Of these, a significant increase is observable in the use of instant messaging services like WhatsApp (the most widely used, at 98.2%) and, to a lesser extent, services with ephemeral content, like Snapchat (22.5%).

While the widespread use of social networks is common throughout this sector of the population, there are notable differences in behaviour patterns between genders. A number of different research projects focusing on gender (Espinár & González, 2009; Estébanez & Vázquez, 2013; Alonso, Rodríguez, Lameiras, & Carrera, 2015) reveal more habitual use, greater public exposure and a higher quantity of content exchange among girls than among boys.

Furthermore, this gender difference extends to the topics of content consumed by young people on YouTube and to video games, as well as more traditional audiovisual consumption (series, TV programs, and films). This issue, which has been the subject of extensive academic research, reflects the persistence of traditional gender stereotypes among the younger generations in relation to audiovisual consumption and creation habits, with females favouring dramatic fiction, reality shows or entertainment news, and males preferring sports and humour (Medrano, Aierbe, & Orejudo, 2009; Masanet, 2016; Pibernat, 2017).

Taking the above into account, María Ángeles Gabino (2004) exposes a clear connection between audiovisual consumption by adolescents and leisure contexts over formal and educational situations. However, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has an increasingly prominent presence in the classroom, facilitating student access to a wide range of complementary sources during school time on computers and tablets (Eynon & Malmberg, 2011; Fernández-Planells, & Maz, 2012; Solano, González, & López, 2013; Ciampa, 2014). Wikipedia is the most popular source of information used by young people today, and a regularly used academic tool in secondary education (Salmerón, Cerdán, & Naumann, 2015; Tramullas, 2016; Valverde & González, 2016).

With all of this in mind, this article offers a contribution that complements the findings of other similar studies conducted in other regions of Spain, such as Catalonia (Castellana, Sánchez-Carbonell, Chamarro, Graner, & Beranuy, 2007), Galicia (Rial, Gómez, Braña, & Varela, 2014), and Andalusia (Bernal & Angulo, 2013), as well as international studies (Gross, 2004; Arango, Bringué, & Sádaba, 2010).

## 2. Material and methods

This study analyses data from 2,426 surveys completed by adolescents aged from 12 to 16 who are enrolled in compulsory secondary education (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> year of Spain's Educación Secundaria Obligatoria) in the Basque

**Male and female patterns of consumption, creation and dissemination of online audiovisual content by adolescents are diametrically opposed and closed categories. The one characteristic that both male and female adolescents share is that they consume more than they create, as only a small number dare to become youtubers, and the smartphone is the main tool for the production and dissemination of content.**

province of Guipuzcoa. These are young people born at the turn of the millennium who have grown up in a context conditioned by new technologies. The results outlined in this article are actually based on data gathered in an extensive research project whose objective has been to conduct an in-depth examination of the influence of new technologies on changes to habits of consumption and creation of content in Basque among the adolescent population. To this end, a self-administered questionnaire was designed with 100 questions, most of which were multiple choice, divided into six blocks. This paper focuses on two of those blocks: leisure and school work, considering content in both the Spanish and Basque languages. The results can therefore be extrapolated to the rest of the Basque Country and to Spain as a whole. The data are analysed based on three categorical variables (potentially defining of behaviour): gender, grade level, and type of educational institution (public or private).

The study universe is made up of 28,817 boys and girls across 108 secondary institutions, and the sampling unit was the group. Cluster sampling was used, stratified by proportional allocation, taking into account the geographical distribution of the schools in Guipuzcoa and the educational levels. The sample is gender-balanced and is made up of a random selection from 60 schools, with a total of 120 groups (2 groups from a different grade at each school), of which there are 30 groups per grade level. The maximum sampling error is  $\pm 1.9\%$  for the whole territory of Guipuzcoa. The statistical confidence level is 95% (in the most unfavourable case of  $p=q=0.5$ ). The field work was carried out in the months of December 2016 and January 2017. The surveys were completed in the classroom under the direction of one of the researchers and in the presence of each group's teacher or tutor. The approximate duration of the survey was 45 minutes.

### 3. Results

The study data demonstrate that gender is the most defining variable of patterns of consumption, creation and dissemination of leisure content among adolescents, but has almost no impact at all on content for school use. On the other hand, the type of institution only influences academic content, while the grade level is key to revealing the evolution of trends in content consumption, creation and dissemination.

#### 3.1. Consumption patterns

##### 3.1.1. Leisure

Video games are the preferred activity among boys, to which they dedicate an average of 76 minutes of their weekend leisure time; for girls they constitute a marginal habit on which they spend an average of 26 minutes. Girls prefer to spend most of their time (95 minutes on average) chatting, tweeting and communicating via WhatsApp, while males spend 67 minutes on this activity.

The classification of the most popular online video games among adolescents combined two criteria: the closed list of the seven most successful games, with 39.9% of users, and the list of "other" games chosen freely by 31.5% of respondents. As it can be seen in Table 1, only three video games on the closed list appear because the other three, Habbo, World

of Warcraft (WOW) and Dot A are not used by more than 5%. The Sims was the only video game capable of attracting significant attention among the girls, although this was limited to younger ages. In fact, only 8% of 4th year students reported playing this game. The other video games are

predominantly male and popular at all secondary grade levels. Pan European Game Information (PEGI) has classified Call of Duty and GTA as video games suitable for persons over 18, and they therefore represent a risk for underage children who use them. With respect to the mode of playing, more users prefer to play in groups (especially boys), while only a minority plays alone (predominantly girls).

Table 1. Distribution of use of most popular video games by gender			
Closed list	Total	Boys	Girls
Minecraft	12.3%	18.3%	6.4%
The Sims	11.3%	6.6%	16.5%
League of Legends (LOL)	7.5%	12.2%	2.8%
Open List	Total	Boys	Girls
FIFA	16.1%	19%	5.5%
GTA	12.8%	14.4%	7.3%
Call of Duty	10.6%	12.2%	4.9%
Clash Royale	10.2%	11.5%	5.5%
Mode of playing online	Total	Boys	Girls
In a group	55.7%	68.8%	30.4%
Alone	38.3%	27.3%	59.9%



**Table 2. Distribution of followers of most successful YouTubers by gender and grade level**

	Subscribers 07/05/2018	Views 07/05/2018	Total	Gender		Secondary Year Level	
				Boys	Girls	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Elrubius	29,079,272	6,541,425,340	40.6%	53.4%	28.1%	46%	32%
Wismichu	7,097,773	915,715,319	38.8%	53%	25%	44%	37%
VEGETTA777	22,207,174	8,781,537,550	19.7%	31.9%	7.9%	26.1%	12.2%
Willyrex	13,912,660	4,800,438,586	18.8%	30.7%	7.2%	24.1%	13%
Alexby11	7,310,308	1,179,223,661	16.1%	26.5%	5.9%	20.7%	9.3%
Yellow Mellow	1,686,298	138,467,771	12.8%	9.2%	16.4%	13.7%	17.7%
Patry Jordan	3,875,360	514,173,363	8%	1.5%	14.2%	7.5%	12%

YouTube is the most popular platform with young people, and youtubers are their opinion leaders and role models. 60.4% of respondents knew at least one of the seven most successful youtubers included on the closed list, which was prepared according to information provided by students in earlier interviews. Of these, the top five have channels on gaming, and thus their audience is predominantly male. This is the case of the gamers VEGETTA777, Willyrex, and Alexby11. On the other hand, in addition to video games, Elrubius and Wismichu take a humorous look at topics of interest that attract a considerable female audience. Girls follow youtubers less than boys, although they represent the majority of the audience of the two last channels on the Table 2, Yellow Mellow and Patry Jordan. However, the youtubers with more male followers are less popular among older youths, while those with more female followers have bigger audiences at higher year levels. Finally, the survey included one open question that was answered by 68% of respondents, for which, despite a very wide range of results, 20% mentioned AuronPlay. This youtuber, who comments on internet videos, currently has more than 8 million subscribers and more than 1 billion views.

Of all the content available on YouTube, tutorial videos attract a significant youth audience. A total of 62.4% of adolescents view them regularly, and this percentage is notably higher among older respondents. In fact, only 28.9% of 4th year secondary students report that they do not view them, compared to 48% of first year students.

**Table 3. Distribution of viewing of most popular tutorial videos by gender**

	Total	Boys	Girls
Do not watch tutorials	37.6%	39.9%	35.5%
Video games	28.1%	46.5%	10.3%
Fashion and hairdressing	25.8%	3.1%	47.9%
Technology	19%	25.5%	12.6%
Sports	17.9%	25.4%	10.8%
Travel	12.9%	5.4%	20%
How to make movies	9.1%	8%	10%

The most popular topics of tutorial videos are determined to a large extent by gender. Boys prefer tutorials on video games, technology and sports, while girls watch more tutorials on fashion, hairdressing and make-up, travel, and how to make movies. Older viewers are much more likely to watch tutorials on fashion (14.6% in 1st year compared to 32.3% in 4th) and travel (6.5% in 1st year and 17.8% in 4th). Finally, it is worth noting that tutorials on technology and how to make movies are common to both leisure and school work. These two categories are more popular among private school students, who are significantly more likely to view tutorials on technology (21%) and how to make movies (10.8%) than state school students (15.1% and 6.9%, respectively). Moreover, interest in technology increases with age, as these tutorials are viewed more by students in higher grades (12.1% in 1<sup>st</sup> year compared to 24.2% in 4<sup>th</sup> year).

### 3.1.2. Complementary information sources for school use

Most adolescents consult internet sources other than those offered by formal education; only 14.1% admitted they did not, of which 16.4% were boys and 11.7% were girls. This percentage drops drastically with age, as the use of such sources is more common among students in higher grades: 22.3% of 1st year students stated they do not consult other sources, compared to only 7.1% in 4th year. Wikipedia, with 86.9% of users, is the most popular reference source at all grade levels, followed by tutorial videos (34.9%), texts on school subjects (31%), studies and notes available online (26.5%), documentaries (26.2%), and forums (24.9%).

With respect to gender, it is significant that girls (35.4%) consult more online texts than boys (26.5%), as this suggests a greater interest among females in acquiring higher quality and more detailed information to complement their studies. At the higher grade levels, more students consult texts (17.2% in 1st year compared to 44.3% in 3rd), online studies (17.2% in 1st year and 36.2% in 4th), and documentaries (20.8% in 1st year and 30.8% in 4th). Participation in forums also becomes common in 4th year, with 34% of respondents. Private school students use complementary sources more: 39.2% view tutorial videos, 35.2% look up texts, 28.2% view documentaries, and 28.2% participate in forums. This constitutes a notable difference from state school students, far fewer of whom consult these sources: 24.2% tutorials, 25.5% texts, 23% documentaries, and 20.6% forums.

**Table 4. Distribution of knowledge, skills and devices used by adolescents to create content**

Knowledge and skills	Total
Record images with a camera, edit them on a computer and create a coherent narrative	31.5%
No knowledge	24.3%
Record images with a mobile	20.9%
Use a camera and editing programs	19.3%
Devices	Total
Mobile phone	35.5%
Computer	19.8%
Tablet	3.6%
Video camera	2.8%

### 3.2. Content creation and dissemination patterns

Most adolescents possess the technological knowledge and skills necessary to create audio-visual content, and also have access to technological devices: 96.2% possess a mobile phone, 82.4% own a laptop, 62.4% have a desktop computer, and 77.9% have a tablet. However, they tend to consume more content than they create, as creation is the activity that they spend the least leisure time on (28 minutes on average). Girls are considerably more active in content creation, spending an average of 32 minutes compared to 23 minutes for boys.

It is thus not surprising that 85.6% of young people are not youtubers. Of the 7.4% who are, 12.1% are boys and 2.6% are girls. The percentage of youtubers is lower at older age levels, with only 4.9% of 4th year students. Only a small number of adolescents dare to expose themselves to public opinion and the pressure to attract followers. On the other hand, 12.3% of respondents create tutorials to post them on YouTube (15.1% of boys and 9.5% of girls). The 2nd year cohort has the highest percentage of content creators (15.3%), while 4th year has the lowest (9.1%). As might be expected, there is a direct correspondence between the category and hierarchical classification of tutorials adolescents consume, mainly for leisure purposes, and those they produce: tutorials on video games (51.7%) are the most common, followed by sports (32.6%), fashion and make-up (29.5%), technology (26.2%), how to make movies (18.1%), and travel (15.1%). These videos are structured works that require a certain level of audiovisual production knowledge, along with dedication and interest on the part of their creators. As in the case of consumption, tutorials on video games are more common among boys (75%), while fashion and make-up videos are more popular with girls (60.7%). The only content related to school use is technology tutorials. In this case, there are no differences between private and state school students, but age is a determining factor, as the highest percentage of creators (40%) is found among 4th year students.

Along with these tutorial videos, the mobile phone has given rise to a second type of unedited content intended for immediate distribution to friends online. This includes photographs (67.4%), recordings (62.3%), automatically edited videos (61.2%), music (39%), and audio (38.8%). Females give priority to taking and posting photos of friends and selfies, and also to record and share more videos of "friends' stuff" and of parties and concerts.

However, creating and sharing audiovisual content does not seem to be a widespread activity among young people, as 57.2% of respondents report they have never uploaded a video to the Internet, compared to 40.8% who have. YouTube is the channel most widely used by youths for sharing their content publicly. It is followed by Instagram, with a similar gender distribution. The WhatsApp messaging service, used more by boys, and Snapchat, the platform preferred by girls, occupy third and fourth positions, respectively. Finally, Twitter and Facebook rate lower with adolescents. In terms of use by age level, YouTube is more popular at younger ages, while only 38.3% of 4th years use it; on the other hand, use of Snapchat at this year level is higher, at 42.2%.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The results of this research confirm that leisure is the predominant purpose for the consumption, creation and dissemination of audiovisual content by adolescents. Male and female consumption patterns, closed and diametrically opposed to each other, effectively determine content creation and dissemination. In other words, the types of products they consume online directly influence the content they create and the way they share that content. Adolescents are bigger consumers than creators; only a minority dare to become youtubers. Those who do create produce two types of content: on the one hand, the smartphone is the main tool for the virtually automatic “production” of minimalist audio-visual pieces, an activity led by girls; on the other hand, boys produce fewer videos, but the videos they do produce are more structured and of higher quality. In short, the “creation” of content is associated with entertainment and confirms that the vast majority of teens lack the critical capacity to produce audio-visual work, despite having the skills and technical means within their reach.

Video games are the focus of the monolithic profile of male consumption and determine the preference for consuming youtuber and tutorial videos dealing with this subject. This consumption influences production by males of YouTube channels and video game tutorials, resulting in structured content shared mainly on this platform. The gaming habit does not change with age, but the consumption of gamer videos and video game tutorials, as well as the production of the latter, is notably higher among older males. As noted in studies by Craig A. Anderson and Brad J. Bushman (2001), Enrique Díez (2009), Beatriz Muros, Yolanda Aragón and Antonio Bustos (2013), and Gema Alcolea (2014), there is a significant number of minors playing extremely violent video games not suitable for their age level. Call of Duty “justifies” the death of the enemy because the player is a soldier of war. In GTA, the violence is gratuitous; the player is the member of a gang who breaks the law and engages in activity that is denigrating to women. These kinds of games naturalise violence and sexist attitudes that clash with the values of tolerance and diversity that young people should be learning. What is needed, therefore, is a line of research that will explore the possibility of producing non-violent video games that promote gender equality.

Interest in personal life experiences, the importance of fashion and the desire to share content and communicate online are characteristics inherent to internet use by females. In their “productions” they present their image and their public lives, disseminating them on Instagram and WhatsApp. These practices pose risks that need to be investigated in greater depth: the careless, unrestricted exhibition of their private lives (Montes, García, & Menor, 2018) and the influence of the aesthetic standards imposed by the fashion world in the consumption, creation and dissemination of content by females. Youtubers and tutorial videos reproduce these standards, which are then reflected in the photos and videos made by girls, in which they project an image of themselves that attempts to emulate an aesthetic ideal and repeats stereotypical female behaviour.

In the area of school work, the most prominent unregulated source is Wikipedia, while other text sources are of secondary importance. Girls are more concerned with information quality given that they look up and consult more online texts. Audiovisual content is in second place with tutorials on technology or how to make a movie, viewed mostly by private school students, although the level of creation of such videos is similar in state and private schools. However, there is a significant gender imbalance, with boys producing considerably more videos. Forums are used by a minority of respondents, although they become more significant in the higher grade levels, as do tutorials. It is urgent to investigate the repercussions that the systematic use in schools of unregulated sources has on the quality of youth education and to propose measures that will ensure the reliability of these sources.

