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The Future national and regional public television in Spain. Proposals of Political Parties in 2015 and 2016 Elections

Futuro de la televisión pública nacional y autonómica en España. Propuestas de los partidos políticos en las elecciones de 2015 y 2016

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Abstract

The scattering of the Spanish political landscape and the disappearance of absolute majorities have led to the prominence of debate on television public service. This paper presents the research results of the positions on the public media in Spain, expressed by the main political parties that have attended election calls held here during 2015 and 2016. We have started from the hypothesis that strength and viability of television public service is now bigger than in 2012 when there were absolute majorities in the National Parliament and in several autonomous communities. Methodologically speaking, we have conducted a content analysis of the proposals on national and regional public television from the electoral programs of political parties for 2015 regional and 2015-2016 general elections. In parallel, we have conducted structured interviews with those responsible for media and communication of the four most representative parties at national level. From analysis we have confirmed the hypothesis that public televisions in Spain have more future and viability with the fragmentation of the new political landscape.

Keywords

Audiovisual Council; State; Financing; Public Media; Political parties; Public television

Resumen

La segmentación del panorama político español y la desaparición de las mayorías absolutas ha propiciado el protagonismo del debate sobre el servicio público de la televisión. Este trabajo presenta los resultados de la investigación de las posiciones sobre la televisión pública en España expresada por los principales partidos políticos que han concurrido a las convocatorias electorales celebradas en España durante 2015 y 2016. Hemos partido de la hipótesis de que la fortaleza y viabilidad del servicio público de televisión es ahora mayor que en 2012 cuando existían mayorías absolutas en el parlamento nacional y en varias de las comunidades autónomas. Metodológicamente hemos realizado un análisis de contenido de las propuestas sobre la televisión pública nacional y autonómica a partir de los programas electorales de los partidos políticos para las elecciones autonómicas de 2015 y generales de 2015-2016 y en paralelo hemos realizado entrevistas estructuradas con los responsables de comunicación de los cuatro partidos más representativos a nivel nacional. A partir del análisis hemos comprobado que las televisiones públicas en España tienen más futuro y más viabilidad con la fragmentación del nuevo escenario político que cuando existía sólo la alternancia PP, PSOE.

Palabras clave

Consejo audiovisual; Estado; financiación; medios públicos; partidos políticos; televisión pública

1. Introduction

Although the positions of political parties towards the different vectors of public performance often differ depending on whether they are in power or not, these political forces must summarize their aspirations and social perspectives on the different aspects that determine the future of a country. The future of the public media depends on the will and trust of citizens concerning their social utility and on the regulatory will of the public administration. This public administration is governed by the apparatus of government and management of the public interests, and consists of the political forces with majority representation in parliament. The positions of these political parties with majority representation in Parliament, which are expressed in their legislative programmes and projects, are what determine and shape the future of our object of study: the public television service.

To assess the future viability of public media in Spain, we have analysed the proposals and positions of the different parties that participated in the elections in the past two years. The big surprise is that the Spanish political stage has changed, going from a two-party system and government to a multi-party parliamentary system, composed of four main parties, thanks to the emergence of new political parties. This evolution seems to have given prominence once again to the role of public media.

A social trend in favour of private television became stronger in recent years, but from 2011, and as consequence of social movements and new political parties, public broadcasting, together with health, education and culture, recovered the social importance they had lost in Spain, while the Spanish political scenario was reconfigured and its model started to be questioned.

There is much literature on this subject, and particularly on the legal changes brought by the Law 17/2006 (Azurmendi, López & Manfredi, 2011; Zallo, 2010); the resulting models (Caffarel & García de Castro, 2006; López Cepeda, 2012; López Jordán, 2013); the financing of public broadcasting (Bustamante, 2013a; De Mateo & Bergés, 2009; Ortiz, 2010); the differences between the economic-financial situation of public radio and television in Spain and other countries such as France, the United Kingdom and Germany (Jivkova, 2011); the return of pluralism to the media (Bustamante, 2013b); the precariousness of the working system of audiovisual professionals in the public media (CRTVE) due to lack of funding initiatives and audience segmentation (Herederó & Reyes, 2016); the future of the regional television stations (Bustamante, 2010; FORTA, 2012; Marzal, 2015; Miguel & Casado, 2015, López-Rico, 2016); and the future of the public broadcasting in Europe (Lowe & Bardeol, 2007; Moreno & Jiménez, 2007, Campos-Freire 2013). However, there is still no approximation to the reality of the future of public broadcasting based on public opinion and the official positions of political parties during the general and regional elections of 2015 and 2016, which saw the emergence of new parties that placed the debate on the future of public broadcasting on the public agenda, which has forced the so-called traditional parties to state their positions in certain matters.

2. The Spanish political context

The economic crisis and social cuts have had provoked deep changes in the Spanish media landscape, with the displacement of the public's interests towards other media and the reforms and counter-reforms proposed by the corresponding public administrations (European, national, regional), which has resulted in the disappearance or privatisation of public media.

