

**New Technology and Changes in the Mass Media.  
Considerations for Political Scientists**

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There are numerous points of contact between Political Science and mass media studies (1).

In fact, the first studies on the sociology of communication, (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, Merton, MacPhee, Klapper, etc.) were studies applied to political phenomena, in particular electoral phenomena.

The first "functionalist" studies on communication (Lasswell) were also about the communicative organisation of political institutions and of society.

This importance of "politics" is also evident at the birth of another of the branches of communication sciences: that of the social psychology of persuasion. Authors like Hovland, Tchathotine, "fathers of the theory of persuasion" are in fact analysts of the communicative behaviour of politics.

Moreover, we could even say that the sociology of culture, until the first signs of commercial advertising (Barthes), also has one of its main points of interest in political persuasion.

In any event, the main relationships between political sciences and communication sciences have centred around the study of effects, at an initial stage considering the mass media as generators of immediate effects on political behaviour, and later on (Lang) (2), studying the existing filters between the mass media and this behaviour.

However, things change rapidly in communication. The main reason for this paper, addressed to Political Science experts, is to analyse a change that may appear to be surprising. It is not so much a question of studying the effects the mass media have on society and politics, but rather of studying the effects the mass media receive from the rapid changes that new technology brings to society.

We are not saying that the mass media no longer influence society, we are saying, however, that the mass media are gradually becoming mediators, non-independent agents of social and political dynamics.

In any event, it is true that, particularly when one wishes to study their future, it should be taken into account that the mass media are at the same time "influenced" by society and "influences" on society, and that makes their prospective analysis particularly difficult.

One thing appears, however, to be unquestionable: in recent years, as a result of technological transformations and the worldwide expansion of the communication industry (3), the limits of independence of the communication sector

have become restricted. The development of communication is becoming gradually conditioned by factors that hitherto clearly had nothing to do with communication.

### **The "mass media" industry's loss of independence**

Communication, and in particular the new forms of communication, depend today, more than ever, on the development of technology and on the conditions in which it is introduced; on the home consumer market's absorption capacity, but even more on its industrial and military applications, on the logic of the I+D processes and on the capacity of the economy to make the investments profitable.

The key concept is that "social communication" no longer depends exclusively on sociopolitical factors, such as freedom of speech, or even on economic factors linked to the market itself, but that "social communication" begins to depend heavily on other forms of "transmission of information".

Take, for example, the case of the Spanish programme of research and operativity of the satellite Hispasat, with an investment of around 40,000 million ptas, designed to "offer some social communication services", but determined by its profitability over and above its contribution to the "mass media".

The mass media have become a more and more limited part of the modern communication business. The mass media sector is an ever-smaller percentage of the communication turnover. In 1987 this percentage was calculated at a mere 26% (TABLE 1).

### **Increase in the "capacity" of communication**

One unquestionable factor and one that must determine the development of communication media in the coming years, is that of the increased number of communication "capacities".

This increase can be seen in the following aspects:

a- Increase in reproduction "capacity": with a growing number of specialised publications and with the appearance of new possibilities of a more independent kind of own publishing.

b- Increase in audiovisual production "capacity", with a growing number of large industrialisation processes, and of amateur production as well.

c- Increase in transmission "capacity", with the setting up of new communication channels, thanks to satellites, to the new cable networks and to maintenance of the ether networks.

d- Increase in data-selecting and processing "capacity", with all the new telematic processes (4).

### **Importance of Communication Policies**

These factors determine a change of emphasis, from political communication to Communication Policies.

In the 60s, 70s and even 80s, nobody in Europe wanted to hear about "Communication Policies". The liberal principles of democracy demanded a single principle: the best law (policy) on communication was not to have one. The existence of dictatorial regimes, like Franco's, with its "Spanish Doctrine of Information", justified this position. The MacBride report, widely discussed by western liberals, was received as a threat to the freedom of communication. Third-world countries, however, insisted on the need to introduce Communication Policies that would enable them to combat their own underdevelopment.