<b>Table 5. Distribution of audiovisual content created on mobiles and of delivery platforms</b>			
<b>Content</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
Photos of friends	55%	40.7%	69.9%
Videos of “friends’ stuff”	35.1%	24.9%	46.4%
Videos of parties and concerts	27.1%	21.4%	32.8%
Selfies	23.5%	15.8%	32.1%
<b>Delivery platforms</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
YouTube	45.2%	55.6%	30.6%
Instagram	45%	46.7%	43%
WhatsApp	44.8%	47.9%	40.7%
Snapchat	34.4%	28.8%	42.4%
Twitter	18.5%	18.8%	15.9%
Facebook	13.4%	16.2%	9.3%

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# Youtubers' social functions and their influence on pre-adolescence

## Funciones sociales de los youtubers y su influencia en la preadolescencia

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### ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the relationship between preadolescents and youtubers, with the objective of observing how tweens integrate youtubers as referents of a teen digital culture. From a socio-psychological and communicological perspective, a mixed methodological design was applied to carry out the audience study, which was divided into two parts: A quantitative analysis of the audience via a survey administered to 1,406 eleven-twelve year old students of Catalan Secondary Schools, and a qualitative analysis of the preadolescent audience using three focus groups. The quantitative data was analysed with SPSS and the qualitative data with the help of the Atlas.ti software. The results demonstrate that tweens consider youtubers as referents for entertainment and for closeness to a teen digital culture, but not really as role models or bearers of values as influencers. Also, preadolescents show some dimensions of Media Literacy, since they recognise youtubers' commercial strategies and their role as actors and professionals. The study notes gender bias in some aspects, and it is an introduction to observation of youtubers' social functions amongst teenagers, individuals who are in the process of constructing their identity and about to become young adults.

### RESUMEN

El presente estudio se centra en la relación entre preadolescentes y youtubers, con el objetivo de observar cómo los primeros integran a los youtubers como referentes de una cultura digital juvenil. Desde una perspectiva sociopsicológica y comunicativa, se aplicó un diseño metodológico mixto para llevar a cabo el estudio de audiencia, organizado en dos partes: un análisis cuantitativo de la audiencia a través de un cuestionario administrado a 1.406 estudiantes de once-doce años de institutos en Cataluña, y un análisis cualitativo de la audiencia preadolescente a partir de tres «focus group». Los datos cuantitativos se analizaron con SPSS y los cualitativos con la ayuda del programa Atlas.ti. Los resultados demuestran que los preadolescentes consideran a los youtubers como referentes para el entretenimiento y por su proximidad a una cultura digital juvenil, pero no realmente como modelos o portadores de valores en tanto que «influencers». Además, los preadolescentes muestran alguna dimensión de Alfabetización Mediática, al identificar las estrategias comerciales de los youtubers y sus roles profesionales. El estudio da cuenta de un sesgo de género en algunos aspectos, y resulta una introducción a la observación sobre las funciones sociales de los youtubers entre los adolescentes, personas que están en pleno proceso de construcción de sus identidades y a punto de convertirse en jóvenes adultos.

### KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Preadolescentes, adolescente, YouTube, youtubers, identidad juvenil, valores, medios de comunicación social, cultura digital. Tweens, adolescent, YouTube, youtubers, youth identity, values, social media, digital culture.

## 1. Introduction and state of art

Today's adolescents and young adults, so-called millennials (Strauss & Howe, 2000), were born and have grown up in an environment permeated by media, and so their "natural" ecosystem can be described as the 2.0 social media environment. A number of studies have highlighted the role of media in the socialisation of children and young people, although until only a few years ago this meant the so-called traditional mass media (Arnett & al., 1995). In today's media ecosystem (Jenkins, 2006), colonised by countless devices, screens, social networks and apps, young people have an increasing number of options from which to choose and they have access to them at an increasingly young age.

The complex relationship between media and young people during the last century started out life with the identification of young people as belonging to a certain market niche. This led to the establishment, or rather, the recognition of a key stage in human development. Teens, young people between 13 and 19 years of age, were originally targeted in the 1950s by cinema, radio and television (Davis & Dickinson, 2004; Ross & Stein, 2008). Tweens or preadolescents, young people between 9 and 13 years old, were then identified as a market segment in the 1980s (Ekström & Tufte, 2007). Tweens, young consumers, are neither children nor adults (Linn, 2005); they are "between human being and becoming", as pointed out by Larocca & Fedele (2017).

Psychology and sociology have taught us that adolescence is a key stage of life and development in which adolescents are in the process of constructing their idea of themselves, as they make choices related to fundamental issues (academic, gender, etc.), which will influence their future life. Hence, they are more susceptible to the influence of the environment (Bernete, 2009), and it becomes essential to understand how adolescents interact with the digital environment (Blomfield & Barber, 2014).

We also know that the interaction of children with YouTube involves a series of characteristics, such as collaboration with peers and family, interaction with viewers, learning opportunities, civic engagement and identity formation (Lange, 2014; Lenhart & al., 2015), but there is still a need for research into the way in which so-called influencers may serve as guides in the processes of socialisation and identity construction of tweens.

Also, as summarized by Fedele (2011), we know that audiences can attribute to media four main kinds of social functions: entertainment (e.g. fun, humour, spending time, avoiding boredom, escaping routine), consumption situation (e.g. ritual, structural and relational use), narrative (e.g.: bardic and storytelling functions), and socialisation functions (e.g. personal identity and community building, learning about reality, society modelling, sharing and commenting, identification and admiration, parasocial relationships). As for social functions, social networks as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube have become a relevant area of social interrelation for adolescents in the context of their identity building process (Ahn, 2011). As for YouTube, according to Pérez-Torres & al. (2018: 63), young users show a mostly passive use, a characteristic that may largely favour the role of youtubers as model references in the construction of youth identity.

From these theoretical standpoints, the overall aim of the study is to observe how tweens integrate youtubers as referents of a teen digital culture, that is to say, to discover what preadolescents are attracted to regarding youtubers, which of the mentioned social functions they attribute to youtubers, and how they integrate the models and values proposed by youtubers, in their capacity as influencers.

This study combines a set of different theoretical perspectives: a constructivist approach, the tradition of cultural studies, the theory of uses and gratifications, and a gender perspective, since previous studies pointed out that girls and boys use social media in a different way (Oberst, Chamarro, & Renau, 2016).

### 1.1. The emergence of youtubers as an "authentic performance" for the young

Youtuber boom really took off in 2012, with the change of the YouTube interface, and by 2016 YouTube had become the second largest social network in the world after Facebook and the first in digital content (Bonaga & Turiel, 2016: 128). As these authors point out, the platform combines the sought-after sensation of intimacy between youtubers and users with the ability to position videos on search engines (YouTube uses Big Data analysis). In addition to the economic benefits and the huge global market represented by the platform, youtubers can become commercial brands and role models at the same time (Lovelock, 2017), especially amongst the very young. The ability to improvise, to change, and to surprise is a world away from the scripted and hermetic programming of traditional media and this makes youtubers very attractive to adolescents. According to Montes-Vozmediano, García-Jiménez & Menor-Sendra (2018: 68), "videos by adolescents are watched twice as much, and those by youtubers are those with the greatest impact".



The idea of youtubers as Web 2.0 micro-celebrities is connected to Senft's definition (2012), which refers to joining together "the double aspect of 'authentic' performance of self on social media as a 'brand identity'" with "wisely managed 'authenticity' for commercial gain". As Smith (2017: 3) states, "microcelebrity is fraught with difficulties around authenticity vs. self-interested promotion (Senft, 2012) and negotiating intimacy with commercial interest (Abidin, 2015)". On the one hand a Celebrity Studies research line analyses youtubers and vloggers beyond commercial interests, framing 2.0 celebrities in "a state of 'selfhood' which allows each person equal space to consummate a unique vision of themselves" (Smith, 2016: 1). On the other, several studies point out celebrities' symbolic markers of "authenticity" as representations of the working class (Biressi & Nunn, 2005; Oliva, 2014).

Successful youtuber microcelebrities, whom Bonaga and Turiel (2016: 120) define as "creators", become influencers: "As the name indicates, influencers are those who use their ability to communicate to influence the behaviour and opinions of third parties". Jerslev (2016: 5233) also asserts that "microcelebrity strategies are especially connected with the display of accessibility, presence, and intimacy online".

Youtubers, then, are an integral part of a teen culture as influencers and protagonists who help –directly or indirectly– to initiate the adolescents into multimedia products specifically aimed at them. The fact that many successful

youtubers are young people themselves makes it all the more valuable to analyse their relationship with adolescent internet users (Westenberg, 2016), since they may be role models through both identification and admiration mechanisms (i.e.: socialisation function).

To work as a role model (Calhoun, 2010) a person's behavior or their success can be emulated by others, especially by younger people. This notion is related to the aspirational models (real or fictional), which must be sufficiently removed to constitute an object of desire, but not so far as to be perceived as inaccessible or in such a way that all possibility of contact is lost (Massonnier, 2008: 47).

The identity building function, the manner in which characters are identified and empathised with, and even the parasocial relationships engaged in by media audiences have been documented over decades (e.g. Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005; Iguartua-Perosanz & Muñoz-Muriel, 2008; Livingstone, 1988). Many youtuber followers for example, especially those who have been followers for some time, expect certain familiar aspects which connect them to their youtuber, such as greetings, nicknames or "certain linguistic devices (e.g. overstressed or long vowels) (Dredge, 2016a) for comic or ludic effect, thereby inviting playful commentary and injecting gaiety into the community" (Cocker & Cronin, 2017: 8), and followers will protest when they do not appear on a regular basis.

Despite the differences in format between television and the internet, and the opportunities to interact, and despite adolescents' perception that they have greater freedom when interacting with the internet (Aranda, Roca, & Sánchez-Navarro, 2013), there are psychological mechanisms which are activated similarly by followers of television fiction and those on social media. For this reason, as it will be explained below, categories which are normally used for fictional characters will be employed in this study to analyse what tweens like of youtubers, given that so-called "influencers" are representations of real people.

**Youtubers are an integral part of a teen culture as influencers and protagonists who help initiate the adolescent into multimedia products specifically aimed at them. Also, they are both commercial brands and role models at the same time, especially amongst the very young, thanks to their ability to improvise, to change, and to surprise their audiences, as well as the sense of authenticity, accessibility and intimacy they share with their followers.**

## 2. Material and methodology

A mixed method approach (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007) was employed in this audience study, specifically a sequential explanatory design (Creswell, 2014), which was divided into two phases: (1) Quantitative analysis of the

audience via survey; (2) Qualitative analysis of the audience with focus groups. The protection of human subjects was guaranteed in the study, in accordance with protocols that were approved by the financing institution and the Research Ethics Committee at the Ramon Llull University.

### 2.1. Description of youtuber profiles

10 of the 20 most highly followed Spanish-language youtubers were selected (Socialblade, 2016) in order to ensure balance in terms of gender and variety in terms of YouTube channels thematic categories (videogames, music, memes/jokes, beauty/fashion, etc.). These were, in decreasing order of subscribers: ElrubiusOMG, Vegetta-777, Willyrex, ZacortGame, ElrincondeGiorgio, Wismichu, Staxx, Auronplay, ExpCaseros and YellowMellowMG.

The prominence of channels related to videogames should be pointed out (in line with the findings of Gómez-Pereda, 2014) as well as channels linked to entertainment and, in the case of ExpCaseros, self-learning experiments.

What preadolescents are more attracted to is entertainment and the feeling of being a part of a digital teen culture, which they can share with their peer group. Also, tweens are well acquainted with youtubers as public figures and micro-celebrities, but they admire their comic nature and their knowledge more than their look or the brand images: youtubers can be references for entertainment and sociability, but they do not create a desire in tweens to become a reflection of the so-called influencers.

All 10 can be considered influencers as they have more than a million subscribers (Berzosa, 2017), they present themselves as creators, generally using a language based on humour and proximity, they also generally have a presence on other channels and media, as well as being the focus of a true transmedia strategy.

### 2.2. Analytical instruments

#### 2.2.1. The questionnaire

Following a pilot survey (n=85) to test and validate the methodological tool in three secondary schools in Barcelona, Catalonia, a questionnaire was developed to discover what

preadolescents look for in the world of youtubers and if they project themselves in any way.

A Google form entitled "Young people's preferences" was designed for the definitive survey and was administered online in the classroom in the presence of teachers. The schools were contacted via email and the teachers were instructed on how to administer the questionnaire and told specifically not to mention the word "YouTube" explicitly.

The questionnaire, written in both official languages of Catalonia (Catalan and Spanish), had two parts:

- Five questions regarding sociodemographic data (age, gender, school, etc. with a strict respect for maintaining anonymity),
- Eight questions on the subject matter of the study: one open question and the rest with closed answers (some multiple choice and others on a 5 point Likert scale).

Among other questions, respondents were asked the reasons why they were interested in the 10 youtubers of the list. The characteristics they had to evaluate were based on a typology used in analysis of fictional characters: identification with a character, admiration towards a character, coolness, characters' closeness to own interests, entertainment and socialisation functions, such as sharing with a peer group (Buckingham, 1987; Fedele, 2011; García-Muñoz & Fedele, 2011; Iguartua-Perosanz & Muñoz-Muriel, 2008; Medrano & al., 2010).

The survey was undertaken during the month of December, 2016 by pupils in the first year of ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education, 11-12 years of age) in 41 public and private secondary schools in Catalonia, yielding a total of 1406 valid responses, 716 girls (50.9%) and 690 boys (49.1%). As for age, 87.1% (n=1,224) of the participants were 12 years old, with an average age of  $x=12.11$  (Median=12, Mode=12).

SPSS software was used to carry out the descriptive analysis and provided frequency tables and descriptive

statistics (mean, mode, median, and standard deviation) and bivariate analysis using the Chi square, Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests, depending on the type of variable (level of significance  $p < 0,05$ ).

### 2.2.2. Focus group interview script

The objective of the focus groups was to delve into preadolescents' feelings about, and interest in, youtubers. Moderators followed an interview script using semi-structured questions, which were grouped into 21 categories based on the variables of the quantitative phase, amongst which, for the purposes of this article, the following stand out:

- Youtubers' functions, e.g. identification, admiration, coolness, closeness, entertainment, peer-related functions.
- Media literacy, e.g. media production and dissemination processes (Ferrés & Piscitelli, 2012); the role of youtubers as actors and professionals.

The three focus groups, each of six participants (three boys and three girls), were carried out between January and March 2017. The participants from the focus groups were selected according to the following criteria: the school and the pupils' availability, being talkative, and having different levels of interest in the subject "Information technology". The focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim and analysed following the procedure of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Four different researchers in pairs and an official trainer of Atlas.ti, who discussed how to categorize responses until reaching a final consensus, carried out the coding process. The qualitative analysis was carried out with the help of Atlas.ti software.

The results of the Focus Group contributions were identified in the following way: Focus group number (FG1, FG2, FG3) + Participant (Boy/Girl) + Participant Number (in contribution order).

## 3. Analysis and results

### 3.1. Tweens' preferences related to youtubers

The youtubers from the list most recognised by tweens in the survey sample were AuronPlay (78.2%,  $n=1,120$ ), ElRubiusOMG (74.1%,  $n=1,042$ ), and Wismichu (66.4%,  $n=933$ ). Moreover, participants could indicate other youtubers that they liked, and this was done by 55.3% ( $n=777$ ), with 271 different youtubers mentioned, a fact that demonstrates a wide diversity amongst what tweens watch on YouTube. The other youtubers mentioned included DjMaRiio (2.7%,  $n=38$ ) and two women, Dulceida (2.6%,  $n=36$ ) and Yuya (1.2%,  $n=17$ ).

### 3.2. Social functions attributed to youtubers

The social functions attributed by participants, varied a great deal by youtuber, as shown in Table 1, with the entertainment function being the most valued one. In particular, concerning the second most valued function, closeness to their own interests, it has to be stressed that it is most valued in the case of ExpCaseros (35.5%,  $n=249$ ), the only youtuber focused on self-learning experiments. On the other hand, both coolness and socialisation functions were attributed to youtubers by more than 10% of tweens in the sample. Finally, items related to identification and admiration were valued by fewer respondents.