In Spain, the Law 17/2006 of 5 June, on National Public Radio and Television, rebranded the Ente Público RTVE as Corporación de Radio y Televisión Española (Spanish Radio and Television Corporation), hence CRTVE. The Law 17/2006 established that the Director of the CRTVE will be elected by Congress, by a two-thirds majority of its members, for a non-renewable mandate of six years that does not coincide with the mandate of the legislature. Similarly, the Law 8/2009 of 28 August, sought to guarantee the financial stability and economic independence of the new CRTVE, with a mixed financing system in which 50% is paid by national commercial broadcasters, pay-TV operators and telecommunications companies, and the rest by the national government. These laws sought to mark the beginning of a new stage to lay the bases of the public broadcasting system. Subsequently, news councils were created, the Statute of news programming of TVE was written, and new discussion and public information programmes appeared. From 2007 to 2011, the two Presidents of the new CRTVE were elected by consensus between the majority parties of the chambers.

Then, after the general elections of 2011, when the Popular Party (PP) came into power, the quality of the public service model began to deteriorate: the Royal Decree-Law 15/2012 of 20 April amended the administrative regime of CRTVE, and the new Director was elected by absolute majority of the chamber, just 24 hours after the first vote. On the other hand, the creation of the National Audiovisual Media Council

(CEMA, according to its initials in Spanish), which was planned in the General Law on Audiovisual Communication of 2010, was rejected by the new government of the Popular Party, which transferred the functions of such council to the National Markets and Competition Commission (CNMC, according to its initials in Spanish) (Gavara, 2013).

In 2008 a new global economic crisis started and this affected the budgets of public audiovisual bodies and eventually prompted the creation of the Law on Budgetary Stability and Financial Sustainability, in May 2012. On the other hand, the amendment of the General Law on Audiovisual Communication of August 2012 opened the door to the privatisation of the regional broadcasters. As a consequence, in the following two years, redundancy schemes were launched by Telemadrid, Radiotelevisión Murciana (RTVM) and Radiotelevisión Valenciana (RTVV), which ended up closing down. There were also mass layoffs, of up to 70% of the workforce, and budget cuts in both national and regional public broadcasting corporations. All of these changes in the political landscape and the institutional instability in our country have contributed since then to the bankruptcy of the public trust on the need for public broadcasting service. Importantly, this trust certainly is what determines its future.

The functions of the public broadcasting service have been in crisis in Europe since many years ago while the American model seems to gain hegemonic ground in the European media systems, and there is a greater tendency towards oligopoly among large private groups. Europe and, therefore, Spain have experienced the progressive deregulation of the public broadcasting service and the loss of identity of its functions (Moreno & Jiménez, 2007). The recent economic crisis has provoked very deep cuts to public media, like the closure of the Greek Radio and Television corporation (Elliniki Radiofonia kai Tileorasi - ERT) on 11 June, 2013, and, in the field of Spanish regional media, the closure of the Valencian Radio and Television corporation (Radiotelevisió Valenciana - RTVV) on 23 November, 2013.

On the other hand, depoliticisation and professionalisation have been two of the main goals of the most consolidated European public broadcasting corporations, like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), since its foundation, and the public media of the Nordic and Scandinavian countries. In the case of Spain and the South of Europe, despite the reforms and counter-reforms to the legal and administrative national, the legal autonomy in the management of the public broadcasting service corporations is still a pending issue (García de Castro, 2006). Thus, it seems logical that today the authority and future of public broadcasting corporations depend on the collective interest of their activity, and the inescapable editorial, administrative and economic autonomy and independence.

These public communication policies have been objects of numerous research works throughout history, and this has resulted in the identification of different models, given that the regulatory authorities of most countries tend to follow pretty similar guidelines. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), the Spanish model (pluralistic and polarised) is determined by the majority electoral system, in which public broadcasting would be controlled by the government in power. However, the political context is evolving from an imperfect two-party system to the proportional multi-party system of consensus democracy, in which power-sharing predominates. And it is in these models in which professionalisation is seen as an adequate tool to face the political instrumentalisation of public broadcasting.

As Hallin and Mancini (2004: 49) point out, over time the governmental system ends up adopting the professional-liberal model, since the rotation of parties in power make the political forces to end up accepting the loss of control and to prefer not to pass it to their rivals, however, the fact is that, as we will see below, now all parties favour professionalism and independence in the regulation of public broadcasting.

3. Objectives

This article presents the results of a research study on the positions expressed by the main political parties that participated in the elections of 2015 and 2016 towards public media in Spain. To facilitate the synthesis of our research results, we have formulated five large areas detected during the extensive field work carried out as part of this project. These five large areas serve as guides to rank the proposals of the different political parties that participated in the elections and to present our conclusions:

1. The public broadcasting service
2. Coexistence of national and regional public broadcasting
3. Governance and transparency
4. Funding and sustainability of the public television model
5. The Audiovisual Council

In this way, the objectives of this research are to predict the future of Spain's public broadcasting media system according to the current political context, and to determine the social function of the media in Spain based on the public policies proposed by the different political parties that have participated in the last elections (municipal, regional and general).

