Cultural industries and the digital change

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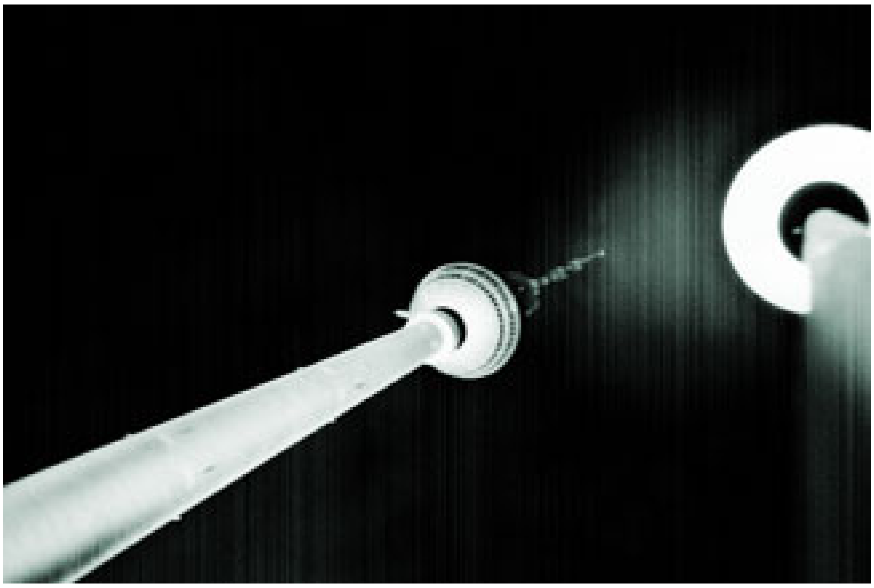
Digitalization is a term that has become a buzzword in the literature on television in the past years. This process supposes not only a technological change in the production, distribution and consumption of TV, but also in the reconfiguration of the TV industry structure, including the appearance of new operators, the diminishing role of others, an increasingly complex regulation and, as a whole, the reconfiguration of the market and its players.



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In this research the analysis focuses on the relations among different actors which shape the television framework, and which are finally responsible for the contents broadcasted through airwaves, satellite and cable. The aim is to draw the commercial and ownership relations among the companies involved. The research also introduces a geographical factor in order to explain some of the results obtained.

An outstanding case here is the independent TV production sector. In the Spanish national and regional TV one can watch every year more than 17,000 hours produced by these companies. Their location can be explained quantitative and qualitatively. First, the majority of production companies are located in the metropolitan areas of Madrid and Barcelona, where one can find the companies with the highest incomes. Television programmes produced by these companies can be watched both in national and regional broadcasts. In fact, national broadcasts are provided basically by production companies located in these two areas. Regional public broadcasting companies have nevertheless also helped to create a strong local industry made up of diverse production companies. In several cases their volume of production can reach high figures, but they continue to be excessively -sometimes exclusively- dependent on the buying capacity of the public broadcasting company of their region.

However, Spanish audiovisual companies are very weak in the production for new means such as satellite or cable. In these areas, the largest transnational conglomerates (Walt Disney, Time Warner, Sony or Televisa) control the market, and national companies can only opt to participate - if at all - under joint ventures. This strategy is becoming common, since transnational power does not look for the direct control of foreign broadcasting or production companies, but for the possibility to sell its own contents, which are highly appreciated by international operators and audiences in the Western world.

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