There are significant gender differences in the ratings of most of the proposed youtubers, which was more noticeable in the case of male youtubers (Auronplay:  $p < 0.001$ ; ElRubiusOMG:  $p < 0.001$ ; Vegetta777:  $p < 0.001$ ; Willyrex:  $p = 0.001$ ; Zacortgame:  $p < 0.001$ ) compared to the one female youtuber on the list, YellowMellowMG ( $p = 0.022$ ). In particular, boys tend to place more value on the identification function (even in the case of YellowMellow), while girls tend to place more value on socialisation functions. Also, especially in the case of gamers' channels, boys place more value on closeness to their interests, while girls place more value on the entertainment function. Finally, as for admiration functions, boys place more value on the attributes "intelligent" and "badass" (also in the case of YellowMellowMG), while girls place more value on a male youtuber being "good-looking".

In terms of identification, it is noteworthy that 9 out of 10 of the proposed youtubers were male, which is more than probably the reason why girls did not choose this characteristic.

Once more, the case ExpCaseros is worth noticing, since no gender differences were found for this self-learning experiments Youtuber, so that both girls and boys like him for the same reasons, including the closeness to their interests.

There are differences in the open option ( $p = 0.001$ ), above all in relation to Dulceida, who was only mentioned by girls (5%,  $n=36$ ) and in relation to DjMaRiio, who was only mentioned by boys (5.5%,  $n=38$ ).

**Table 1. YouTubers' Social Functions**

		Entertainm ent	Closeness to own interests	Coolness	Socialisation functions	Identification	Admiration			
YouTuber		He is funny	He talks about things which interest me	He is famous	My friends like him/her	I would like to be like him/her	He is badass	He is intelligent	He is good- looking	
Auronplay	n	533	112	108	101	93	86	37	30	
	%	48.5%	10.2%	9.8%	9.2%	8.5%	7.8%	3.4%	2.7%	
ElrubiusOMG	n	547	69	158	124	69	40	12	22	
	%	52.5%	6.6%	15.2%	11.9%	6.6%	3.8%	1.2%	2.1%	
Wismichu	n	451	105	88	82	67	84	32	24	
	%	48.3%	11.3%	9.4%	8.8%	7.2%	9%	3.4%	2.6%	
Vegetta777	n	166	101	141	149	55	52	52	21	
	%	22.5%	13.7%	19.1%	20.2%	7.5%	7.1%	7.1%	2.8%	
Willyrex	n	221	85	129	127	48	57	36	28	
	%	30.2%	11.6%	17.6%	17.4%	6.6%	7.8%	4.9%	3.8%	
ElrincondeGiorgio	n	345	81	64	44	51	82	24	33	
	%	47.7%	11.2%	8.8%	6.1%	7%	11.3%	3.3%	4.6%	
ExpCaseros	n	144	249	42	34	67	36	116	14	
	%	20.5%	35.5%	6%	4.8%	9.5%	5.1%	16.5%	2%	
Staxx	n	199	96	96	42	60	52	37	32	
	%	32.4%	15.6%	15.6%	6.8%	9.8%	8.5%	6%	5.2%	
ZacortGame	n	143	90	82	54	76	76	35	23	
	%	24.7%	15.6%	14.2%	9.2%	13.1%	13.1%	6.1%	4%	
YellowMellowMG	n	167	90	59	45	72	41	33	23	
	%	31.5%	17%	11.1%	8.5%	13.6%	7.7%	6.2%	4.5%	
Average		%	35.9%	13.1%	12.7%	10.3%	8.9%	8.1%	5.8%	3.2%

Percentages calculated excluding missing values. Source: made by the authors.

The number of mentions to youtubers made in the qualitative results do coincide with the three first youtubers on the quantitative list, AuronPlay, ElRubiusOMG and Wismichu, but there are also many other comments on other youtubers, such as Dulceida and Yuya.

The characteristics mostly mentioned by participants are knowledge (admiration function) and humour (entertainment function), particularly in the case of Hamza Zaidi (though not included in the list), even if there was also evidence of the importance given to identification and closeness with some youtubers, as can be seen in the following fragment from FG3:

- FG3-Boy1: Hamza. Hamza Zaidi. He's from Morocco, but he's Spanish and speaks Spanish and everything and he's very funny.
- Moderator: And do you imitate him? Or what's funny about him?
- FG3-Girl2: No, it's that sometimes he uses expressions which we say ... [...] we don't laugh at him.
- Moderator: So you don't laugh at him, then, but he is funny.
- FG3-Boy1: No, he does it on purpose. For example, instead of saying "bed", he says "beeeeed".
- Moderator: And you say that when you are out in the playground and things?
- FG3-Boy1: Yes.

### 3.3. Media literacy dimensions

Both in the open questions of the survey and in the qualitative phase, several comments denote a sort of media literacy in the participants, since they are able to recognise both media production and dissemination processes, and what being a youtuber means.

First, in the survey the respondents were asked in an open question what they do not like about YouTube. Some of them indicate, in the open option, items that can be categorised as YouTube commercial mechanisms (3.5%, n=49) –as the bell, the clickbait, and overall the ads–, the lack of netiquette and rude behaviours of particular youtubers (5%, n=70), and the risks for minors (0.4%, n=6), as in the case of the protection of their identity and privacy. Also, in the qualitative phase, preadolescents have either an explicit (FG3Boy2: "Google pays for monetization on YouTube"; FG3Boy1: "And if you put ads [on your channel] you get paid more") or implicit understanding of the dynamics and commercial demands of youtubers.

This implicit understanding is connected to the reasons for liking and disliking youtubers, since participants –in particular girls– are critical of offensive comments or behaviour. For instance, the two youtubers at the top of the



ranking, AuronPlay and Wismichu, favourably rated as “badass”, are also unpopular with some participants in the focus groups, while one of those most commented upon youtuber and most highly rated for authenticity, knowledge and respect for her followers is Yuya:

– FG3-Girl1: (I don’t like) big-heads. That’s why I like Yuya, because she has a lot of followers but she hasn’t changed (...) and she respects her followers more than others.

– FG3-Boy4: She’s very calm, she is. (...)

– Moderator: It’s the real her? She is not fake?

– FG3-Girl1: No, she’s like that.

Second, almost all the boys and girls in the focus groups recognised that there was a difference between the character on YouTube –with its pros (fame and money) and cons (loss of intimacy and anonymity, risks associated with fame)–, and the real person:

– FG1-Boy3: And a lot of youtubers also say that they often act out a character on YouTube, but that afterwards they are very different.

– Moderator: They say that?

– (Some): Yes. [...]

– FG3-Boy3: For example Wismichu said in a video that he was really funny in videos but he was more serious in real life.

– FG3-Boy2: I also saw a video with youtubers... and when you see them in that video they are really nice and friendly, but when they do their own videos they turn really badass. They say things like: “I don’t like that”, or “Get out of here!”.

On the other hand, participants recognise the role of youtubers as professionals and workers. In the survey, 4.5% (n=63) of respondents said they would like to be a youtuber when they grow up, an option indicated more by boys (7.2%, n=50) than by girls (1.8%, n=13) ( $p<.0001$ ), while 9 participants (0.6%), 2 girls and 7 boys, indicated that they already had their own YouTube channel. In the focus groups, participants also pointed out that being a youtuber could be a profitable and enjoyable profession, although it could also be very stressful and challenging.

**Youtubers are incorporated into tweens’ leisure time practices and that are seen more as actors of a teen digital culture, rather than as identification or admiration models as influencers, mostly given the critical attitude preadolescents have of them.**

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The aim of the study was to delve into the risks and the opportunities associated with the relation between tweens and specific social media actors, the youtubers. The quantitative and qualitative results have allowed us to respond to the overall objective.

Related to tweens’ preferences and youtubers’ functions in tweens’ life, on the one hand, it can be stated that preadolescents are more attracted to entertainment and the feeling of being part of a digital teen culture, which they can share with their peer group. On the other hand, even if they recognise some kind of attraction of fame amongst the models embodied by youtubers, they distrust the short-term nature and the risks related to this job; they are also wary of certain attitudes and codes youtubers express which may be offensive.

With regard to the possible ability of youtubers to foster models as influencers, we have observed that the characteristics valued depend a lot on the particular youtuber. At the time this study was completed, the youtubers best-known by preadolescents were AuronPlay, ElrubiusOMG and Wismichu, who were also regarded as the funniest. But when participants were asked to mention spontaneously who they liked and why, there were many more, including women such as Dulceida and Yuya, thus representing better gender and ethnic background, as well as channel subject variety.

Preadolescents value the humour of youtubers above all else, and in a very distant second place, the proximity of youtubers to young people’s interests, that is the entertainment and socialisation functions aimed at sharing the

content with their peers. It is significant that Yuya is the youtuber who received the most favourable comments and this was because of her knowledge, her good relationship with her followers and her authenticity.

Aspects such as coolness, sharing with peers, or identification are more highly rated than others such as looks, or intelligence as factors of attraction.

The participants in our study are well acquainted with youtubers as public figures and micro-celebrities, but they admire their comic nature and their knowledge more than their look or the brand images, which they may represent. They are still present as reference for entertainment and sociability, whilst not being of chief importance and without creating a desire in participants to become a reflection of the so-called influencers.

So we could say that youtubers are incorporated into tweens' leisure time practices and that are seen more as actors of a teen digital culture, rather than as identification or admiration models as influencers, mostly given the critical attitude preadolescents have of them. When preadolescents are asked what they want to be when they are older, being a youtuber is seen more as a hobby than a profession. Hence, it can be observed that YouTube still has a limited impact on young people at this stage of their identity development.

This does not diminish the fact that preadolescents know and imitate youtubers' language and expressions, or follow those they like, and even enjoy some of the "badass" youtubers, nor does it mean that they do not recognise the risks of the loss of intimacy and the abuses which are present and may become amplified by the digital environment. The comments of our participants show they know what it is to be media literate in production and dissemination processes and, lesser, in ideology and values dimensions (Ferrés & Piscitelli, 2012): They comment on commercial strategies, they are comfortable using information terms such as monetization, and they are very critical of offensive and discriminatory attitudes.

Lastly, gender bias is clearly evident not only in the lower number of female youtubers and the social functions attributed to youtubers, but also in the fact that there are three times more boys than girls who have had a YouTube channel and there are four times more boys interested in a future as youtubers.

There is a need for more research into the role of exclusion and the function of refuge which social media might exercise over the youngest boys and girls, as noted by Michikyan and Suárez-Orozco (2016: 413): "Conscientiousness maintained a consistently protective role over time while hostile classroom contexts increased vulnerability over time, particularly for girls". There is also room for further research to look into differences according to age group and to analyse whether social media foster the development of the new generations' individual and differentiated characteristics –in the sense of creating a mirage of social diversity and identity on the platforms, as in Jenkins (2006)– and if they do so both as consumers and prosumers. We agree with Pérez-Torres & al. (2018), when they point out that it is recommendable to increase the sample of youtubers, using selection criteria not based on the number of followers, and extend the analysis to blogs and Instagram.

Fully incorporated in the digital ecosystem as they are, it seems that preadolescents are on the point of making the leap into full adolescence. Once there, they may find themselves lacking referents. In this sense, we would argue that educommunication in schools and the idea of the prosumer should be made more of. YouTube and youtubers should not only be used as a form of animated information or as a way of identifying those guilty of performing in today's "market of the ego" (Rivière, 2009); youtubers contribute to the range of opportunities and servitudes of the neoliberal system we belong to, which includes gender stereotypes.

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# Towards understanding young children's digital lives in China and Australia

Hacia la comprensión de las vidas digitales de los niños en China y Australia

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## ABSTRACT

This article develops insights and generates new lines of inquiry into young children's digital lives in China and Australia. It brings to dialogue findings from a national study of young children's digital media use in urban settings in China with findings from studies in Australia. This is not presented as a direct comparison, but rather as an opportunity to shed light on children's digital lives in two countries and to account for the impact of context in relatively different social and cultural circumstances. The article outlines findings from a study of 1,171 preschool-aged children (3 to 7-year-olds) in six provinces in China, including the frequency of their use of television, early education digital devices, computers, tablet computers and smartphones, music players, e-readers and games consoles. It also focuses on various activities such as watching cartoons, using educational apps, playing games and participating in video chat. Methods included a multistage sampling process, random selection of kindergartens, a weighted sampling process, the generation of descriptive data and the use of linear regression analysis, and a chi-square test. The study demonstrates the significance of a range of factors that influence the amount of time spent with digital media. The contrast with Australian studies produces new insights and generates new research questions.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo desarrolla ideas y genera nuevas líneas de investigación sobre las vidas digitales de los niños en China y Australia, en discusión con las conclusiones de estudios nacionales sobre el uso de los medios digitales por parte de los niños en entornos urbanos en China y Australia. El trabajo gira en torno al mundo digital de los niños en los dos países, analizando el impacto del contexto en ámbitos sociales y culturales significativamente diferentes. El estudio abarca una muestra de 1.171 niños de 3 a 7 años, de seis provincias de China, presentando la frecuencia de uso de televisión, dispositivos digitales en la educación temprana, ordenadores, tabletas y teléfonos inteligentes, reproductores de música, libros electrónicos y videoconsolas. También se enfoca en diversas actividades como ver dibujos animados, usar aplicaciones educativas, jugar a videojuegos y participar en videollamadas. Los métodos incluyeron un proceso de muestreo multietapa, con selección aleatoria de jardines infantiles, un proceso de muestreo ponderado, la generación de datos descriptivos y el uso del análisis de regresión lineal, y una prueba de chi-cuadrado. El estudio demuestra la importancia del rango de factores que influyen en la cantidad de tiempo que pasan con los medios digitales. El contraste con los estudios australianos produce nuevos conocimientos y genera nuevas preguntas de investigación.

## KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Digital media, young children, pre-school, screen time, tablet, computers, television.

Medios digitales, infancia, preescolar, tiempo frente a la pantalla, tableta, ordenadores, televisión.



## 1. Introduction

Young children's digital practices present parents, educators and policymakers with a significant social challenge, but remain under-researched. This article outlines findings from a study of the digital practices of 1,171 preschool-aged students (3 to 7-year-olds) in China, and these findings are then considered dialogically with findings of available studies in Australia. We do not present this as a scientific comparison, but rather as an opportunity to provide context to understand the data from China and to develop new research questions. This approach has proved valuable to us as scholars conducting research in China and Australia because it sheds light on children's digital lives in different social and cultural circumstances. The article presents a literature review before outlining the data from China in detail. It then provides some findings from available Australian studies. Our approach draws on Bakhtin's theory of dialogism (1984) to suggest that understanding local data is enhanced by discussing findings from other contexts. Our approach has limitations because while the data from China was gathered and analysed by the lead author, the Australian findings are from a small number of limited secondary source studies. Despite this limitation, the article generates interesting propositions about young children's digital lives in China.

### 1.1. Literature review

Children's digital experiences have emerged as a worldwide issue not only because screen media has become an everyday part of many children's lives, but because digital lives begin at ever younger ages (Holloway, Sefton-Green, & Livingstone, 2013). Data from EU Kids Online indicates an increase in young children's Internet use in recent years. In some countries, for example, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands, almost 70% of students aged 3 to 4 go online (Holloway, Sefton-Green, & Livingstone, 2013). Mobile devices, especially touchscreen media, provide young children with easier digital access than was previously available (Thorpe & al., 2015; Marsh & al., 2016). In the United States, the percentage of young children's mobile device use increased sharply from 38% to 72% in just two years from 2011 to 2013, reflecting the introduction of tablet computers (Common Sense Media, 2011, 2013).

The rapid uptake of digital technologies by young children is not just a Western phenomenon. In China, there were more than 1.18 million children aged from 6 to 11 using the Internet in 2015, particularly via smartphones (CNNIC, 2016). Research conducted in China shows that although television still dominates young children's screen time, touch screen media is available in almost every household (Li & Wang, 2014; Yu, 2016; Yang, Wang, & Zhu, 2016). These significant changes have caused concern in China. A sample survey in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province (Yu, 2016) indicates 51% of parents of young children hold negative attitudes towards touchscreen media, with concerns about vision health, social interaction and Internet addiction. Research shows that youngsters have always been seen as more vulnerable to media and technologies than older children (Paik & Comstock, 1994; Ostrov, Gentile, & Mullins, 2013; Radesky & al., 2016). However, there is perhaps more concern about children's digital media use than is warranted. For instance, reporting on a survey conducted in Beijing, Li & Wang (2014) argue young children's lives have not been overly occupied by digital media. They found that children's daily total time for playing with toys, outdoor activities, and reading is 2.5 times greater than engagement with media.