Spain has just experienced two years of intense electoral activity among political parties, both traditional as emerging. In 2015 and 2016 there have been regional and municipal elections and two general elections, which have witnessed innovations in the election manifestos of the so-called "emerging" parties or new political formations, which have forced the rest of the parties to state their positions in certain matters.

The initial hypothesis is that faced with all the changes in the media landscape and the segmentation of the electorate into the different political options offered in the past elections, the different political forces have had to define and summarise their proposals on the future of public media. The analysis of the electoral proposals will allow us to inquire about the future and current health of the public media system of our country, based on the positions of the different political parties that will govern and manage the public resources, as well as to identify the possible social functions that the media will perform in the future in our country.

The main research question that this study aims to answer is: Is the health of the public broadcasting system in Spain better off today than in recent years? Does it have a more promising future now than it did years ago?

4. Methods

To have a vision of the future of the public broadcasting service in Spain, we design a research project divided into two complementary stages: the first one covers the election period that begins with the Andalusian regional elections of 22 March 2015, the call to the regional and municipal elections of 24 May 2015, and ends with the Catalan elections of 27 September 2015. The second stage covers from the general elections of 20 December 2015 to the call for the general elections of June 2016 .

The primary source of data for each phase of the study and each regional and general election call was the election manifestos of the different political parties that participated in those elections. The analysis of the regional elections distinguished between different autonomous communities . Although the election manifestos of the different autonomous communities do not differ substantively from the framework manifestos prepared by the corresponding parties for these calls, we highlight and investigate the causes of the differences that do exist between the municipal, regional and framework election manifestos of different political parties and coalitions. We were aware that in those autonomous communities that had seen their public television service closed (Valencia) or reduced (Madrid), or already had an Audiovisual Council (Catalonia and Andalusia), the election manifestos of the different parties in that community would place greater emphasis on public broadcasting than the framework election manifestos.

The analysis of the data excluded those communities whose public broadcasting was outsourced or entrusted to the private sector (Castilla-León, La Rioja and Navarra), or non-existent (Cantabria). This first research phase therefore only took into account the framework election manifestos of the regional elections and the particular manifestos developed for each autonomous community.

After collecting and classifying all election manifestos -and after the election results- the analysis focused on the election manifestos of those parties that occupied the top positions in terms of seats at the national level: Ciudadanos, Podemos, the Popular Party (hence PP), and the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (hence PSOE, according to its initials in Spanish) . The analysis obviously included the election manifestos of the platforms and coalitions that had an outstanding performance in the elections, such as Junts pel Si in Catalonia and Compromís in the Valencian Community.

The second phase of the research analysed the general election manifestos of 20 December 2015 and 26 June 2016, even if they did not contain substantial differences. Subsequently, the analysis focused on the election manifestos of the major national parties: Ciudadanos, Podemos, PP and PSOE, which allowed us to compare their manifestos in the regional and national levels.

The first phase of the research also took into account the investiture speeches of the new regional Presidents as the second primary source of information because in more than one case, the candidate to the regional presidency made reference to the public broadcasting of his/her autonomous community (for example, Ximo Puig in the Valencian Community).

We decided to complement the content analysis of the election manifestos and investiture speeches with structured interviews in order to obtain qualitative data necessary to understand with greater rigour some

of the claims made in the manifestos. We used a convenience sampling method since we only interviewed the communication officers of the four major parties in terms of results of the general elections. In the elections of December 2015, the seats won by the PP, PSOE, Podemos and Ciudadanos represented 88.7% of the total number of deputies. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed for the analysis.

The structured interview, which was the same for all parties, had three sections: the first one was dedicated to the regional television corporations (model, governance, functions, content), the second one was dedicated to the national television corporations, and the last one investigated the position of respondents towards the coexistence of both systems to build a unified public broadcasting service for Spain (Caffarel 2007)

The results were analysed to develop a forward-looking assessment of the social role of public media in Spain. On the one hand, the content analysis of the election manifestos provided data for contrasting the different proposals put forward by parties, while the interviews with the representatives of the parties that participated in the general elections provided qualitative data. Finally, we proceeded to the analysis of the press releases that were issued by the four aforementioned parties (through their websites) and addressed the subject of public media. Meanwhile, the monitoring of news media during the election campaigns provided very useful secondary data on the different proposals and comments that arose in different journalists and media outlets .

5. Data analysis

5.1. The public broadcasting service

All political parties, except the PP, explain the importance of public media for building an advanced society in their election manifestos, and some of them even dedicated a specific chapter to this subject. In the general elections of 2015, the subject was addressed by PSOE in *Una visión progresista de la sociedad de la comunicación* ("A progressive view of the communication society") , by Podemos in *Comú Podem*, by En Marea in *RTVE y políticas mediáticas* ("RTVE and media policies") , and by Ciudadanos in ("Culture, the backbone of a country") .