We cannot forget, however, that in the meantime the countries in Europe, and their governing political parties, controlled monopoly television stations with great political and cultural influence. There were, in effect, communication policies in Europe. The secret lay in the fact that nobody wanted to bring them into political discussion.

At the end of the 80s, the idea of communication policy reappeared explicitly in Europe, as a political debate.

Communication policies unquestionably occur in political life, but in particular in the field of development and industrial competition.

As has already been seen in the transition in Spain to democracy and in Catalonia to self-government, and as we are beginning to see in European politics, political factors ("regulation" - "deregulation" - "regulation") occur frequently in the development of the communication system as a whole.

If we concentrate on the experience of Catalonia, we find that Communication Policies have an influence on the setting up of communication channels. The policy of "deregularisation" does not directly help to establish communication channels for the communities that do not fall either within a state

border or within a market border. Spanish Laws such as those of Private Television and Telecommunications Planning (LOT), the most important actions of the Spanish Communication Policy, are factors that have a negative influence on the development of communication channels in Catalonia.

### **The displacement of politics by economics**

Politics, however, will no longer be the only factor capable of affecting the development of the "mass media". Worldwide "multimedia" companies, even more than politics, will be responsible for the development of the "mass media" in Catalonia. Their financial and management capacity, their marketing strategy, agreements or mergers, and even strategies of image and advertising will be factors more likely to have an influence than the political strategies or decisions of "regulation" or "protection" made by governments.

This mobility is already evident on the pages of the world economic press, which is more and more interested in the change in ownership of the "mass media".

### **Influence of everyday life on the "mass media"**

Lazarsfeld's theory on the "two stages of communication" is confirmed in the various conditions of each stage in the development of the mass media.

The action of the media finds a constant filter in the conditions of everyday life. Although we must acknowledge the ever-growing influence of the "mass media" on the life of the people, the possible reverse influence, of everyday life on the mass media, should never be overlooked.

So, for example, the Mediterranean nature of our customs and our way of life will be observed in the very development of the use of new media and may explain certain deviations not forecast by analysts in countries like France, United States or Japan, that are more advanced in the field of telecommunications.

Analysts of communication, as its technology increases, should not overlook the influence of the factors that affect everyday life in general and, as a result, communication behaviour: climate, time organisation, forms of leisure, housing, forms of town planning, all of which have a strong influence on the development, and on the stability, of the forms of social communication.

## **Changes in the channels and frontiers of communication**

With regard to Catalonia, its language and its culture, one of the main changes in the communication system is the one relating to new channels of communication.

The most important innovation is the Government's shift in the control of some communication channels, the new multinational activity of private enterprise and the setting up of new transnational communication channels. This is the case of the European audiovisual channel, which in Catalan society as a whole is seen as a new channel of its own.

In these new conditions, the main problem will be to be able to keep a communication channel of its own for Catalonia in general.

## **Irregular and unbalanced introduction of new technology**

The communication system is today being interpreted in a very distorted manner as a result of the influence that the advertising campaigns promoting them are having on public opinion.

New technology is growing in an unbalanced and heterogeneous way, adapting to the various economic and social conditioning factors in each community.

TABLE 2 clearly shows these imbalances and the structural condition that the various media form among themselves. Just as an introductory example: the low number of VCRs there are in Italy is only explained by the general structure of its television supply, among which is a large ether supply, concentrated in the years of private television expansion.

An analysis that includes the third world countries shows this imbalance even more clearly.

New technology is being introduced in a very different way from the way hertzian television was introduced, that in few years achieved almost universal expansion (in all those countries that had electricity).

## **SOME SPECIFIC CHANGES FORECAST FOR THE PRESS (5)**

### **Concentration of ownership and transnationalisation**

There is likely to be economic consolidation of a limited number of journalistic companies, following a reduction in the number of individual names and the trend towards monopoly of the press in its respective spheres, particularly in the local and district press where it is becoming more and more difficult for two names to exist side by side.