Along with China's fast-paced economic development, people in China are living through significant social changes, including changes to childhood contexts. The one-child policy has changed since 2013, potentially altering the family structure (Chen & al., 2016). Furthermore, fierce labor market competition reinforces parents' pressure and leads them to privilege their children's education (Chi, Qian, & Wu, 2012; Chen, 2015). These authors suggest early education starts from the moment a baby is born, with significant uptake of educational toys and early education curricula which potentially impacts Chinese young children's education, entertainment, and parenting.

Meanwhile, there has been limited research on the impact of socio-economic demography on young children's digital media use in China, which is of concern, given significant disparities in household income in China. As scholars have argued, to effectively understand children's media use, it should be located within familial, economic and geographic contexts (Jordan, 2016; Calvert & Wilson, 2008). In one Chinese study, Li, Zhou and Wu (2014) investigated media use of 1,195 infants aged between 3 to 6 in Ningbo, Zhejiang province and found that time spent on television is associated with children's age, family income and parents' education. Li, Zhou and Wu (2014) suggest that minors from lower income families or families where parents have less formal education tend to watch more television. Meanwhile, children living with grandparents or those from higher-income families spend more time playing video games. These results are in accord with those found by Western scholars (Huston & al., 1999; Anand & Krosnick, 2005). Overall, though research about young children's digital lives in different socioeconomic situations is still limited in China and internationally.

## 1.2. Research question

China is a developing country with unbalanced economic development, and children's media use is likely different across regions. However, no large national survey has ever been conducted. Secondly, the amount of research related to this topic is sparse in China, and most studies simply provide descriptive data. Thirdly, it is difficult to find data on Chinese young children's digital media use in English, which hinders international scholars from understanding the situation in China, or making comparisons to Western data.

Therefore, this research draws a national picture of young children's digital media use at home in urban China. The first question focuses on the kinds of digital media children access at home since household ownership of digital media reflects values, requirements, and preferences of each family. Questions about usage patterns and predictors provide a general understanding of young children's digital media behavior and disparities between different demographic variables. We also ask how parents in China value different kinds of digital media and what rules they have for children's usage as it has been shown that young children's media exposure is strongly related to parents' mediation strategies (Wu & al., 2014; Nikken & Schols, 2015). These data provide a better understanding of digital childhoods in China; placing them in dialogue with available studies from Australia enables preliminary discussion about similarities and differences between the East and West in the context of the globalized media industries.

## 2. Methodology

Data about 1,171 preschoolers' (aged 3 to 7) media use was collected in China by the lead author through a parent-report questionnaire from April 2017 to June 2017. A multistage sampling process was conducted in mainland China. Initially, 27 provinces were clustered into three categories according to indicators reflecting the regional economic development and education quality, which include GDP, education funding, number of kindergartens, teacher and student ratio. Four municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing) directly under the Central Government were excluded due to incomparable population and level of development. This stratification provides a better representation of diversities in economics, education, and geography. Next, six provinces were chosen randomly in each category, and the best-developed city was chosen since access to kindergartens was more possible in those cities. Lastly, a random kindergarten was chosen in each city and questionnaires were sent to all the preschoolers and completed by one of each child's primary caregivers. The overall response rate is as high as 78%, as teachers in every class asked parents for help to support the study.

Table 1 shows the sampling result in each city. As the number of students and response rate differ in each kindergarten, a weighted sample according to preschooler population size in each region was used to achieve a more reliable representation.

To understand the digital lives of Chinese young children, descriptive data such as average time spent and frequency of media usage were represented. A linear regression analysis was conducted to explore important predictors of time spent on different kinds of media, and a chi-square test was used to see how parents' attitudes toward different media vary among different social-economic status groups.

Australian studies discussed include the longitudinal study of Australian children (AIFS, 2016), and studies on children's television viewing (ACMA, 2015), young children's mobile touchscreen media use (Coenen & al., 2015), and parents' beliefs about their young children's screen time and physical activities (Hamilton & al., 2015). The findings from these studies are placed into dialogue with the findings from China to provide a deeper understanding of the Chinese data. Bakhtin's dialogic approach (1984) suggests acts of interpretation are inevitably relational and productive where they recognise opportunities for dynamic interaction of concepts and ideas. He suggests dialogic relationships are an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifesta-

tions of human life, everything that has meaning and significance' (Bakhtin, 1984: 40). We have been inspired by this line of thinking in our interpretation of findings from the

**Table 1. Sampling result**

Category	Region	Sample size	After weighted
Level 1	Shanghai	139	60
Level 2	Suzhou from Jiangsu Province	263	281
Level 3	Xi'an from Shaanxi Province	324	157
	Jinan from Shandong Province	143	305
Level 4	Nanchang from Jiangxi Province	155	186
	Wuhan from Hubei Province	147	182
Total number		1,171	1,171

Chinese data, not just to gain greater insight into the Chinese data, but to generate new questions about young children's use of digital media in different social and cultural contexts.

### 3. Findings from the Chinese study

#### 3.1. Digital media in the lives of young children

Young children in urban China are surrounded by digital media at home. In a typical family, there are 1.42 televisions<sup>1</sup>, 0.69 early educational tablets<sup>2</sup>, 0.70 desk computers, 1 laptop, 0.83 tablets, 2.96 smartphones, 0.5 music players, 0.17 e-readers and 0.15 game consoles. 93.2% of families own at least one computer (pc or laptop), 65.9% of them have tablets, and 52.1% bought early educational tablets for their child. Only 3.6% of families have no television while the percentage of families without any e-reader or game console is high at 84.8% and 90% respectively.

#### 3.2. Usage patterns and predictors

##### 3.2.1. Usage patterns

Table 2 shows average time spent on each kind of digital media when asked about media consumption for the previous day. Over 99% of infants use at least one digital device on both weekdays and weekends and the average total screen time is 63 minutes and 88 minutes respectively. 14.2% of children exceed 2 hours' total screen time on weekdays while 26.7% exceed 2 hours per day on weekends. Television is the most frequently used, followed by smartphones, tablets and early educational tablets.

Although a large proportion of kids in the study never use early educational tablets (46.9%), computers (47%), tablets (39.4%), and especially game consoles (91%), only 9.7% never use smartphones. Table 2 also indicates that tablets and smartphones are the most popular and most often used mobile devices for young children. When a tablet is available for infants, they spend more time on it than other media, except for television.

**Table 2. Average digital media screen time on a certain day**

Digital media types	Average time spent		Average time spent in those who used the media		Percentage of children who used the media	
	Weekday	Weekend	Weekday	Weekend	Weekday	Weekend
Television	0:37	0:47	0:52	0:59	70.8%	80.3%
Early educational tablets	0:05	0:07	0:26	0:34	18.3%	20.7%
Computer	0:03	0:06	0:32	0:37	9.7%	15.4%
Tablet	0:06	0:13	0:31	0:46	20.6%	28.5%
Smartphone	0:09	0:13	0:22	0:25	41%	50.3%
Music player	0:02	0:03	0:27	0:27	6.6%	9.6%
E-reader	0:01	0:01	0:21	0:34	3.9%	3.2%
Game console	0:00	0:01	0:36	0:38	1.1%	2.6%
Total screen time	1:03	1:28	1:03	1:29	99.7%	99.2%

Table 3 shows minors mostly watch children's television programs and cartoons on tablets and smartphones. Youku, iQiyi and Tencent Video are their favorite video apps, as listed by parents. Nearly half of young children (47.9%) play games on tablets while 38.2% play games on smartphones. The most popular games among kids are Talking Tom, Carrot Fantasy, Pop Star and girls' dressing games. Several games listed by parents might be considered by other parents as inappropriate for the age group, including Plants vs. Zombies and King of Glory.

Parents identify the use of educational apps more often than other categories of apps. For instance, «Jiligualá» for learning English, «Wukong Shizi» for learning Chinese, «My numbers» for numeracy, video apps such as «Himalayas» to listen to stories, and there are also some integrated early educational apps combining cartoons, gaming, singing and 'common sense' education, such as «Baby Bus», «Xiao Banlong» and «Shima Shima Tora no Shimajiro» (from Japan). Tablets are used more often than smartphones for accessing educational apps (44.4% compared to 28.5%). However, 41.5% use smartphones to make phone calls or video chat. WeChat, the most popular social media in China, is listed by some parents as young children's favorite app.

##### 3.2.2. Predictors of usage patterns

Another aspect of digital media use investigated were the factors influencing the amount of time spent with digital media. Table 4 shows the linear regression analysis result of the main time factors. Here we consider four



potential reasons: (1) Children's demographic variables like gender (1=boy, 0=girl) and age (months). (2) Family socioeconomic status such as parents' education and yearly family income. (3) Family structure including sibling presence (1=yes, 0=no) and whether the child is mainly taken care of by parents or grandparents (1=parents, 0=grandparents), and (4) Region (1=Shanghai, 0=other regions).

Gender and age do not have much influence on young children's screen time. However, older children are likely to spend more time on computers than younger children.

Young children whose mothers have higher degrees spend less time on television, early educational tablets and smartphones. Total screen time also decreases with higher education, although fathers' education seems to have little effect. Family income is significantly related to how much digital media a family accesses ( $r=0.327$ ,  $p<.001$ ), which means that young children from higher-income families may have more access to different digital media. Time spent on digital media does not have any association with family income, though, except for television. These results indicate that mother's education and, to some extent, family income are predictors of screen time use.

Sibling presence is an important variable in relation to screen time on television. Since 35.4% parents claim that they might use media as a babysitter because they do not have enough time to take care of their children, raising more children may lead to lack of time. In addition, compared with other media, television is more appropriate for siblings to watch together while other media are usually used alone.

In China, 64.4% of young children are taken care of by parents while 33% are cared for by grandparents. A very small proportion of young children are raised by nannies (0.5%) or other people (1.9%). As shown in Table 4, time spent on television and smartphones increases if grandparents take the child care. The chi-square test found

Digital activities	Smartphone	Tablet
Watching cartoon or watching kids program	79.1%	87.2%
Watching programs not for kids	1.5%	1.5%
Educational Apps	28.5%	44.4%
Arts Apps	16.6%	16.1%
Playing games	38.2%	47.9%
Making phone call and video chat	41.5%	11.7%
Others	5.1%	2.4%

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables					
	Television (Coefficient/ Standard error)	Early educational tablets (Coefficient/ Standard error)	Computer (Coefficient/ Standard error)	Tablet (Coefficient/ Standard error)	Smartphone (Coefficient/ Standard error)	Total screen time (Coefficient/ Standard error)
Constant	59.29*** (9.56)	9.38* (3.82)	-2.96 (3.26)	12.45 (6.35)	11.94** (4.22)	84.54*** (16.12)
<b>Gender</b>						
Female (ref.) <sup>3</sup>						
Male	0.46 (2.71)	-0.53 (1.08)	0.57 (0.93)	0.77 (1.78)	-0.03 (1.19)	-0.17 (4.55)
<b>Age</b>	-0.07 (0.13)	-0.04 (0.05)	0.16*** (0.05)	-0.09 (0.09)	0.08 (0.06)	0.19 (0.22)
<b>Mother education</b>						
High school (ref.)						
Vocational school	-4.69 (4.20)	-0.23 (1.67)	-1.01 (1.44)	-1.45 (2.78)	-2.54 (1.84)	-15.27* (7.10)
Bachelor degree	-9.12* (4.62)	-2.58 (1.82)	-1.57 (1.58)	-1.40 (3.04)	-1.68 (2.01)	-19.73* (7.75)
Postgrad.	-8.61 (7.17)	-6.78* (2.82)	0.87 (2.45)	-3.66 (4.67)	-8.07** (3.10)	-28.71* (11.99)
<b>Father education</b>						
High school (ref.)						
Vocational school	0.33 (4.39)	1.58 (1.75)	-1.77 (1.59)	1.81 (2.90)	-1.95 (1.92)	4.05 (7.38)
Bachelor degree	0.75 (4.62)	0.88 (1.84)	-1.50 (1.58)	1.70 (3.06)	2.37 (2.02)	1.58 (7.82)
Postgrad.	1.46 (6.59)	0.02 (2.60)	0.37 (2.25)	0.30 (4.32)	3.95 (2.85)	6.56 (11.06)
<b>Family income</b>	-0.23* (0.10)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.06 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.04)	-2.02 (0.16)
<b>Sibling Presence</b>						
No (ref.)						
Yes	11.17*** (2.98)	0.84 (1.18)	-0.56 (1.02)	-1.10 (1.95)	-0.38 (1.30)	13.33** (4.97)
<b>Caregiver</b>						
Grandparents (ref.)						
Parents	-13.55*** (2.90)	-1.14 (1.15)	-0.51 (0.99)	0.533 (1.91)	-3.00* (1.27)	-18.18*** (4.83)
<b>Region</b>						
Other regions (ref.)						
Shanghai	-0.77 (5.49)	2.21 (2.15)	1.09 (1.85)	16.83*** (3.58)	1.88 (2.39)	27.11** (8.97)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.043	0.006	0.014	0.017	0.015	0.044
n	860	837	837	841	846	813

that parents are more likely to set strict rules than grandparents for smartphone use ( $\chi^2=9.98$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.019$ ) which may lead to young children's moderate use.

In this research, different regions relate to the difference in economic development and investment in education. However, large disparities are only found between Shanghai and other regions. In Shanghai, one of the best-developed cities in China, young children tend to spend more time on new technology like tablets. The average time spent on tablets in Shanghai (24.9 min) is more than twice compared with other districts (9.8 min). Furthermore, as shown in Table 4, time spent on tablets is not determined by family income, but by region, which indicates that parents in developed districts may have more open attitudes toward new technologies.

### 3.3. Other activities in young children's lives

Table 5 represents young children's average time spent on non-digital activities. In China, large numbers of preschoolers spend their whole day in kindergarten. The average school time on weekdays can be as long as 7 hours 23 minutes, 5 days a week. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are all included in kindergarten time. 46.6% of children take on after-school training like English, Maths, dancing, musical instruments and other activities. On weekends they spend nearly an hour on outdoor activities and with toys, which implies that young children in China undertake significant physical activities. Worries about excessive screen media taking up recommended physical time may be overstated for most Chinese young children.

### 3.4. Parents' attitude and rules on digital media

The data indicate that parents act as gatekeepers in young children's digital media use. 82.5% say they download apps for their children and 86.5% check the quality of apps before allowing their children to use them. However, using digital media as babysitters is sometimes inevitable due to lack of time or the need to occupy or distract small children in public places. Only 38.1% of parents state that they seldom or never leave their baby alone with media. Thus, parents make rules for children's media use which also reflect their attitude towards different digital media.

Parents believe digital media can be both helpful and harmful to young children. Smartphones and game consoles are blamed for causing harm by most parents while early educational tablets are more valued (see supplementary table at <https://bit.ly/2xn5gYE>). Chinese parents tend to pay attention to the educational function of media, while the role of entertainment is less important. Therefore, they make rules for media content and time spent with television, computers, tablets, and smartphones, but there are fewer rules about using early educational tablets.

Demographic variables like parents' education, family income, and region are important indicators of parents' opinion on digital media. Respondents with higher incomes and higher degrees or those from more developed regions are more likely to hold positive attitudes towards tablets and smartphones. However, as shown in Table 6, parents with less education are more likely to believe in the educational value of early educational tablets (mother:  $p<.01$ , father:  $p<.01$ ). Children whose parents achieve higher degrees are more likely to be nonusers of early educational tablets.

## 4. Australian studies

As noted, there is only a small amount of data about young Australian children's use of digital media at home. The best available data is from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, which outlines screen time use and parental attitudes for a cohort of several thousand children, but the study is limited because the cohort was aged 4-

**Table 5. Average time spent on other important activities**

	Average time spent		Average time spent in those who had the activity		Percentage of children who had the activity	
	Weekday	Weekend	Weekday	Weekend	Weekday	Weekend
Sleeping	9:14	9:43	9:14	9:43	100%	100%
Time in kindergarten	7:23	0:03	7:56	7:20	92.3%	30.4%
Out-door activities	0:47	1:05	0:51	1:19	92.3%	82.2%
After-school training	0:22	0:42	1:17	1:30	29%	46.6%
Homework	0:20	0:27	0:33	0:38	60.2%	71.1%
Playing with toys	0:48	1:05	0:50	1:08	95.9%	96.3%

5 in 2004 when the study commenced, and the data is therefore from a previous era. The 2016 report provides comparative data for the cohort from 2004 to 2012, when the same children are aged 12-13. When aged 4-5, the parents reported their children watched an average of 119 minutes of television per day on weekdays and 131 minutes on weekends. In 2012, at age 12-13, this same cohort of infants was watching 116 minutes of television per weekday and 151 minutes on the weekend (AIFS, 2016: 106). The data also shows that in families with higher levels of education, children were less likely to watch television for more than two hours a day, especially on weekdays. As 4-5-year-olds, 42% of children whose parents were not university educated watched more than 2 hours of television per day, compared with 32% for children in families where a parent was university educated. In 2004, parents reported that their 4-5-year-old infants used home computers for an average of 14 minutes per day. 6.5% used computers for more than an hour per day on weekdays and 19 minutes on weekends (families were not asked about electronic game use). In 2012, the same cohort of children reported that they used electronic games or computers for an average of 88 minutes per day on weekdays and 107 minutes on weekends. The study shows that by age 12-13, the cohort was using screens for an average of about three hours on weekdays and four hours on weekends.