The PP addresses public broadcasting in the regional manifestos for Andalusia, Catalonia and the Canary Islands, but sometimes does so in a contradictory way. For example, in the manifesto for Andalusia, the PP says: "We will support RTVA as a public social communication medium and will implement a management model that will make it a truly efficient and independent public service company, making the most of the financial, material and personal resources of this public Agency" .

However, in the Canary Islands the PP literally proposes to "privatise" the medium: "We will design and enforce the bidding procedure in order to privatise the Public Broadcasting Entity of Canaria, safeguarding workers' current contracts, and allocating public funds to social and job-promotion policies" .

It is important to mention that in these autonomous communities the government is not in the hands of the PP. Therefore, the PP has a more varied, not to say contradictory, position towards regional public broadcasting, supporting it in some cases (Andalusia) and promoting its privatisation in others (Canary Islands). In our interview, this party clearly supported the public ownership of the national and regional broadcasting media, but also remarked that "some autonomous communities have very useful formulas of public ownership and private management" (Interview with the PP) .

With regards to the rest of the parties, the regional and framework election manifestos of Ciudadanos, PSOE and Podemos unanimously advocate for the maintenance of a public television service, and propose different alternatives to guarantee its future:

Ciudadanos, in most of its regional election manifestos, supports the autonomy e impartiality of the regional public entities as well as their depoliticisation and democratic regeneration, their improvement and professionalisation through the appointment of the members of their boards by consensus and reinforced majority. Thus, Ciudadanos positions itself along the same line of the reform established by the now repealed law proposed by Zapatero's government. For example, in the manifesto for Castile-La Mancha, Ciudadanos literally says:

Ciudadanos will amend the current regulation of public radio and television to provide it with impartiality. This way, the Management Board and the director general will be appointed on the basis of merit and capacity by a three-fifths majority of the Courts, making it difficult for a single parliamentary group to make these appointments (2015:54) .

Ciudadanos also supports the recovery of RTVV in Valencian Community and the depoliticisation and professionalisation of Telemadrid. In its manifesto for Aragon, Ciudadanos pledges to “ensure the independence and plurality of regional public media”, and in the Balearic Islands advocates for the democratic regeneration of public broadcasting against the colonisation of the media.

As Table 1 shows, there is an important correspondence between these statements contained in the election manifestos and the speeches of candidates to the presidency of autonomous communities:

Table 1: References to public broadcasting in investiture speeches of the Presidents of the autonomous communities

Autonomous community	Previous government	Current government	Makes references to public broadcasting
ANDALUSIA	PSOE	PSOE (supported by Ciudadanos)	NO
ARAGON	PP	PSOE (supported by Podemos)	YES
ASTURIAS	FAC	PSOE (supported by UNITED LEFT)	NO
BALEARIC ISLANDS	PP	PSOE (supported by Podemos)	YES
CANARY ISLANDS	CC	CC	NO
CASTILE-LA MANCHA	PP	PSOE (supported by Podemos)	YES
CATALONIA	CIU	JxSí (supported by CUP)	NO
EXTREMADURA	PP	PSOE	YES
MADRID	PP	PP (supported by Ciudadanos)	YES
MURCIA	PP	PP (supported by Ciudadanos)	NO
VALENCIA	PP	PSOE (supported by Compromís/Podemos)	YES

Source: Authors' own creation

In its framework regional manifestos, PSOE proposes to “merge and update in one law the regulation that has been chained in time, from 2006 to 2015 and regulates the activity of the CRTVE”. Podemos advocates for the de-governmentalisation of public media and the amendment of the General Law of 2010 to adapt it to European standards.

However, there are some differences in nuances across the manifestos of some communities. The PSOE proposes to amend the third channel law in the Balearic Islands in order ensure an insular territorial network of IB3; in Catalonia proposes to repeal the Law on the Catalan Corporation of Audiovisual Media (Corporació Catalan of Mitjans Audiovisuals), which was enacted by the CIU and the PP; in the Community of Madrid proposes to enact a new law for the Public Entity Telemadrid and to reopen RTVV (which was also proposed by Ximo Puig in his investiture speech).

Podemos, in addition to pledging to promote the third sector, i.e., community communication services, promises to strengthen Aragon’s CARTV and Austrias’ RTPA as “public service and economic social agents”, and to create a new non-partisan and innovative RTVV in Valencia”, and to implement an urgent plan to recover RTVM in Madrid. In Catalonia, promoting “public communication under control democratic citizen”. In other words, with the exception of the PP, political parties converge on issues such as the reopening of RTVV and the new law for Telemadrid. Meanwhile, the results of the interviews indicate that there is a clear bet on public broadcasting.

Despite the relationship between CRTVE and the regional television entities does not appear explicitly in their election manifestos, the political parties under analysis support the coexistence of national and regional public television corporations, according to the analysis of the interviews with their representatives. We only found indirect references, such as the one made by Ciudadanos: “CRTVE must coordinate its encounter with all regional television corporations to supporting its viability”.