"Multimedia" logic (press-radio-television-advertising) will be imposed on press companies, and this will also lead to the progressive entry of international capital into press companies.

### **Number of readers at a standstill and an increase in influence**

The number of daily papers per 1000 inhabitants in Catalonia (currently between 80 to 90 per 1000 inhabitants) may stay the same, below the average of the European Community countries, but without increasing, thanks to the expansion of the gutter press, as is occurring in England or Germany.

This standstill may allow a limited expansion of the press in Catalan, not only by the appearance of new dailies, but also by extending the pages in Catalan in the current dailies published in Spanish in Catalonia.

The press will maintain a progressive social influence and a large income-return from advertising for press companies.

These companies have already seen their profits in advertising increase dramatically, above all the other media, including television. In 1986 this income reached 40.2%, while television income was still very far below that of the press, at 23.7%. The increase in revenue from advertising in the press in recent years has been spectacular, with a jump from 39,000 million pesetas in 1980 to 275,000 million ptas in 1988. All the forecasts lead us to think that this income may stabilise, even after the appearance of private television stations.

Advertising is becoming a bigger and bigger percentage of the total income of newspaper companies (275,000 million in advertising compared to 140,000 million in sales in 1988). The financial role of advertising in the press, in spite of being smaller than in the case of the audiovisual media, still has sufficient weight to explain its editorial policies.

### **New forms of the press**

New technology applied to the press, as to the communication media in

general, favour two apparently contradictory movements, one of centralisation and the other of decentralisation.

On the one hand, the small media will become more numerous, thanks to easy access to own publishing, that will favour the specialised press, mainly that of companies and organisations. It is likely that there will be a progressive diversification of printing production and the abolition of the traditional boundaries between the book and the daily newspaper.

But on the other hand, there will also be more long-distance publishing processes, favouring the large national or international daily newspapers, as is the case of El País in Spain, or USA Today or the Financial Times on a worldwide scale.

Telematic information transmission (videotext) will not be, strictly speaking, a replacement for the conventional press but it will provide new selective means of information.

### **Easy reading**

The growing influence of the audiovisual media on people's perception habits will force newspaper publishers to come into line with them by designing new newspapers. These changes will involve more graphic and statistical treatment, adopting new forms of display, but also reducing or condensing the journalistic discourse, and likewise the cultural and political discourse, which are more easily reduced to stereotypes.

## **IMMEDIATE CHANGES (1990) IN TELEVISION**

### **Hertzian television**

1990 will see a great increase in the supply of television in Catalonia, that may have 9 major ether TV networks, all of them with mainly commercial programming.

State television stations: TVE-1 (RTVE), TVE-2 (RTVE), TVE-3 (RTVE), TV-3 (CCRTV), Canal 33 (CCRTV), Canal 9 (RTVV-Valenciana)

Private television stations: Tele 5, Canal Plus, Antena 3.

An increase in the number of television reception hours per person is forecast. This increase, that must be limited in the overall average, may be significant

in the average of some sectors of the population. The current television watching time in Spain (3.43 hours per person) may come close to the American average (4.15 hours per person).

This increase in the supply of television and in competitiveness will force state television stations (TVE and TV-3) to adapt to the new conditions of programming (and of show presentation) of private television stations. Between 1990 and 1995 there will be strong competition and a reduction in the level of penetration (audience) of the present state television stations.

This will lead to great difficulties for the expansion of educational television and for cultural programming, that will cast aside in this competitive process.

### **Consolidation of TV-3**

TV-3's audience achievements up to 1989 occurred in a very unusual situation: duopoly (TVE-TV-3).

In 1988, this audience achievement was accompanied by a parallel success in advertising revenue (15,059 million ptas), obtaining 9.3% of the whole of the advertising "cake" for television in Spain (162,000 million ptas).