A study conducted by the Australian Communications and Media Authority of 1,137 adult respondents with children aged 0-4 in 2015 suggests their children watch 114 minutes of free to air television per day, which is comparable to the 2004 study data (ACMA, 2015: 5). The ACMA study shows that 5-12-year-olds watched 80 minutes of free to air television per day and overall, youngsters aged 0-14 watched 33 minutes less per day of free to air television in 2013, compared to 2001, reflecting children's engagement with digital technologies. The study also shows that 77% of parents said they time-restrict their kids television viewing and 99% of parents said it was important their children watch age appropriate programs (ACMA, 2015: 13).

Coenen's study of mobile device use (2015) surveyed Australian parents of 159 children aged 0-5 and showed that 62.1% of children watched television for more than 30 minutes per day on weekdays and 65.8% on weekends. The next most used devices were tablet computers, with 25.8% greater than 30 minutes use on weekdays and 31.3% on weekends. Hamilton and others (2015) conducted a small study of 20 parents of 2-5-year-olds to better understand parents' views about physical activity and screen time. Parents in their study argued that limiting screen time promotes physical activity, improves mental wellbeing and stimulates creativity through play. Neumann's study (2015) of the home digital environments of 69 2-4 year olds in Australia surveyed parents and found that the children used television for a mean time of 80 minutes per day, tablet computers for 20 minutes per day, mobiles phones for 10 minutes, the internet for about 8 minutes per day and games consoles for about 5 minutes per day.

## 5. Placing the Chinese and Australian findings in dialogue with each other

We are not presenting these 'comparisons' as scientific assessments, but rather as an opportunity to generate new lines of inquiry. Perhaps most interestingly, the findings suggest young Chinese children spend less time on screens on both weekdays and weekends than young children in Australia. Chinese children's total screen time use per weekday is 63 minutes and on weekends is 88 minutes, while kids in Australia watch television for 114 minutes per day (ACMA, 2015), and use other devices in addition to this (Coenen & al., 2015, Neumann, 2015). It is interesting to consider explanations for this disparity. Firstly, children in China are involved in long hours of formal education at a younger age than Australian children, perhaps providing Australian children with more time to access

screen media. Secondly, the Chinese results indicate that children with more siblings might spend more time

**Table 6. Chi-square test results of parents' attitude on early educational tablets and their education (\*p≤.05; \*\*p≤.01; \*\*\* p≤.001)**

	Helpful	Harmful	No effect	Never used
<b>Mother's education</b>				
High school graduate	58.1%	2.5%	7.6%	31.8%
Vocational school graduate	57.9%	0%	9.7%	32.4%
Bachelor degree	55.2%	2%	8.4%	34.5%
Master degree and above	31.7%	0%	11.7%	56.7%
df=9; $\chi^2=24.23$ ; p=.004**				
<b>Father's education</b>				
High school graduate	60.6%	1.8%	5.5%	32.1%
Vocational school graduate	61%	0.8%	6.4%	31.7%
Bachelor degree	52.1%	1.3%	12.2%	34.4%
Master degree and above	37.5%	0%	10%	52.5%
df=9; $\chi^2=26.16$ ; p=.002**				

on television which also increases the total screen time. As most Chinese young children (61.5%) are still the only child in their families, they may have less screen time than Australian children who generally grow up with siblings. Thirdly, we can speculate that children in China spend less time with digital media because of parents' attitudes to the benefits and harms of media. While it is impossible to make direct comparisons about attitude from the available data, significant numbers of both Chinese and Australian parents believe it is important to be involved in their children's media use through playing a gatekeeping role, and both have concerns about the possible harmful effects of screen time.

Another surprising result of this study is Chinese parents' emphasis on the educational functions of digital media, with most parents believing in the value of educational tablets for early education. While there is increasing emphasis on educational performance at younger ages in Australia, our sense is that there remains greater emphasis on educational achievement in China. There are some possible explanations for this that will benefit from further study. Firstly, there is a tradition for Chinese parents to attach importance to academic performance and employment, secondly, the one-child policy may have increased parents' expectations on the only child, and they are willing to devote everything they can to enhance their children's education. Thirdly, the growing competition in the labor market in China encourages parents to start children's education as early as possible, to assist them to be competitive amongst their peers.

Finally, commercial companies have foreseen the huge profit in the children's early education market and vigorously advertise their products.

Another significant observation from the two data sets that warrants further investigation is that there seems to be a similar amount of tablet and smartphone use by young children in China and Australia. Chinese parents report that 20.6% of children use tablet

**While it is impossible to make direct comparisons about attitude from the available data, significant numbers of both Chinese and Australian parents believe it is important to be involved in their children's media use through playing a gatekeeping role, and both have concerns about the possible harmful effects of screen time.**

computers on weekdays and 28.5% on weekends, and 41% of kids use smartphones on weekdays and 50.3% on weekends. Of those that use them, the average time on tablets is 31 minutes on weekdays and 46 minutes on weekends; for smartphones, it is 22 minutes on weekdays and 25 minutes on weekends. In Australia, according to Coenen's study, tablets are used more than 30 minutes a day by 25.8% of minors on weekdays and 31.3% on weekends. It is more difficult to make a comparison with smartphones with the available data, but only 38.7% of young Australian children never use a smartphone on weekdays, and 43.8% never use them on weekends. Therefore, in both countries, it seems that at least half of all minors use smartphones for up to 30 minutes on the weekend and over a quarter use tablets for more than 30 minutes in both countries on the weekend.

Another similarity between the two countries is the type of content children access, within the context of globalized cultural experiences of childhood. As Appadurai (1996) suggests, mediascapes and ideoscapes are two closely related dimensions of global culture flows. In Australia, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) is by far the most popular provider of children's media content (ACMA, 2015), broadcasting and digitally distributing content internationally. In China, while Channel 14 from China Central Television broadcasts 20 hours a day and carries Chinese children's cartoons, it also broadcasts many popular international children's programs that are also available to Australian children on the ABC: Teletubbies, Peppa Pig, Thomas the Tank Engine and so on. These productions are introduced to both Chinese and Australian youngsters and their parents along with Western knowledge, norms, and values, and then become part of their childhoods. Although there are some differences between young Chinese and Australian children's everyday digital media experiences, there are also signs that global flows of entertainment and information are bringing their 'Eastern' and 'Western' experiences of childhood closer together.

There are some obvious limitations to this study, and this restricts the extent to which findings may generate new theories or explanations. It focuses on childhood and digital media use in urban China, but there are still huge gaps between urban and rural districts in China including in economic development, family routine, culture, and



technology consumption. Likewise, the limited nature of the data from Australia makes it difficult to speak with confidence about young Australian children's experiences of digital media, especially across a range of socio-economic and geographic circumstances. The real benefit we have seen in bringing these disparate studies together is to generate new research questions. While this article has aimed to move scholarship towards a better understanding of digital childhoods in China and Australia, a great deal is still to be learnt about the complexities of young children's ever-evolving digital media experiences.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The "Annual Report on Development of China's Radio, Film, and Television" suggests the proportion of digital television users in a city like Shanghai could be as high as 91.74%. Thus, television in this research mainly refers to digital television.

<sup>2</sup> Early educational tablets include devices similar to the LeapFrog system found in Western countries. In China, the system is called the "Early Education Machine" (direct translation).

<sup>3</sup> Short for reference. Comparing male and female screen time and nominal variables are converted to dummy variables to use linear regression to compare the differences between groups. The coefficient number for television is 46", meaning males watch television for 0.46 minutes more than females.

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# University training on entrepreneurship in communication and journalism business projects

Formación universitaria sobre el emprendimiento en proyectos empresariales de comunicación y periodismo

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## ABSTRACT

The current scenario of crisis and change has prompted the idea of entrepreneurship as a way to develop new media business models that can be promoted by university training. In this study, we aim to assess the effects of such training. A qualitative study was conducted using in-depth interviews of Spanish journalism and communication entrepreneurs who have undergone university training in business creation and management. Our results show the positive effects of this training on entrepreneurship both in general and on specific aspects of entrepreneurial projects such as organization, business plan/model, marketing, innovation, social aspects and quality of life. Different patterns between the effects of university training on new initiatives and advanced projects were also observed. In this respect, the training supported the creation of new businesses and the development of existing ones. Finally, the suggestions for improving training and the limitations to entrepreneurship have revealed the importance of providing this type of education with a more practical, up-to-date approach that is interconnected with the business and university world. Therefore, examples of this work can be of vital importance in opening up new opportunities for sector development to enable future generations of journalists to fulfill their important social function.

## RESUMEN

El escenario actual de crisis y cambios ha llevado a pensar en el emprendimiento como una nueva vía para el desarrollo de nuevos modelos de negocio en los medios de comunicación, que puede ser fomentado por la formación universitaria. El objetivo de este estudio es valorar los efectos de dicha formación, para lo que se ha desarrollado una investigación cualitativa basada en entrevistas en profundidad entre emprendedores españoles de periodismo y comunicación que han recibido formación universitaria en creación y gestión de empresas. Los resultados muestran el efecto positivo de esta formación sobre el emprendimiento en general y también sobre aspectos concretos de los proyectos empresariales: organización, plan/modelo de negocio, marketing, innovación, aspectos sociales y calidad de vida. También, se han observado diferentes pautas entre los efectos obtenidos para las nuevas iniciativas y para los proyectos avanzados. En este sentido, la formación ha apoyado la creación de los nuevos negocios. Por último, las sugerencias para mejorar la formación y las limitaciones al emprendimiento aportadas han revelado la importancia de dotar a este tipo de educación de mayor carácter práctico, actualizado e interconectado con el mundo empresarial y universitario. Por ello, los ejemplos de este trabajo pueden resultar de vital importancia para abrir nuevas oportunidades al desarrollo del sector que permitan a las futuras generaciones de periodistas cumplir su importante función social.

## KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

University training, journalism, communication, marketing, innovation, social, crisis, job.  
Formación universitaria, periodismo, comunicación, marketing, innovación, social, crisis, empleo.

## 1. Introduction and state of the art

The journalistic crisis and views of the media sector's transformation from an economic perspective have generated a great number of studies (Siles & Boczkowski, 2012). However, few studies have examined the application of entrepreneurship to the field of communication and journalism (Weezel, 2010). Within this field, the influence of media entrepreneurship training and education has been scarcely studied (Hang & Weezel, 2007). However, the existing literature raises a number of interesting points. One of these points has to do with the reluctance of future journalists and communication professionals to embrace entrepreneurship. Some studies provide evidence of the small number of students who consider entrepreneurship and self-employment a career option both in Spain (Casero-Ripollés & Cullell-March, 2013) and in other countries –the United Kingdom, for example– (Delano, 2002). Furthermore, as students progress in their training, they develop a disenchanted and cynical view towards entrepreneurship (Barnes & de-Villiers, 2017; Casero-Ripollés, Izquierdo-Castillo, & Doménech-Fabregat, 2016). The motives that explain this low predisposition in students to media entrepreneurship are both ethical issues and the primacy of the journalist model, understood as an employee, distanced from ownership structures. Some studies show that journalists distance themselves from and turn their backs to business issues to protect their professional independence (Ferrier, 2013). Renouncing entrepreneurship may thus avoid conflicts of interest that arise from simultaneously having to serve the public and pursue economic benefit (Baines & Kennedy, 2010).

Despite journalists' disinclination to entrepreneurship, various research studies show that university training, in particular, creates positive stimuli and increases students' entrepreneurial intentions (Aceituno, Bousoño, Escudero, & Herrera, 2014; Aceituno, Bousoño, & Herrera, 2015; Barnes & de-Villiers, 2017; Paniagua, Gómez, & González, 2014). Even media sector entrepreneurs themselves attach great importance to university training to generate innovative and creative businesses (Beltrán & Miguel, 2014). However, this issue raises a broad debate in the literature. Other research studies conclude that the effects of this training are not well known or consistent (Von-Graevenitz, Harhoff, & Weber, 2010) because it is difficult to assess the effect of training programs on entrepreneurship (Rasmussen & Sørheim, 2006). Even some educational programs that adhere very closely to the business reality are minimally effective and may even fail to support the students' entrepreneurial intentions. This is the case of the "Junior Achievement Young Enterprise Student Mini-Company" (SMC), which is the main entrepreneurial initiative in secondary schools and colleges in the United States and Europe (Oosterbeek, Van-Praag, & Ijsselstein, 2010). Other studies also report the ineffectiveness of such training (Souitaris, Zerbini, & Al-Laham, 2007). However, media entrepreneurship programs are proliferating, especially in the USA, and becoming more legitimate in the academic realm, although their contents are similar to each other to the point of being isomorphic (Sindik & Graybeal, 2017). Entrepreneurs are made, not born and it is therefore necessary to train them to take advantage of market opportunities (Krueger & Brazeal, 1994). This positive perception of entrepreneurship training is confirmed by other research studies (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003; Wang & Wong, 2004). Even in the United States, this is one of the fundamental trends from the educational world to face the journalism crisis (Anderson, 2017).

However, the literature reveals that journalism curricula are rarely oriented towards entrepreneurship (Blom & Davenport, 2012; Elmore & Massey, 2012; Hunter & Nel, 2011). University education is dominated by a traditional view of what journalism is and should be, and it prepares its professionals to be media workers or employees (Deuze, 2006). Universities lack the speed and agility to respond to the technological and business changes affecting journalism as well as the innovation and creativity required by media entrepreneurship (López, Rodríguez, & Pereira, 2017). Various experiences and experts show the need to equip students with attributes and skills related to business innovation, the empowerment of startup culture, statistical reasoning and entrepreneurship so that they can adapt to the new reality and take advantage of it (Baines & Kennedy, 2010; Barnes & de-Villiers, 2017; Briggs, 2012; Claussen, 2011; Ferrier & Batts, 2016; Griffin & Dunwoody, 2015; Lassila-Merisalo & Uskali, 2011), being able to become, in this way, both entrepreneurs of their own companies and intrapreneurs of the companies in which they work for others. It is important to do it from the very beginning of the Journalism curriculum (Chimbel, 2016). In this sense, these experts say journalism training should not be restricted to meeting the employee requirements of mainstream media companies. Instead, self-employment skills must be incorporated into the curriculum, so that, in addition to acquiring skills in developing journalistic and communication content, future professionals acquire business and financial management skills relevant to their sector. This approach poses a challenge for educators in the field of journalism and communication (Ferrier, 2013).



Given this context, the objective of this study is to assess the effects of university entrepreneurship training on entrepreneurial projects in communication and journalism in order to add understanding on the creation and management of new opportunities in this sector from which future generations of journalists can benefit.

## 2. Materials and methods

This study is based on the use of semi-structured interviews to explore the effects of university entrepreneurship training on the creation and development of entrepreneurial projects in the journalism and communication fields. The semi-structured interviews are a qualitative method and can be considered the most suitable approach to achieve our research objectives. It allows us to obtain data on the participants' views, practices, and behavior, offering a complete approach to

a complex study topic for which quantitative approaches have not produced conclusive results (Rasmussen & Sørheim, 2006). Qualitative interviews also provide access to information that is difficult to obtain through other research techniques. The answers to research questions about the how and why of a process require qualitative approaches such as semi-structured inter-

**It can be even asserted that the training has allowed more professional management of the projects, more innovation and better relation with stakeholders and society, elements which contributed to increase the student's satisfaction and therefore to positive effects on these aspects.**

views because quantitative approaches are geared towards responding to the what, who, where and how much (Yin, 2014). This study specifically focuses on how training affects entrepreneurship in the field of media and communication; therefore, the use and appropriateness of the qualitative method is justified. The study was conducted using COREQ guidelines (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007) and RATS qualitative research review guidelines (BioMed Central, 2017). In our study, the questionnaire for the interview has been split into four general blocks as shown in Table 1.