This debate is highlighted by the repealing of the third channel law, which was enacted in 1983, by the 2010 Law on Audiovisual Communications, the possibility of the privatisation of public channels opened by

President Mariano Rajoy in his 2011 inaugural speech: "When the administrations are bound to reduce expenditure, it is absolutely priority to review our current model of public television. For this reason, I announce that, with immediate character, we will bring to this Chamber the legal reform needed to allow new management models" . The debate was also highlighted by the similar statements made by UTECA, the Spanish Unión of Associated Commercial Television Broadcasters: We "insists that the best option is the privatisation of regional broadcasters and their renunciation to advertising" (Azurmendi, López and Manfredi, 2011:1). Finally, the amendment of the 2012 Audiovisual Communication Law opened the door to the possibility of liquidating and privatising loss-making public broadcasting networks, which actually happened in Valencia the year following.

Ciudadanos, PSOE and Podemos bet clearly on the coexistence of the two public television service models, making special emphasis on the protection of the linguistic diversity and information of proximity. The PP, clarifies its support by pointing that it must be the regional authorities who decide what are their needs and objectives. It does not close the door to the private management of regional television corporations: "We firmly believe in public national television and therefore consider that it should exist and coexist with private or commercial options as well as (public or private) regional options" (Interview with the PP).

When asked whether they consider the coexistence of territorial centres of CRTVE and regional networks appropriate, the roles are reversed: while PSOE and Podemos talk about cooperation, to avoid duplication of spending and infrastructure and a weighted size, the PP flatly supports the existence of the territorial centres of CRTVE, "which is one of the greatest strengths of the Corporation, one of its most profitable and justified assets, and one of the activities that contribute the most to supporting and valuing the *raison d'être* of CRTVE" (Interview with the PP).

5.3. Governance and transparency

PSOE, Ciudadanos and Podemos advocate for the return to the model implemented by Zapatero's government in the Law of June 2006, in which the president of CRTVE is appointed by a two-thirds majority, and are against the Decree of April 2012 which amended the administrative regime of CRTVE. Podemos also proposes to improve the 2006 Law by adapting it to European legislation and particularly to "the independent corporation model, like the one implemented in the British Broadcasting Corporation", while Ciudadanos proposes the President to be selected by a two-thirds majority from a shortlist of three candidates chosen in a public tender process . The PP is the only one that supports the current system.

The political parties and coalitions also proposed legislative reforms to strengthen the professionalisation of public broadcasting entities in the other territorial levels. The Catalan coalition Junts pel Sí argues in its election manifesto for the need to "further strengthen the governmental independence of the CCMA through legislative reforms that professionalise governance, guarantee its funding through the 4-year contract programme, stabilise the mixed funding system, and assign its dependence and control exclusively to Parliament" .

The analysis of the content of the (general and regional) election manifestos and the structured interviews with the parties' representatives has also examined other concrete aspects of the governance of public broadcasting corporations: the role of the Management Board. In this regards, all parties support the reform of the current management boards, their appointment by a two-thirds majority of parliament, their professionalisation and independence, and the reduction of their composition. In addition, Ciudadanos proposes to integrate a wide range of social organisations through rotatory positions.

The PP considers it is necessary to reduce the number of members of the Management Board of CRTVE and proposes the amendment that its government made in 2012: from 12 to 9 members, and the suppression of the remuneration, human and technical resources they enjoyed since the enforcement of the law of 2006. With regards to the composition, election and remuneration of the members of the management board, the PSOE advocates for formulas that guarantee of its independence, and proportionality: the salaries of the management board members will depend on their functions and these functions will depend on whether they have an exclusive or partial dedication.

Podemos is the party that offers the most detailed model, since it adds the following remarks with regards to the appointment of the Management Board and its President:

- The representatives of the workers in the Management Board are chosen by specific direct vote as it occurs with the News Council.
- The referendum about the head of news will be binding.

- The Ombudsman will be chosen by the citizenry, through direct vote via interactive media. It will be part of the Management Board and will be rotated every three years.
- A broad Social Council will be created and given the necessary competencies through which the civil society can choose the principles that will guide the management of public broadcasting and monitor their implementation.

The interviews confirmed that the four political parties support the reduction of the number of members of the management board of public broadcasting corporations and their salaries. In the case of the workforce, Podemos proposes progressive rationalisation "to adapt it to the productive structures of the 21st century, based on plans agreed by consensus with the representation of workers". Meanwhile, the PSOE believes that it is not necessary to reduce the workforce, but to manage the existing workforce better. In contrast, the PP defends the maintenance of the workforce of CRTVE: "a medium as broad in terms of channels and activities as CRTVE must always have the right workforce to perform its functions"; while the regional governments of the PP promoted large redundancy schemes in the public broadcasting corporations of Valencia and Madrid during the past legislatures.

All the parties agree on the utility of the current commissions of parliamentary control. Only Podemos adds that it is necessary to enhance its auditing functions. PSOE, Podemos and Ciudadanos also agree that there is a lack of transparency in the management of public broadcasting corporations and in their mechanisms to purchase programming. However, in the interview, the PP adopted the opposite position: "In CRTVE the transparency, control, accuracy and mechanisms needed to comply with the programme purchasing rules are complete, according to the latest public audits".