In this period also there was a large increase in investments in advertising in general in the "mass media" sector (105,000 million ptas in 1980 against 684,000 million ptas in 1988), and its progressive influence on the decisions regarding content and programming.

It is difficult to foresee how the appearance of private TV stations will affect the TV-3 audience. However, it is not easy to envisage an audience increase, but rather a consolidation that could be considered a commercial success.

A substantial increase in advertising investments in television as a whole is also unlikely, and so the consolidation of TV-3 will have to limit itself to keeping the 9% share of advertising investment in Spain.

### **Local television**

Local hertzian television in Catalonia (around 100 broadcasting stations in 1988) (6) is unique at international level. If, after the appearance of private television stations, the present situation of tolerance does not alter, these experiments may become established, forming the 10th ether channel available to the majority of

Catalan towns.

Final consolidation of these broadcasting stations does not seem possible, but it is, by means of partnerships (programmes by connection) formed with the main public (or private) networks.

### **Satellite TV networks**

At least until 1995, there is likely to be a slow (minority) introduction of parabolic receiver aerials. The 23,000 aerials recorded in Spain in 1988 brought satellite TV to 850,000 homes, still a limited percentage of viewers (7%-10%), and one that will grow slowly.

The cost, the technological complexity of installation, language difficulties and the larger supply of ether TV will restrict the growth of satellite TV in Catalonia.

Between 1990 and 1995 there will have to be a reorganisation of the 43 present (transnational) channels that are received today by satellite in Europe, with a trend towards concentration in a few companies and broadcasting by means of the same satellite. (This is the case of the Astra satellite and that of Rupert Murdoch the businessman, who runs 6 satellite channels with different and complementary contents).

The use of domestic satellites is still far off (1995, 1998?) for Catalan TV channels, but it is already within the reach of TVE that broadcasts its programmes to Europe (Eutelsat I F-4) and to America (Canal América, Intelsat).

In 1992 the possibilities of state-controlled satellite broadcasting in Spain will increase with the use of the Spanish satellite Hispasat.

The use of satellites for replacing the hertzian communication networks of the present state and private chains would mean redefining the television networks (Retelevision), through integration of cable, satellite and ether. This would enable Catalonia to set up a complete system of audiovisual ether coverage (correspondents) which is at present lacking for all its districts.

### **Cable TV**

Cable television channels, already in existence in some countries, may be classified according to the following types:

- 5 Channels with various types (including sport)
- 2 Channels with various types, but particularly with sport.
- 2 Channels devoted to sport.
- 2 Channels of eroticism.
- 3 Channels of local, community or public information.
- 4 Channels of education, science or culture.
- 2 Channels specialising in information (news).
- 2 Channels of weather forecasting.
- 2 Film channels.
- 2 Channels of entertainment and shows.
- 2 Religious channels.
- 2 Channels of music for young people.
- 1 Channel of classical music.
- 1 Channel of popular folk music.
- 2 Channels of telepurchasing.
- 1 Channel of business information.

Cable networks (using fibre optics) will be introduced into the cities and towns of Catalonia with a higher level of business activity.

In these major cities these networks will have a twofold use: primarily professional information (banks, government, business management, etc.) and secondarily, communication for the public at large (conventional TV).

Since the development of the networks has to follow the logic of the interests of technical and professional communication, it is impossible to make an independent prediction about the appearance of conventional cable television.

In the next 5 years the appearance of private television stations and the increase in the supply of satellite television among those with a high level of purchasing power may have the effect of neutralising the demand for cable television channels.

Its growth, that must be assumed to be limited, would be an indirect result of the installation of new wide-band networks, that are necessary to meet new telecommunication demands.

Most people, already "satisfied" with the 9 conventional free television channels, will not be prepared to pay more to have new programmes. Social groups with a strong purchasing power and who live in areas with extensive telecommunications capacities, may be able to have access to around 40 original satellite, cable or ether transmission channels, supplied by cable companies, as occurs already nowadays in the cities of the most highly developed societies.