### 2.1. Participant selection and recruitment

Participants were included in the sample if they met the following two main criteria: (1) They have acquired, in their undergraduate university education, knowledge in the field of business creation and management, (2) they have started to develop a full business plan for new business initiatives or have launched product or process expansions or innovations in entrepreneurial projects in the journalism and communication fields. The interviewees are active participants in business creation; hence, they are defined as promoters who have undergone a learning process to develop new initiatives or to expand or conduct product or process innovations. The inclusion of such participants enables access to accurate knowledge regarding the effect of entrepreneurship directly through the protagonists' experience and perceptions. Spain is the geographical scope of reference of this study. In selecting sample participants, people from various Spanish regions (Valencia, Asturias, Canarias, Andalucía, Castilla-La Mancha and Cantabria) were selected, with a significant number of people from regions with a larger business network and greater population size (Madrid and Cataluña).

Participants were volunteers recruited through convenience sampling (Martín-Crespo & Salamanca, 2007). The sampling strategy prioritized feasibility, as the study's subjects were difficult to reach. Therefore, as a starting point for finding participants that met the two main criteria, we used a list of 25 university students who pursued academic study in business creation and management in the Madrid Open University (MOU) and Jaume I University of Castellón between 2012 and 2016. The MOU students come from all over Spain, whereas the Jaume I University of Castellón students mainly come from Valencia and nearby regions, such as Cataluña or Aragon. The selection mentioned above was the main criteria for these lists of students, and we add a geographic criterion: subjects from several Spanish regions were included to ensure diversity, and a large number of subjects from the two major regions in the Spanish economy (Madrid and Cataluña) were included to ensure higher representativeness.

**Table 1. In-depth interview questionnaire**

Questionnaire	
<b>Block 1</b>	
a) Project description and type of entrepreneurship supported by the training:	
- Expansion	
- Process or product innovation:	
- New initiative/ Projects in their early stages	
b) Variation of entrepreneurial intentions	
- To which extent (positive, neutral or negative) have you modified your entrepreneurial intentions because of the training received in this course?	
<b>Block 2</b>	
c) Organization:	
- Before receiving the training, how were your entrepreneurial activities organized?	
- Has the training allowed you to learn a new way of organizing your company better? In what way(s)?	
d) Business plan/model:	
- Before receiving the training, how developed was your business plan/model?	
- Has the training facilitated the development of your business plan/model? In what way(s) has it allowed you to increase your income level? What are your expectations in this regard?	
e) Marketing:	
- Before receiving the training, how were your marketing activities organized?	
- Has the training enabled you to better organize your marketing plan? In what way(s)?	
f) Innovation:	
- Before receiving the training, what was the level of innovation in the products and services you offer?	
- Has the training helped you build or develop an innovative product or service? In what way(s)?	
<b>Block 3</b>	
g) Social aspects:	
- What type of relationships are currently being established, or could be established in the future between your entrepreneurial project and the major stakeholders interested in its implementation (customers, local community, suppliers, shareholders, employees, among others)?	
- Has the training encouraged you to hire people, now or in the future? How many people?	
- What type of benefits can your entrepreneurial project bring to your local society and to all other stakeholders?	
h) Quality of life:	
- Have your quality of life and level of happiness improved with the creation and development of your entrepreneurial project? In what ways?	
<b>Block 4</b>	
i) Limitations:	
- What are the main limitations regarding the implementation of your project?	
j) Suggestions:	
- Could you suggest some recommendations to improve the training?	

In interview 14, data saturation was reached; there was no new or relevant material, and it was highly probable that additional interviews would not influence the results. The reason for this data saturation is due to aspects such as the reduction of barriers to enter the journalism sector (Hang & Weezel, 2007) and, additionally in the Spanish case, entrepreneurial effervescence and job loss (Asociación de la Prensa de Madrid, APM, 2014; APM, 2015). When students have entrepreneurial intentions and get through the appropriate training, they may get very motivated and transcend the barriers to implement their plans. This allows us to obtain a reasonable number of in-depth interviews for our research objectives. Also, it is important to note that the availability of key informants, those with innovative proposals likely to be imitated, is of concern in a difficult moment for the journalism sector in need to find new business models (Casero-Ripollés, 2010). Finally, our research sample comprised 14 participants (9 men and 5 women).

## 2.2. Ethics statement and data collection

The Ethics Committee of the MOU has approved this research. The potential members for our sample were initially contacted by phone by the authors and invited to participate. They were informed that the data they shared would be used for this study. Those who showed interest in participating did provide verbal expression of consent. Then they were extensively briefed on the research objectives and on the contents of the four blocks of the questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews.

This first phone contact lasted 30-40 minutes. Subsequently, the complete questionnaire was emailed (Table 1) to their personal addresses as provided by the participants. Once the researchers received the complete document, a first analysis of the interview content was conducted. The participants were contacted again by

phone, to recheck the interview, ask for clarification or additional data, complete the answers to some questions or ask new questions that arose from previous answers. This second contact lasted 45-60 minutes.

The researchers served in both facilitative and neutral roles. They had a facilitative role in helping participants understand exactly what was expected of them in the questionnaire to obtain the maximum amount and quality of data. They played a neutral role to avoid influencing the participants' answers. For that reason, it was determined that allowing the participants to respond to the interview questionnaire through email was the best strategy to avoid influencing the responses and affecting the results. On this basis, the researchers' subsequent involvement in the recheck and interview enlargement process prevented the loss of information and guaranteed a minimal influence on the respondents.

The answers for blocks (2) and (3) were coded by three of the researchers involved in this study, with one of them acting as the coding coordinator. The fourth researcher, who was not involved in coding, reviewed the data and interpretations generated by the other researchers. No computer software was used for coding. The coding was designed following the guidelines below:

- Answer with positive effect (P). The student entrepreneurial intentions are increased due to its application of the acquired knowledge to the business project at the present moment.
- Answer with neutral effect (N). The student entrepreneurial intentions do not change either because he has not acquired knowledge to apply or because its application to the business project has not occurred at the present moment.
- Answer with negative effect (NE). The student entrepreneurial intentions diminished because of the acquisition of knowledge provided by the training.

Thereafter, the results from the 14 participants in the study were individually compared. As the second step, the results obtained for each of the 6 characteristics of these two blocks (2) and (3), were analyzed. Finally, we proceeded with the suggestions to improve the training and the suggested obstacles to entrepreneurship.

The analytic approach was based on an inductive method; it established a chain of evidence to formulate common patterns (and draw conclusions that were representative of the group) and build the explanation of the studied phenomenon. Thus, external validity is guaranteed (Dubé & Paré, 2003). The methodological approach for the data analysis was ethnography combined with discourse analysis. This study is based on approaches developed in a study on the entrepreneurial culture of young people in rural areas in Argentina (Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Pesca y Alimentación de Argentina, 2007), but adapted to the needs of entrepreneurship in the journalism and communication fields, characterized by the search for business models and innovative benefits that make this new work sphere highly desirable for future entrepreneurs.

### 3. Analysis and results

A detailed description of the entrepreneurial projects can be found in Table 2. As this table shows, students have increased their entrepreneurial intentions because of the provided training; in some cases, such as those of Castilla-La Mancha and Cataluña 2, this increase is quite significant.

In order to assess how the acquired knowledge has been applied to business projects, the information is summarized and coded according to the six characteristics established for this study, namely organization, business plan/model, marketing, innovation, social aspects and quality of life (Table 1).

According to this information, the training had positive effects on the organization of all entrepreneurial ventures. The technical and professional criteria provided were used to allow the projects in their early stages to lay the foundation for entrepreneurship planning and organization and in some cases to turn their business idea into a business plan (Asturias, Andalucía 1 and Valencia 1) and to learn organizational skills (Andalucía 2) For more advanced projects, these contributions improved the established organizational structure and permitted the expansion to new departments. Only in the case of Cantabria, a neutral effect is observed for the current non-application of organizational concepts.

Regarding the business plan/model and for most of the projects in their early stages, the provided expertise has had positive effects on its application to create a business plan, except for the cases of Madrid 1, Cantabria (for which the business plan was finished and to which new knowledge may only be incorporated if the company grows) and Valencia (financial knowledge to be applied in the future). In contrast, in the most advanced projects, the training fundamentally supported changes to the business plans of older businesses, except for Canarias 2, whose business plan was created as a result of the training.

**Table 2. Project description and variation in entrepreneurial intentions**

Project and type of entrepreneurship	Variation in entrepreneurial intentions
Cataluña 1: Multimedia communication of music content distribution using online resources. Projects in their early stages.	Positive
Madrid 1: Digital magazine specializing in local cultural events. Projects in their early stages.	Positive
Asturias: TV magazine related to new technologies and electronic entertainment. Projects in their early stages.	Positive
Andalucía 1: Popular science magazine. Projects in their early stages.	Positive
Valencia 1: Digital media characterized by the selection of general media information useful to readers (only five daily news articles and an editorial). Projects in their early stages.	Positive
Andalucía 2: Creation of a company to improve workers' communication in the flamenco scene and thereby expand the target audiences. Projects in their early stages.	Positive
Canarias 1: Multimedia communication platform disseminating an innovative idea for a rural and active tourism product different from the typical sun-and-beach product. Projects in their early stages.	Positive
Cantabria: Online information musical culture portal for a specific geographical scope, with a wide implantation and constant promotion on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Projects in their early stages.	Positive
Valencia 2: Entrepreneurial project of external communication for local cultural institutions. Projects in their early stages.	Positive
Valencia 3: Development of a professional project created by a media company that supports visual information based on computer graphics. Projects in their early stages.	Positive
Canarias 2: Academy for the provision of the following types of courses: public speaking and communication, audiovisual locution for radio and television and commercial speech. Expansion.	Positive
Castilla-La Mancha: Local broadcasting station. Process or product innovation.	Very positive
Madrid 2: Communication agency providing the following services: press office, social networking management, public speaking and communication training, digital marketing, editorial services and content management. Process or product innovation.	Positive
Cataluña 2: Company generating a corporate magazine supporting the work of business travel managers. Process or product innovation.	Very positive

Moreover, in the projects on their early stages, some initial business model cost optimization was observed (as in the cases of the Cataluña 1, Canarias 1 and Valencia 3 projects); furthermore, the Valencia 3 project even found a solution to its financial difficulties. In this regard, in all of the advanced projects, revenue growth and cost reductions were observed as a result of university training.

Regarding marketing, the training had positive effects on most projects in their early stages except in the cases of: Cantabria, which had already formalized their plans, Madrid 1, Andalucía 2 and Valencia 3. These effects are reflected in the support for planning and organizing this activity. Similarly, advanced projects were able to improve, develop and create new business plans by learning the importance of improving their adaptation to customer needs (Canarias 2 and Castilla-La Mancha) and to new technological realities (Madrid 2 and Cataluña 2).

Regarding innovation in early stage projects, positive effects were lower than on previous characteristics. Some of these projects had no positive effects (Cataluña 1 and Madrid 1), and some others exhibited only the assimilation of the importance of continuous innovative efforts necessary to achieve business success (Andalucía 1, Valencia 1 and Cantabria). In contrast, among advanced projects, training had a higher effect both on organisation (all projects) and on the creation of new products and services (all projects except Canarias 2).

According to the information obtained, only one entrepreneur who underwent training (Valencia 2) considered that the creation of a company might give rise to problematic relationships. Since this appreciation is related to the student's training, it could be understood as a negative effect, as it reduces his entrepreneurial intentions. In the case of projects on their early stages, most of the effects related to the social aspects are neutral and come from the project itself and not from the training, except in the cases of Valencia 1 (stakeholder and society relationship planning) and, Canarias 1 and Valencia 2 (product and service improvement and innovation). In contrast, for projects in their advanced stages it has had a positive effect in all cases except Canarias 2, whose social benefit is the achievement of a more communicative society and it comes from the project itself and not from the training.

Most projects experienced an improvement in quality of life and happiness; the two that did not (Andalucía 1 and Cantabria) neither showed a decrease of these characteristics (neutral effect). However, other factors related



to the projects (personal fulfillment for being able to work in journalism or being their own boss, for example) are more typical of the projects in their early stages (neutral effect). In projects in their advanced stages, other factors related to the satisfaction to provide more professional management (positive effect) are observed.

Even though positive effects appear in all the projects, there are 5 projects on their early stages in which the neutral effects are predominant: Madrid 1 (1 Positive and 9 Neutral), Cantabria (1 Positive and 7 Neutral), Andalucía 2 (3 Positive and 4 Neutral), Cataluña 1 (3 Positive and 5 Neutral) and Andalucía 1 (3 Positive and 4 Neutral). The other 5 projects on their early stages have mostly positive effects: Valencia 2 (7 Positive and 1 Negative), Canarias 1 (7 Positive and 3 Neutral), Valencia 3 (6 Positive and 3 Neutral), Valencia 1 (5 Positive and 4 Neutral) and Asturias (4 Positive and 3 Neutral). Within advanced stage projects, there is a predominance of positive effects: Madrid 2 (12 Positive), Canarias (13 Positive and 1 Neutral), Castilla-La Mancha (9 Positive) and Cataluña 2 (9 Positive and 1 Neutral). The only case of a negative effect is Valencia 2.

As for the characteristics, they all have positive effects too. These effects are predominant over neutral ones in 4 characteristics: business/plan model (21 Positive and 3 Neutral), organization (17 Positive and 1 Neutral), marketing (13 Positive and 4 Neutral) and innovation (12 Positive and 5 Neutral). Neutral effects take over in the quality of life and happiness (12 Neutral and 7 Positive) and relationships and benefits with local society and stakeholders (19 Neutral and 13 Positive). This last characteristic is the only one with a negative effect.

To summarize, positive effects (83) are predominant in all projects and all the characteristics, over the neutral effects (44) and only one negative effect.

Regarding suggestions for improving training, providing expertise is the most prominent recommendation in the information obtained, especially concerning the presentation of case studies (Andalucía 2, Canarias 1, Canarias 2, Valencia 2, Valencia 3, Madrid 2 and Cataluña 2). Other options in this regard include providing more practical training (Madrid 1, Valencia 3 and Cataluña 2) and integrating the development of a personal project into the training (Cataluña 1 and Valencia 1). No clear consensus was observed in this key recommendation among the proposals of projects in their early stages and those of advanced projects. Discussions and interaction among students were also suggested and was very important to students of five projects in their early stages (Cataluña 1, Andalucía 1, Valencia 1, Canarias 1 and Valencia 2), which establishes a pattern among these new projects. Other recommendations provided by the students included making business creation and management a required course (Madrid 1 and Canarias 1), receiving personalized advice and moral support from teachers (Asturias), establishing contacts with editorial teams to understand the processes and conducting entrepreneurship workshops (Madrid 2).

To end the presentation of results, the limitations highlighted most frequently by students are closely related to the difficulty of making the business model feasible (Cataluña 1, Madrid 1, Asturias, Valencia 1 and Andalucía 2) or improving it (Castilla-La Mancha), the lack of entrepreneurship advice and support (Canarias 1, Cantabria, Madrid 2 and Cataluña 2) and an excessive legal and administrative burden (Andalucía 1, Cantabria, Canarias 1 and Madrid 2). The remaining limitations are of a personal nature: the lack of entrepreneurial experience (Valencia 2 and Valencia 3), a more significant personal commitment to enhancing activities with the newly acquired knowledge (Canarias 2) and the need to attract entrepreneurial project partners (Valencia 3). It was observed that there are greater limitations on projects in their early stages, and these limitations are especially concentrated when setting up a viable business model. This aspect is essential for the survival of and further development of new businesses and it is less critical in advanced projects.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The results show how university training, when applied to entrepreneurial projects in the journalism and communication areas, is capable to increase the students' entrepreneurial intentions (Aceituno & al., 2014; Aceituno & al., 2017; Paniagua & al., 2014). Therefore, these results support the positive perceptions towards entrepreneurship training (Krueger & Brazeal, 1994; Peterman & Kennedy, 2003; Wang & Wong, 2004).

In addition, it is worth noting that this training has had positive effects in all the characteristics. In particular, these positive effects have been predominant over neutral effects in the business plan/model, organization, marketing, and innovation. Students have been able to perceive how effective training on these issues can increase the feasibility of their projects even in a highly competitive context where new business is difficult to formulate. This fact can explain the positive predominance effects.

In contrast, neutral effects are more significant than positive effects in quality of life, happiness and relationships and benefits with local society and stakeholders. These neutral effects should be attributed to the projects rather

than to the training. It can be even asserted that the training has allowed more professional management of the projects, more innovation and better relation with stakeholders and society, elements which contributed to increase the student's satisfaction and therefore to positive effects on these aspects.