These three parties also completely agree on their rejection of the outsourcing of news services. Podemos, for example, proposed citizen control during the interview: "news programmes are a strategic and sensitive product, whose quality must be ensured is and audited through a participatory Observatory that collects the feedback of the public, workers, news councils, professional associations, parties and civil society" (Interview with Podemos).

5.4. Funding and sustainability of the public television model

All parties agree on the need to improve the current financing system of CRTVE with new income that guarantee its continuity and its financial independence. None of these parties, according to their election manifestos, is prepared to defend the return of advertising to TVE. Likewise, all parties, including the nationalist ones, like the PNV with respect to EITB and the coalition Junts pel Sí with regards to the Corporació Catalana de Mijans Audiovisuals, defend a mixed funding model that includes advertising for each of their regional networks.

Based on the analysis of the general election manifestos, the PP is the only party that does not take a stand in this regard. Ciudadanos proposes to reform the three major laws that regulate the activity of CRTVE: the Statute, the framework mandate and especially the law on funding, to ensure a stable and sufficient funding. The PSOE justifies the suppression of advertising in CRTVE based on Law 8/2009, of 28 August, although proposes to improve the funding system of CRTVE with new income and new mechanisms that ensure the financial continuity, sufficiency and independence of the Corporation.

In the case of Podemos, it either outlines a funding model, although it advocates for the creation of a stable funding model that ensures an efficient and transparent management. A strict code of transparency and incompatibilities will be implemented in order to end with opacity and the alarming cases of corruption from the root. All the accounting will be fully disclosed in a specific website that is accessible to taxpayers. The analysis of the data shows that none of the parties outlines the future funding model of the national public television. Even the PP proposes to achieve the greatest possible agreement for this.

From the analysis of the regional manifestos it is important to note that the election manifesto of the PSOE for the Community of Aragón supports the maintenance of a mixed funding model: public funding plus advertising.

The interviews with the parties' representatives gave us a better understanding of the financing of public television channels. For the PP, the "funding of CRTVE is an essential element that must be reconsidered in the medium term and in the light of its more than obvious dysfunctions. The subject matter deserves to reach further agreement without closing any doors initially (with the exception of the licence fee). The PP

considers that the current funding of CRTVE is sufficient, but also that it must be open to the challenges that may arise in the future.

The PSOE justifies the current funding system in the following way:

The analysis of the results of the suppression of advertising in CRTVE and the new system of taxes to telecoms -despite the administrative and legal problems- indicates that it is a more profitable method. Totally justified. The law should go along this line, and to enhance it, to avoid lawsuits and problems of interpretation or application. The system of sponsorships should also be further clarified (Interview with the PSOE).

Podemos also supports financing without advertising for CRTVE and a mixed financing model with advertising at the general level because it points out, in its interview, an exception "in those public television corporations where the operation without direct advertising is already a seal of identity of public broadcasting". For Podemos, the current financing system seems to be good enough provided expenditure is rationalised with the "astronomical salaries of some directors" and the inverted pyramid of labour is reduced".

Ciudadanos does not believe that the solution is the return to advertising, but neither supports the 2009 law that establishes that the funding of CRTVE must come from other companies:

The CRTVE financing model must be clearly reviewed, but bearing in mind that the return of advertising would not compensate the income derived from the taxes established after the reform of 2009. We must bet on a stable funding model, in some way dependent from the accounts of other companies and the ups and downs of the governments in power. (Interview with Ciudadanos).

All parties are aware of the impossibility of implementing a licence fee, and so they exclude it from the possible funding, although Podemos does so with nuances:

First, it would be necessary to rehabilitate the reputation of public television corporations, so that the taxpayer perceives them as part of their life, as a useful tool, as it occurs in other European countries. If this does not occur, it is not a reasonable proposal (Interview with Podemos).

Regarding the future and sustainability of the model, all parties unanimously see the viability of their respective public broadcasting entities as engines of the audiovisual sector of their respective territorial field. This is, together with information of proximity, one of the *raison d'être* of regional public television channels.

Yet, Podemos considers that the sustainability of public television is threatened by the falling audience levels and the decreasing social reputation of some regional entities. That is why the measures proposed by Podemos to ensure sustainability in the future aim to:

Recuperate the public service mission (proximity, pluralism, rigour, participation) and enhance transparency to streamline spending as much as possible, and seek larger audience levels so that sponsorships and advertising spaces improve their contribution. The commercial exploitation of in-house productions and public audiovisual archives must be allowed (Interview with Podemos).

Even more ambiguous is the PSOE, which considers that "it is necessary to redefine the model", and the PP, which believes that "there is no other option but to ensure their social profitability". These parties do not give details of the funding and feasibility of public television corporations.

5.5. The Audiovisual Council

With the exception of the PP, all political parties are in favour of the creation of a regulatory body for audiovisual media comparable to the European model, and are against the current system of the National Markets and Competition Commission (CNMC). The creation of a new independent audiovisual regulatory authority (CEMA) was envisaged in the 2010 Law and after the last Socialist legislature left its creation pending, the government of the PP had repeatedly spoken out against it, until it eventually transferred the functions that the 2010 Law had attributed to CEMA to the CNMC (Gavara 2012).