## **TV at the hub of the audiovisual sector**

Conventional cinema, shown in public cinemas, will continue to decrease, (400,000,000 cinemagoers in 1966 and 67,000,000 in 1988). Television will absorb and centralise all audiovisual activity.

A single film on television will attract more viewers (10.5 million) than the total number of cinemagoers in one whole year in Spain (8.5 million).

The growth of the video, that has, already reached 28% of homes in Spain, will be halted as a result of the increased number of television channels that are forecast for the next 10 years.

Audiovisual production will become an essential part of the whole cultural and communication industry.

In 1988, the TV stations in Spain showed 1924 films, but these figures will increase even more dramatically. It is calculated that in 1990 these television stations will require a total of 54,000 hours to fill their programming.

## **TELEMATIC SERVICES (TELETEXT AND VIDEOTEXT)**

At present only TVE offers teletext services ("Telecinco"). It is, therefore, a general Spanish service. The technical form used permits, but does not put into effect, the use of Catalan in its texts. For 1990 it is planned to put into operation a TVE regional teletext channel ("Teleseis") which would be able to cover the Catalan area.

The teletext services, with 300,000 receivers at present in Spain, will not be introduced in a generalised way, first of all because they have to follow the rate of changes in colour receivers for new receivers adapted to teletext standards, and secondly because the demand until now has been very limited.

The possibility of expansion of the videotext system in the home, which at present has 10,000 receivers in the whole of Spain, appears to be even more limited.

This system will be introduced initially into what are known as professional sectors, mainly in the areas of banking, rural information, large department stores and supermarkets.

An increase in the number of organisational telematic services (companies, banks, government departments, etc.) is likely, but no growth in home telematics.

The appearance of management companies for the use of telematics in companies acts as a stimulus for determining the direction and possibility of this growth.

Table1

**Table 1**  
**Economics of communication per sector**

	<b>WORLDWIDE</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>JAPAN</b>	<b>EEC</b>	<b>OTHERS</b>
<b>PRESS</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>TV/RADIO/CINEMA</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>TOTAL MASS MEDIA</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>PROCES. INFORMATION</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>POST</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>TELECOMMUNICATIONS</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>TOTAL SERVICES</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>CONSUM. EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>TELECOM. EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>DATA</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>ELECTRONICS</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>TOTAL EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>COMPONENTS</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>TOTAL INFORM./COM.</b>	<b>1185</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>150</b>

Source: IDATE/UNESCO World Communication Report, 1988

Table2

**COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT - SPAIN IN COMPARISON  
WITH OTHER COUNTRIES**

**OWNERS TV RECEIVERS**

	1	Colour	2 or +	Cable	VCR	TeleText	PC
HOLLAND	98	92	28	65	37	24	10
DENMARK	96	87	24	7	25	18	12
BELGIUM	96	86	21	83	23	-	12
FRANCE	95	83	21	1	19	-	-
ITALY	99	76	33	-	9	11	9
SPAIN	98	81	22	-	24	-	9
GREAT BRITAIN	97	92	46	1	50	22	7
IRELAND	93	78	15	29	24	2	6
USA	99	96	64	57	59	-	-
JAPAN	99	98	63	13	53	-	6

**Table3**

	AUDIENCE		TIME (minutes)	
	TV	RADIO	TV	RADIO
HOLLAND	-	83	135	169
DENMARK	-	77	90	171
BELGIUM	70	-	137	153
FRANCE	84	75	267	137
ITALY	-	54	180	84
SPAIN	87	55	211	116
GREAT BRITAIN	76	44	218	76
IRELAND	82	79	108	-
USA	99	-	360	-
JAPAN	90	29	198	37

Source: Atlanta Television, ERI, RAI, Rome, 1989

## NOTES

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