Different patterns for projects in their early stages and those in advanced stages were observed. For the latter, their organizational structures, business plans/models, cost and revenue structures and marketing plans were fundamentally improved by training support. Furthermore, organizational innovations and the creation of new products and services were observed. On the other hand, for the projects in their early stages, the basis for company planning and organizing were primarily created, with special attention to their business plans/models and marketing plans. In most projects, positive effects are predominant over neutral and negative effects. Therefore, it can be said that the training has supported the creation of new businesses and the development of others.

The most important recommendations collected from students suggest, on the one hand, to increase the expertise and the practical focus of the training and, on the other hand, to increase the discussion and interaction among students, especially in the projects on their early stages. These suggestions may be related to the scarcity of examples and the need to create or reformulate new business models in the sector. Therefore, studies such as the one presented in this work may bring significant value to student entrepreneurs. It is important to point out that although financing is a common difficulty for entrepreneurs, it does not require specific training for students with entrepreneurial projects in the journalism and communication areas because, as discussed above, new digital technologies considerably lower the entry barriers.

The most common limitations are the difficulty to create feasible business models, the lack of advice and follow-up and excessive bureaucracy. These problems highlight the importance of training that offers up-to-date knowledge in such areas as administration, grants and funding, management and new market opportunities.

Although the results on which these conclusions are sound in terms of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training in entrepreneurial journalism and communication projects, future studies should complement this approach with other techniques and quantitative methods, such as surveys.

For all the above issues, the study's findings indicate that training is effective in the creation and development of entrepreneurial projects in journalism and communication. This important feature may open new alternatives and opportunities to develop the sector and to help future generations of reporters fulfill their important social function.

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# Radio studies: An overview from the Ibero-American academia

Los estudios sobre radio: Un balance desde la academia iberoamericana

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## ABSTRACT

Due to its penetration and access, radio is a very important mass media in the Ibero-American context. However, radio has not received much scholarly attention. In this framework, the present study analyses the situation of Ibero-American radio studies from the perspective of their scientific community. This approach is new in that it focuses on the work, perceptions, and assessment of radio research at supranational level, shedding light on similarities and differences in terms of how Communication is seen as a scholarly field. A questionnaire was used to understand the importance, themes, and quality of radio research from the personal, national and global perspectives, according to its 63 respondents. Participants were also asked to share their perceptions, assessments, and prospects. Despite contextual differences, our study has confirmed that radio studies are a minority field, even in areas of high impact such as new technologies. Likewise, the research career paths of those involved in radio research show how this field is still in its infancy, although some indicators such as participation in projects or cooperation rates point towards a positive evolution in the mid-short term. As per their quality perception, academics are critical of radio studies in the general framework of Communication research.

## RESUMEN

La radio constituye un medio de gran relevancia en el contexto iberoamericano dado su acceso y penetración. No obstante, el estudio de la comunicación radiofónica no ha tenido la presumida proyección en el ámbito académico. En este sentido, el presente trabajo efectúa una aproximación a la situación de los «radio studies iberoamericanos» desde la perspectiva de su comunidad científica. Un abordaje novedoso en tanto que se centra en las trayectorias, percepciones y valoraciones en torno a la investigación radiofónica en una esfera supranacional, con características comunes pero importantes divergencias en el abordaje de la Comunicación como ámbito de estudio. A partir de una encuesta a 63 especialistas en radio se profundizó en la entidad, temáticas y calidad de la investigación radiofónica en las esferas personal, nacional y global; así como en sus percepciones, valoraciones y prospectivas. Más allá de las diferencias entre contextos el estudio ha permitido constatar el carácter minoritario de la investigación radiofónica incluso en aquellas temáticas de mayor proyección como las nuevas tecnologías. Asimismo, las trayectorias de la comunidad científica remiten a una fase incipiente de desarrollo de la investigación radiofónica si bien determinados indicadores, como participación en proyectos o índice de cooperación, permiten visar una evolución positiva a corto-medio plazo. En cuanto a la percepción de la calidad, los académicos se muestran especialmente críticos con los «radio studies» respecto a la investigación comunicativa.

## KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Academy, Latin America, communication, scientific community, research, radio, radio studies, perception.  
Academia, América Latina, comunicación, comunidad científica, investigación, radio; estudios de radio, percepción.





## 1. Introduction

Radio has a privileged position in the Ibero-American context (Spain, Portugal and Latin America). While the democratisation of Internet has led to the radio being displaced in some countries –such as Chile, Costa Rica, or Spain– it is still the second mass media after television in terms of penetration. It is the first in Guatemala.

Radio still has great potential in a setting marked by oral cultural practices (Lienhard, 1994) and a vast, sometimes inaccessible, territory, with substantial economic and sociocultural differences.

Despite all this, radio has been disregarded by the media businesses, public powers and citizens in comparison to audiovisual media and, more recently, to the Internet. According to Lewis (2000), the cultural status of radio lies in its being a private passion that is publicly neglected. If, as León (2012) states, the foundations of Communication Sciences in Latin America lie in experiences prior to formal education, a lower general interest in radio has a direct impact on the academic importance given to the topic.

In this sense, this article approaches the situation of radio studies in Ibero-America from the point of view of its scientific community. This approach is new in that it focuses on the work, perceptions, and assessment of radio researchers; it also focuses on a supranational level, shedding light on similarities and differences in terms of how Communication is seen as a scholarly field.

## 2. Communication in academia

The development of Communication Studies in the Ibero-American academia has been far from homogeneous. The tradition and influences of each country have produced three different models: A theoretical model, close to the school of Sociology, Political Communication, Semiotics, and Communication Theory; another one focusing on the profession, inspired by the North American tradition, and a third model, somewhere in between the former two (López-García, 2010).

Introducing Communication Studies in universities has taken different routes depending on the social, political and academic contexts of each country, although it was usually through Journalism that the subject was first introduced (Silva, 2004). In the 1930s, the first Journalism courses started at the University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), at the Pontifical Javeriana University (Colombia) and the National University of La Plata (Argentina) (López-García, 2010; Del-Arco, 2015). The foundation, in 1935, of the School of Journalism of La Plata marked the beginning of a process that in the 1950s, with the rise and popularisation of television, would be followed by several other Latin American countries (Fernández-Christlieb, 1997; Marques-de-Melo, 1988).

These first courses focused on the professional side of journalism, with little concern about theoretical questions, although González-Samé, Romero-Rodríguez, and Aguaded (2017) highlight that some research initiatives from the behaviour-Laswellian perspective were indeed developed.

The creation of the International Centre for Higher Studies in Journalism for Latin-America (CIESPAL, 1959) and the 10th General UNESCO Conference marked a turning point in the institutionalisation of Communication research, thus laying the foundations of the Latin American Critical School (León, 2012). Thus, in the 1960s, the boom in Communication research mirrored the development of mass media themselves (Marques-de-Melo, 2009). After that, the Latin-American Association of Communication Researchers (ALAIIC for its name in Spanish, created in 1978) played a key role in the recognition and development of Communication as an independent research field (Fuentes, 1991).

According to Antezana (1984), in Ibero-America, Communication courses were subjected to three types of tensions: the crisis of the universities in terms of their social function, as they swayed between theoreticism and pragmatism; the pressure from cultural industries and the space they needed to create for theoretical endeavours and its consolidation as a science.

In the Iberian Peninsula, although the first works in Communication date back to the beginning of the 20th century (Jones, 1993; Oliveira, 2015), the discipline was not studied at University until the 1970s. The fact that both Spain (1939-1975) and Portugal (1933-1974) were under their respective dictatorships hindered the development of an independent discipline. In Spain, the first courses started in 1971, at the Complutense University of Madrid, the Autonomous University of Barcelona and the University of Navarra (Martínez-Nicolás & Saperas, 2011). In Portugal, the New University of Lisbon opened its first Social Communication Degree in 1979 (Martins & Oliveira, 2013).

The creation of the first faculties, departments, and courses in Communication provided the institutional support needed for research to develop in this field (Martínez-Nicolás, 2006; Martínez-Nicolás & Saperas, 2011; Martins & Oliveira, 2013).

Despite the differences across contexts, we could highlight three main common features in the introduction of Communication in university studies in Ibero-America:

1) The expansion of Communication courses, from the 1980s onwards, was linked to new job opportunities; besides, the de-centralisation of universities led to mass university access (Trow, 2006; Barnett, 2001).

2) The diversification of courses to adapt to sector needs and new professional profiles. The profile of the social communicator in Latin America, understood as a professional with a wide and comprehensive understanding of communication processes, differs from the usual European profiles, still dependent on old journalism, advertising and cinematography schools (Red ICOD, 2006).

3) Clear support to quality at the university through the assessment of its lecturers and researchers as its main pillar. For Arencibia and Moya (2008), the point of convergence between national research policies lies in the need to assess the results of scientific activities as elements needed for academic quality and for research and development programmes. Considering the central role of Universities in society, their results, control of performance and contribution to society are to be considered; these are aspects that Barnet (2001) thinks are implicit in the indicators used by academic evaluation organisations such as ANECA, A3ES, CONEAU, CONAES OR CLAEF.

**This article approaches the situation of radio studies in Ibero-America from the point of view of its scientific community. This approach is new in that it focuses on the work, perceptions, and assessment of radio researchers; it also focuses on a supranational level, shedding light on similarities and differences in terms of how Communication is seen as a scholarly field.**

In a nutshell, the wide introduction of Communication into universities has to do with endogenous reasons, reasons related to the field of Communication, and exogenous reasons of economic, institutional and political nature (Rebelo, 2008; Barnett, 2001). However, Beltrán (2000) criticises that the exponential growth of courses and teaching centres has not always led to the development of Communication teaching and research.

### 3. The place of radio research

In a context such as the Ibero-American one, the assessment of academic capital follows its criteria (Lolas, 2008), although in recent years there is some consensus in linking prestige with publication and impact of research outcomes (Fernández-Quijada & Masip 2013; Casanueva & Caro, 2013).

The increasing weight of research led to a certain evolution towards a university model based on generating and conveying scientific knowledge (Ginés, 2004). This evolution coincided with the academic expansion of Communication, the appearance of the first specialised PhD programmes and the subsequent development of an academic critical mass with research training.

Basic Sciences were taken as the model for other knowledge systems and the evaluation-accreditation of lecturers, favouring publication in high impact journals (Piedra-Salomón, Olivera-Pérez, & Herrero-Solana, 2016; González-Samé, Romero-Rodríguez, & Aguaded, 2017).

Even though, according to Beltrán (2000), Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Brazil or Mexico do have an academic tradition of specialised journals in Communication, the current journal hegemony opened a fracture in that tradition of books and compilations, thus generating a saturation of the most important platforms and other collateral damage (Mancinas-Chávez, Romero-Rodríguez, & Aguaded, 2015).

The establishment of academic accreditation systems became a push for the evolution of Communication research, even though its criteria were imposed on the scientific community and also on the discipline's focus (Osca-Lluch & Haba, 2005; Casado-del Río & Fernández-Quijada, 2015; Fernández-Quijada & Masip, 2013).

In this line, authors such as De-Filippo (2013), Soriano (2008) or Beltrán (2000) have criticised the fact that academic evaluation has triggered research strategies and practices guided by higher curricular efficiency "without

considering the complexity of cultural and Communication production in its real practice” (Beltrán, 2000: 338). The clear will to follow a “standardised” research pattern (Soriano, 2008) has shifted the focus toward some themes that are interesting for funding agencies, against others such as radio (Piñeiro-Otero, 2017).

Apparently away from hot topics in the discipline –despite its web, mobile and transmedia potential–, radio seems to have stayed outside the exponential growth of Communication research.

For Lewis and Booth (1989), the trend in public policies to subordinate radio to television has made it invisible, something that is mirrored by Communication Studies. Three decades after all this, radio is still neglected, although it has a different space in Ibero-American Communication research.

Against the limited relevance of radio in Spanish Communication research (Piñeiro-Otero, 2015; 2016), or its incipient development in Portugal (Oliveira, 2015; Santos, 2017), Brazilian radio studies are vibrant both in the

number of researchers and in its scientific production (Kischinhevsky & al., 2017; Haussen, 2016).

**Radio is a mass media of great relevance in Ibero-America, although it has not been equally studied by the academia. Regardless of the different contexts, radio is a minority research line, even within those themes of larger projection in Ibero-American Communication research. For researchers, radio has hardly interested the academia, profession or public authorities, which has had a further negative impact on its status in Communication research. Still, radio is a permanent and key line in their research career, mainly for those mid-career researchers.**

#### 4. Materials and methods

Giménez and Jiménez (2013) consider that the study of research is a duty that allows academics to go deeper into the understanding of their discipline’s ecosystem, potentials, and limitations.

Radio researchers have not been productive in this type of approach, although their presence is increasing in Brazil (Kischinhevsky & al., 2017; Haussen, 2016; Melo & Prata, 2015; Prata, 2015; Prata, Mustafa, & Pessoa, 2014; López & Mustafá, 2012),

and in Spain and Portugal with the works of Piñeiro-Otero (2015), Repiso, Torres and Delgado (2011) or de Oliveira (2015) and Santos (2017). These studies have used Bibliometrics as their main tool; an approach Casanueva and Caro (2013) find incomplete if the relationships and dynamics of academia in research are overlooked.

In order to get to know the situation of radio research in Ibero-America, we developed a questionnaire for our exploratory study. This semi-structured questionnaire was organised around three headings:

- Personal data: basic demographics and academic details.
- Research activities: questions about the importance of radio in the participant’s career, main themes (following the categories suggested by Sterling (2009) and Martínez-Nicolás and Saperas (2011) and basic quality indicators.
- Radio research: the participant’s ideas about mainstream themes, their situation regarding Communication research in general, reference centres for radio research, assessment of the interest of several business-academic-political actors in radio, as well as the respondent’s perception regarding the minority status of radio studies.

This questionnaire combined different types of closed questions: With two possible answers (sex, theme of the thesis regarding the radio); single choice (academic degree) or multiple choice (research themes) answers; Likert scales (cooperation with other researchers in radio-related studies) or numerical from 0 to 10 (quantity, quality and rigour of research in Communication). In the case of Likert scales, the intermediate level –neutral– was not used to force participants to take a stand.

Likewise, open questions were also included (field of specialisation). These questions required decoding and were particularly useful to better understand the perceptions of participants (reference centres, reasons to value radio). The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and mailed in February-March 2017. This helped reach

more respondents, while the fact that it was self-administered and anonymous encouraged more critical and sincere answers (Díaz-de-Rada, 2012; Duffy & al., 2005), it also increased the non-respondent rate. Microsoft Excel was used to process the data.

The way the sample was determined was marked by the scope of the study and population dispersion, especially considering that radio studies are a minority field. Several decisions were made in this regard:

- The diverse consideration and access to academic journals in this field led us to focus on international radio meetings. Namely, we registered the participants from Ibero-American Universities attending ECREA Radio (2013; 2015); Net Station International Conference (2015) and International Radio Biennale (2014), both as speakers or exhibitors.

- This list was further refined with data from Piñeiro-Otero (2015) regarding radio studies in Spanish journals (52 recurring authors, 48 from Spain); the researchers recommended by Oliveira (2015) for Portuguese radio studies (13, one from Brazil) as well as twenty authors of individual books or compilations related to radio.

In this first phase, a questionnaire was sent out to a total of 107 individuals. However, the familiarity of the medium and the academic-professional profile of the selected meetings favoured the presence of specialists from the sector and other research areas (accidental authors), which affected the responses.

In trying to be more thorough, we asked the members of research groups specialising in radio studies, such as Intercom Radio (Brazil) or Rede de Estudos de Rádio e Som (Portugal), to disseminate the questionnaire amongst their members (snowball sampling).

This procedure helped us obtain 63 valid responses (after eliminating duplicities and incomplete forms) of academics in Spain (23), Brazil (12), Portugal (10), Argentina (8), Mexico (4), Colombia (4) and Ecuador (2). The presence of Spanish scholars was very high, which comes to show the importance of research in the academic culture of this country. Still, participants do represent the most important radio studies poles in Ibero-America and this, although it has not been adjusted, offers interesting insights for the study.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Research community

The sample shows that in radio studies scholars have high qualifications – 74% of researchers are PhD holders and 10% Post-Graduate students (47 and 10 respectively)– although there are important differences between countries.

In Spain and Brazil, all researchers are Doctors, versus 80% of Portuguese participants, 50% of Mexicans and 22% of Argentinians (8, 2 and 2 respectively). Most participants from Ecuador and Colombia have a Masters or Post-Graduate course (2 and 3 respectively).