Even Ciudadanos, which had proposed in the Catalan elections, together with the PP, to eliminate the Audiovisual Council of Catalonia (CAC), "because instead of being a regulatory authority is a political entity whose mission is to sanction the media that do not support the nationalist ideology". Ciudadanos also supports the creation of a convergent national audiovisual/ telecommunications regulatory authority

that works in a coordinated manner with the audiovisual regulatory authorities of the autonomous communities. (Interview with Ciudadanos).

The PSOE and Podemos do address this topic with detail in their election manifestos. In the case of Podemos, it advocates for the creation of an independent audiovisual council, "integrated in the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA), similarly to those that exist in most European countries". The PSOE defines its purpose in the following way:

ensure the supervision, transparency and pluralism in the convergent audiovisual and telecommunications sector, as well as compliance with the mission and legal obligations attributed to public audiovisual communication service providers. [...] The effective constitution of a National Audiovisual Media Council that contributes to the protection of small business and community projects, as well as the regulation of conflicts of interest. And as a result of the concentration of large groups (PSOE's election manifesto: 133).

The interview also asked about the positions towards both national and regional audiovisual councils and the answers were similar. The PP reiterated that:

It is not necessary to create new entities and structures of control if there are others that already perform these functions. Let's remember that CRTVE, for example, is subject to the control of the Management Board, the Advisory Board, Parliament, the General Intervention Board of the State Administration (IGAE), the Court of Auditors, the external private auditors, the internal auditors, the National Markets and Competition Commission (CNMC)... It does not seem to be much room left for new regulatory authorities without colliding with those that already exist (Interview with the PP).

Ciudadanos advocates for a national regulatory authority that works in a coordinated manner with regional regulators. To be precise, its spokesman pointed out the following in the interview:

The National Markets and Competition Commission (CNMC) is a macro-regulator that is completely distant from the models of the European environment. We would have to clearly outline what a convergent (audiovisual and telecommunications) regulator should be and the authority of the Competition.

This convergent regulator must be independent and have more competencies, particularly the power to grant national broadcasting licenses.

The national convergent regulator should work in a coordinated manner with the audiovisual regulatory authorities of the autonomous communities. Both types of regulators should expand their scope of action to include new digital media (Interview with Ciudadanos).

Podemos also defends the existence of national and regional regulatory authorities in the same sense in which it manifests its support in its election manifesto. It demands the creation of councils in the autonomous communities, although advocating for "the rationalisation of structures to reduce costs, taking as an example the German model, where the regional councils coordinate at the national level to cooperate, share resources, and unify criteria". When asked about the possible modification of the regulatory authorities that already exist, Podemos proposes going a step further in terms of citizen participation:

It would be desirable to face the need to create Citizen Observatories to measure the social return of investment in public media, based on the indicators published by UNESCO and/or those that are used for this purpose in other European television corporations such as the BBC or the ZDF, in addition to ensuring social participation in management and content production (Constitutional right of Access), for which the promotion of the comprehensive transparency of the media system is essential (Interview with Podemos).

6. Discussion and conclusions

1. The first result of the general analysis, of the general and regional election manifestos and the rest of the materials, is that the traditional left-right political dichotomy or polarisation towards the public media is no longer as decisive as it was years ago. In principle, the main four political parties as well as the rest of political formations or coalitions speak publicly and unanimously in favour of the preservation of public broadcasting in our country in view of the future. Even, the Popular Party speaks in favour of "the freedom, independence and objectivity of the public media".
2. The initial hypothesis of this analysis was that, as a result of the new movements of social contestation and the subsequent emergence of new parties in 2011, the debate on the future of

public television service had been reopened. Second, given that no political party has the absolute majority in electoral consultations, the political scenario and context for television public became more favourable for the distribution of power, so that it is part of the elements of consensus and negotiation between different political forces. Third, given its minority position with respect to the general support for public broadcasting, the Popular Party -whose behaviour and experience in national and regional administration has mostly questioned its viability- seems to have evolved in favour of public broadcasting, at least in its public statements. So it seems that, in contrast with the events of the last years, now all political formations seek better formulas to ensure their future viability, as it happened, for example, with the recovery of the Valencian television and the new Law for Telemadrid, Murcia and the Balearic Islands.