The data show that the scientific community is rather young. Most participants are within the 45-54 and 35-44 age group (29 and 20 respectively). Likewise, most researchers (26 scholars, 55%) became doctors in the last decade (9 in 2005-2009, 10 in 2010-2014 and 7 in 2015 and following) and they are therefore mid-career academics (35 participants claim that they hold adjunct or interim positions and 8 have part-time contracts).

Although for Piñeiro-Otero (2017), usually, the year in which the PhD was obtained is an indicator of maturity in a scientific community, this is not so in this context. The absence or late inception of PhD programmes in Latin American universities (Mateus, 2009) or Portuguese Universities (Martins & Oliveira, 2013), delayed access of scholars to this academic level; an element that is also behind the high international mobility of this group (4 participants from Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and Portugal completed their PhD in Spanish universities).

### 5.2. Research activities

Quality indicators for this set of researchers once again show the diversity of contexts and profiles. For example, becoming a PhD guide is rare in the sample (38%), and most of them are Spanish researchers (14 of the 24 PhD guides, 61% of the Spanish participants). This also reflects the particularities of doctorate studies in this field.

Regarding contributions to journals, although 55% of researchers (35) published the output of their radio research in international journals, 49% of them in English or another foreign language (31), only 30% (19) have contributions in impact journals (JCR or WoS). There is a higher percentage of Spanish researchers in first level citation databases (57% of Spanish participants against 25% Argentinians, 20% Portuguese and 17% Brazilian), thus showing that in this country, research output evaluation systems have been in place for longer.

However, Spanish universities lag behind in radio projects funded. Here, it is Mexican, Argentinian and

Portuguese researchers (mentioned by 100%, 75% and 60% of respondents respectively) who have had projects funded by state-level programmes to increase R+D+i competition, a government measure to foster and strengthen research structures. In Spain, the National R+D Plan for 2013-2016 funded 45 projects in Communication. Only one for radio.

There is unanimity amongst researchers when highlighting the limited interest that this medium offers for funding bodies – the impact of this fact on the development of high-level research is self-explanatory.

Cooperation with other scholars is generalised in Ibero-American radio research. For 65% of participants, this is their usual working style (13% always work with other academics, and 52% often do) against 9% who claim that radio research is an individual research line.

International cooperation is also high, albeit lower for the participants. 46% of researchers responded that they had occasionally worked with foreign colleagues, while 3% claimed they did this permanently and 17% frequently (29, 2 and 11 respectively).

The relevance of cooperative research in Ibero-American radio studies reveals the presence of a mesh of research structures. 60% (38) of participants indicated that they belong to a radio research group. Half of these researchers (18) are linked to non-formal groups such as the Radio and Sound Studies Network (Portugal) or the organisation of the Conference for Radio in the New Century (Argentina), these bodies work more as associations rather than research structures. These groups are part of the researchers' exchange and cooperation networks and have a positive impact on the cooperation index and –according to Pulgarín and Gil-Leiva (2005)– the development of the discipline.

### 5.3. General object

Regarding the definition of a general object for their radio research, participants mentioned technology as their main field, followed by journalism and culture. The transformation of sound media on the Internet has triggered the interest of participants, thus placing technology as the predominant research line of individual research for global radio studies (mentioned by 20% and 23% respectively). The theme becomes more relevant when asked about their prospects on radio research (27%).

The second general object in terms of relevance is journalism. Its importance in the introduction of Communication in academia is still felt both on individual as well as in national and global radio studies. 16% of participants see their research within this field, and 20% responded it is predominant in global radio studies, although in terms of prospective themes, journalism ranks behind other areas of budding interest. Growing interest in sound fiction, with podcasts, has led 13% of participants to tick Narrative/Drama box as one of their most important short-term research lines.

This theme-based approach to individual radio studies and the perception of participants regarding the two main lines in national and global radio studies has confirmed three things: (1) While they are flexible and adapt their interests to the concrete radio context, academics have a very conservative image of national radio research; (2) There is a certain convergence between individual research and global radio studies – this supports the idea of adapting to a more global context and the openness of researchers to mainstream international themes and currents;

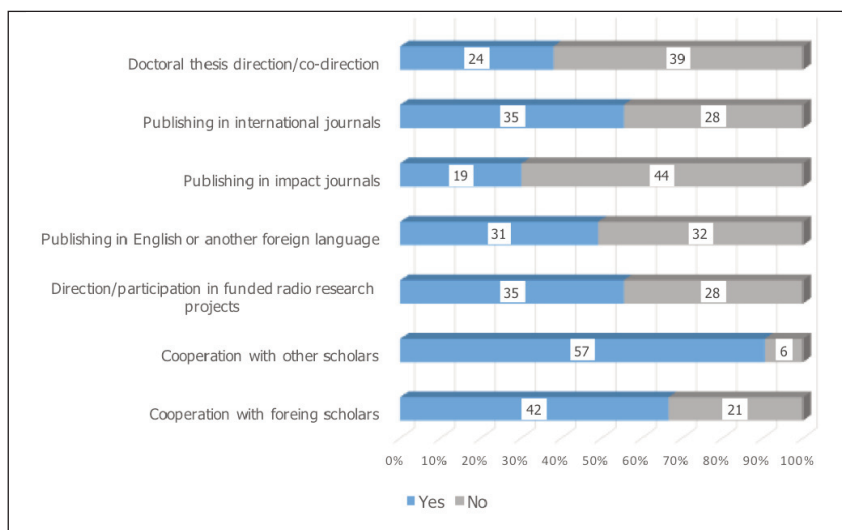


Figure 1. Radio research quality indicators. Prepared by the authors (n=63).



(3) The mainstream lines underline the heterogeneity of national radio studies, although journalism and history still rank first due to the large presence of Spanish, Brazilian and Portuguese researchers in the sample (Piñeiro-Otero 2015; Oliveira, 2016).

#### 5.4. Specific object

Regarding the specific object of their research, content studies (43 authors, 68%) dominate over other approaches. This is shared by Communication research in general (Martínez-Nicolás, 2009), and is directly linked to the relevance gained by some themes such as journalism, new sound manifestations, advertisement and even education or audio and drama.

Other relevant approaches are the technological field or audience and reception studies (38% and 35% respectively). The incipient booming of these trends is linked to radio morphosis: technological developments are closely linked to radio's communication potential, while online tools help to get to know the audiences better, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

#### 5.5. Reference hubs

When participants were asked about the research poles in radio research, opinions were varied. Different countries, research groups inside and outside of the field, are mentioned in this case.

Within this heterogeneity, Spain or its universities is highly mentioned (29 mentions, 12 foreign researchers). Although one participant mentions the loss of status of Spanish research, as "there were universities with good researchers in the past, who had to leave radio as a research line or have not published anything new in years", researchers still place Spanish institutions at a predominant place in radio studies and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona as their main reference centre (9 mentions).

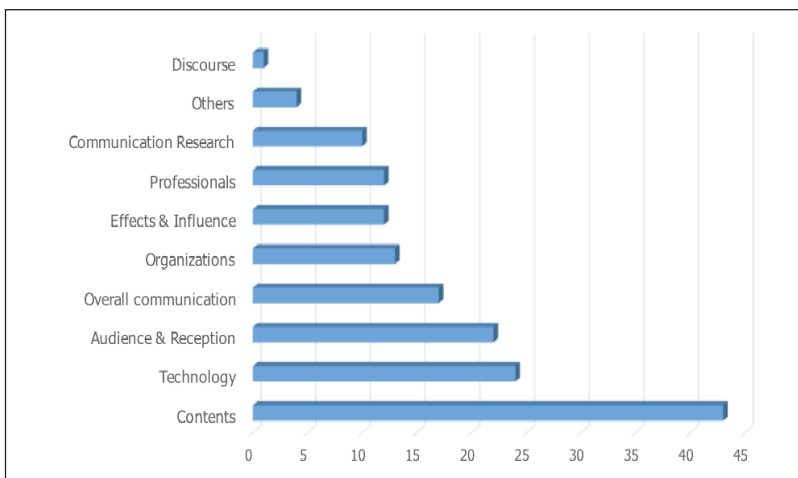


Figure 3. Approach Personal Research. Prepared by the authors (n=158).

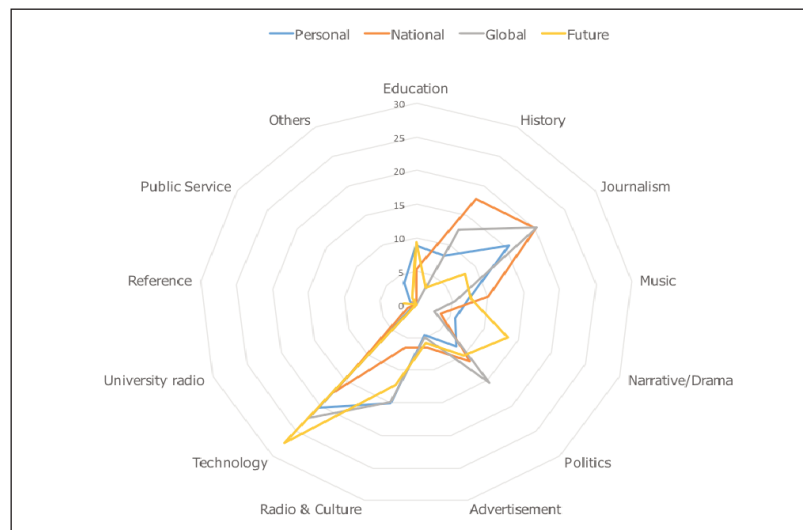


Figure 2. The general object of individual research against predominant themes in national and global radio studies and their development prospects (%).

The second radio research hub is in Brazil (13 mentions to the country or specific institutions, 3 of Portuguese researchers). The relevance of Brazilian radio studies and their key location in some research fields, such as radio morphosis, has given them a special place in the research community (Fernández-Sande & Gallego, 2016; Oliveira, 2016). In particular, the Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP) is mentioned as a key referen-

ce centre (6 mentions, second after UAB). This public university is the only one with a specialised academic journal on radio in the whole of Ibero-America: *Radio-Leituras*.

Apart from these two countries, the relevance of the group Net-Station of the Universidade do Minho (Uminho, Portugal) and the radio section of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA-Radio) are also mentioned by participants. The international projection of these two bodies places them third in the ranking (6 mentions each, all external in the case of Uminho).

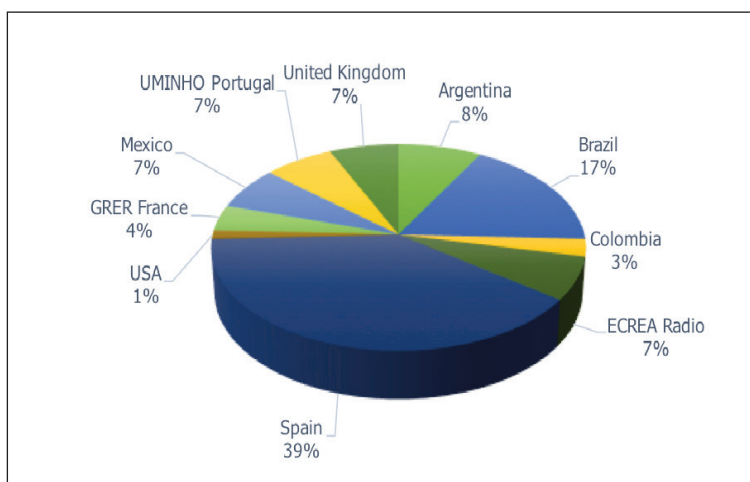


Figure 4. Main Radio Research Hubs. Prepared by the authors (n=74).

### 5.6. Radio as a Research Topic

Regarding their perception regarding the quality of communication and radio research, globally and nationally, there are large differences between contexts. While there is consensus around the fact that global communication research ranks higher than the rest, around 7.4 points (except for Ecuador), in the case of radio research, the perception of quality fluctuates from that of Colombian participants, who claim global research is of higher quality, to the lower value attached to it by Mexicans (with a spread of 2.5 points).

These differences are again seen at national level. Thus, participants show a more positive perception regarding Communication vs Radio Research; something that becomes particularly obvious for Mexican and Ecuadorian researchers (with a spread of 3.2 and 2 respectively) for whom their scientific output in Communication has more quality than global radio studies ( $\geq 1$ ).

The perception that Communication research is more important than radio research is practically unanimous, including in countries such as Argentina or Brazil where there is a more balanced relationship. In this sense, the perception of Portuguese Communication scholars regarding radio production breaks with this trend, as they consider it to be above Portuguese Communication research, and above global radio studies (0.3 and 1.1. points above respectively).

Regarding the perception and consideration of radio in the current context, there is basic unanimity amongst

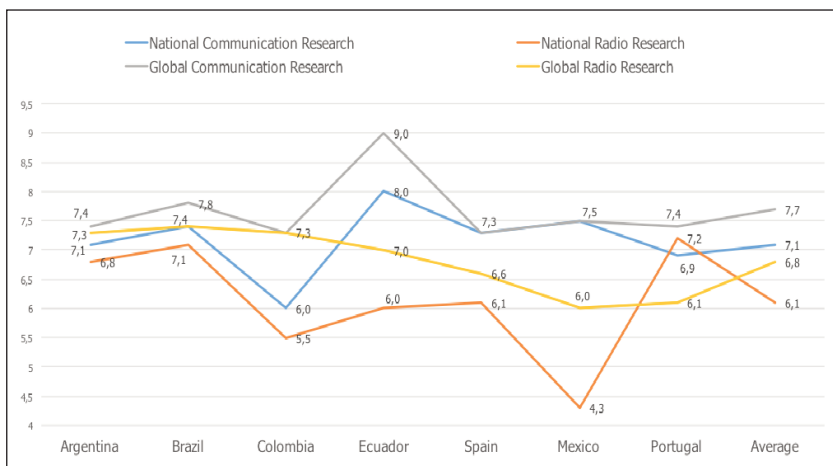


Figure 5. Perceived Quality of Communication and Radio Research (Globally and Nationally). Prepared by the authors (=63).

researchers (92%, 58 participants) in stressing the neglect of the sound medium. This is due to several interrelated aspects that are going to deeply affect the perception of radio studies.

Participants considered that the radio is a medium of limited interest for bodies with power over the matter (4.2 over 10) and the research community (4.7). Besides, radio specialists must face the negative

perception of radio research when applying for funding programmes (3.8) and by journal editors (3.9); these two aspects have an impact in the quality of their research output.

Radio also has limited presence in the curricula (4.7), something that leads to knowledge not being passed on to new generations of communicators, thus reinforcing the lack of interest of the sector and academia.

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

Radio is a mass media of great relevance in Ibero-America, although it has not been equally studied by the academia. Regardless of the different contexts, radio is a minority research line, even within those themes of larger projection in Ibero-American Communication research.

For researchers, radio has hardly interested the academia, profession or public authorities, which has had a further negative impact on its status in Communication research. Still, radio is a permanent and key line in their research career, mainly for those mid-career researchers.

The fact that radio is an essential element in the research output of these researchers right now becomes particularly relevant at a moment when the focus in academia is on output evaluation and radio studies are problematic as “accreditable research”, in Soriano’s terms (2008).

If we look at the quality of individual careers, we can see that radio research is in an incipient stage of development, while some aspects –such as participation in projects– allow us to foresee a positive evolution in the short-mid run, due to the transformation potential that Bozeman, Fay, and Slade (2012) see for funded research.

The same thing happens for cooperation between researchers and their belonging to specialised groups, two aspects that reveal the existence of research structures that are more or less formal, and that can push this study field in its development. Against the individual character of Spanish radio research (Piñeiro-Otero 2017), participants highlight –national and international– cooperation as their most habitual way to work. This can be seen in the influence and consideration of research hubs amongst participants.

Regarding the main themes in radio studies and their prospects, even though journalism was the entry point for Communication Sciences in academia, this discipline is now losing importance against other lines studying the possibilities and expressions of the sound sphere.

This theme-based approach also reflected a higher adaptation of personal research versus national research to the concrete radio context, as stressed by Piñeiro-Otero (2017). Another finding was the convergence of mainstream research lines in global radio studies and the researchers’ scientific output.

Finally, regarding the quality of radio research, academics are particularly critical when assessing – national and global radio studies as of lower quality than Communication research. This is remarkable as –following Kuhn (1971)– it is the community which determines the path of discipline, and therefore, the community’s decisions and practices affect its development.

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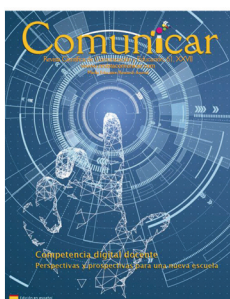
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# Comunicar



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