3. In short, the future of public television service in Spain has been introduced on the agenda of the political groups. The segmentation of the Spanish political landscape and the disappearance of the absolute majorities has increased the prominence of the debate on the public television service, and has even become a key element in the investiture speeches of the new presidents of the autonomous communities, as for example the communities of Valencia, Madrid, Aragon, Murcia (Cf. table 1). It can even be argued that the fortress and viability of the public television service of is now greater than it was, for example, in 2012, when the scenario was very different in the national Parliament and several autonomous communities.
4. Since 1980 (Law 4/1980, of 10 January, on the Statute of Radio and Television) the future of the management of national public broadcasting corporations depended on the party in power. The Law 17/2006 of 5 June, enacted during the government of Rodríguez Zapatero, modified this aspect to entrust the Congress with the appointment, by a two-thirds majority, of the President of the Management Board for a mandate of 6 years. In the following legislature of Mariano Rajoy this aspect was modified once again (Royal Decree-Law 15/2012, of 20 April), but although this legal framework is still in force, the four main political parties, and other formations and coalitions, speak in favour of the preservation of public television services, which is a change that is reflected in the regional and general election manifestos and statements. This is a situation that had not occurred in previous elections.
5. The PP is the party with the most differentiated position and sometimes falls in contradiction regarding the regional broadcasting corporations, especially in those communities that are not governed by it: in some cases the PP defends the public character of the regional media (Andalusia), and in some others advocates for their privatisation (Canary Islands). In our interview, this party positioned itself clearly in favour of the publicly-ownership of national and regional broadcasting media, although it remarked that that "there are very useful formulas of publicly-owned and privately-run broadcasting media in some regions". The position of the PP appears to have evolved as a result of the changes in the political scene and as a consequence of the negative results of its closure of television networks. Thus, the PP now opts for outsourcing or private management in those cases where the sustainability of the network is put into question. The change of the PP towards public broadcasting may have also been influenced by the position of Ciudadanos in favour of the impartiality and autonomy of regional bodies, and the depoliticisation and transparency in CRTVE.
6. Although the references to the relationship between CRTVE and the regional public television corporations are not explicit in the election manifestos, according to the political parties under analysis, the future coexistence between the national and regional public television corporations is guaranteed. Ciudadanos, PSOE and Podemos clearly bet on the coexistence of the two public services, with a particular emphasis on the protection of linguistic diversity and information of proximity. The PP clarifies its support by remarking that it is the regional authorities who should decide what are their needs and objectives.
7. All political parties, with the exception of the PP, have quite similar objectives with regards to the governance and transparency of public media. While the PP is the only party that defends the current model, PSOE, Podemos and Ciudadanos are in favour of returning to the President election method by reinforced two-thirds parliamentary majority, in favour of giving greater transparency to management and programme contracts and against the outsourcing of news content.
8. All parties agree on the need of improving the current funding system for CRTVE with new income that ensures its continuity and financial independence. However, none of these parties is willing

to defend the return of advertising to TVE. Likewise, all parties, including the nationalist ones, like the PNV with respect to EITB and the coalition Junts pel Sí with regards to the Corporació Catalana de Mijans Audiovisuals, defend a mixed funding model that includes advertising for each of their regional networks. Thus, it is likely that the model of mixed funding for regional public broadcasting corporations will be maintained in the future.

9. With the exception of the PP, all political parties are in favour of the creation of a regulatory body for audiovisual media comparable to the European model, and are against the current system of the National Markets and Competition Commission (CNMC). Ciudadanos, which had proposed in the Catalan elections, together with the PP, to eliminate the Audiovisual Council of Catalonia (CAC), also speaks in favour of the creation of a convergent national audiovisual/telecommunications regulatory authority that works in a coordinated manner with the audiovisual regulatory authorities of the autonomous communities. Podemos demands the creation of audiovisual councils in the autonomous communities, although it advocates for “the rationalisation of structures to reduce costs, taking as example the German model, in which regional councils coordinate at the national level to cooperate, share resources and unify criteria”, and proposes a step forward in terms of citizen participation:
10. Based on the previous, we can also conclude that the new political context that has result of the electoral consultations under analysis grant a greater role to the professional and autonomous system or model with views to the future regulation of public broadcasting, as all political parties have pointed out in their election manifestos and statements. To define the concept of professionalisation, we take it as a synonym of political objectivity and neutrality, based on the three dimensions of Hallin and Mancini (2004:31):
 - Exercise of professional autonomy.
 - Compliance with specific professional rules.
 - The public service orientation of the content.
11. In addition to the fact that the manifestos of political parties show a greater degree of unanimity, we can deduce that today the public broadcasting system has a longer and better future than it did few years ago, since the political parties themselves, including the Popular Party, are in favour of reaching an agreement to establish the future funding model. The future of public television is no longer in the hands of the alternation of power between two parties with opposing views, as it has entered in the debate opened by the new political formations that also incorporate new visions and new social generations. The sustainability of public regional and national broadcasting media is better guaranteed by the new multiparty scenario than by the previous two-party system in which only the two major parties, with their opposing visions and conceptions, took turns in power. The appearance of new political actors, which resulted of the new stage of the electoral process, has increasingly placed the spotlight on the need to ensure the viability of public media. This has reinforced the need to ensure the future of public media through a management model that guarantees professionalism and independence, as the basis to reinforce their social credibility.

7. References¹

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¹ The references to the websites of the consulted election manifestos (general elections of 2015 and 2016, the framework regional elections manifestos and the community-specific election manifestos of the autonomous communities of 2015) have been provided as endnotes.



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