Betevé: From hyperlocal television to transmedia?
An analysis of its evolution

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Abstract

Barcelona Televisió sprang from the desire of a group of neighbourhood television stations to broadcast over a shared channel. The project has developed into a multiplatform medium and, more recently, a transmedia system. The aim of this study is to analyse this process, which took place due to the fact that it broadcast content adapted to the potential of each different platform and its constant effort to innovate. This study sets forth the challenges, such as how to move project design away from a television-centred approach, and the opportunities which transmedia represents for local media in relation to the structure of the media.

Keywords
Barcelona Televisió, betevé, digital era, transmedia, local television.

Resum

Barcelona Televisió va néixer de la voluntat d'un grup de televisions de districte per emetre a través d'un canal compartit. El projecte s'ha convertit en un mitjà multiplataforma i, més recentment, en un sistema transmèdia. L'objectiu d'aquest treball és analitzar aquest procés, que va ser resultat de la difusió de continguts adaptats a les possibilitats de cada plataforma diferent i d'un esforç constant per innovar. Aquest treball planteja els reptes —per exemple, deslligar el disseny del projecte d'un enfocament centrat en la televisió— i les oportunitats que representa el transmèdia per als mitjans de comunicació locals, en relació amb l'estructura del mitjà.

Paraules clau
Barcelona Televisió, betevé, era digital, transmèdia, televisió local.

1. Introduction

Digitalization has forced most local media to evolve to adapt to new technological platforms for broadcasting content. Migration to Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) was one of the main factors affecting the communication ecosystem of local channels, especially in Catalonia and other places with a similarly high concentration of local media. Elsewhere, these changes have had a less dramatic impact and have even led to the appearance of local television channels, as in Scotland.

In Catalonia, which had more than 100 analogue local television channels, adaptation to the digital age occurred by both the transition to DTT and the appearance of new channels — airwave-transmitted or not— that broadcast synchronously and asynchronously over the Internet. Moreover, the economic crisis had an impact on the television system, negatively affecting local channels' budgets. These changes have had a major impact on local channels, which often do not have the resources to innovate in response to the development of new technologies.

Adaptation has been accompanied by structural adjustments in reporting that have led to both a convergence between television, radio and digital projects and the creation of structures aimed at updating information online via websites and social media. In fact, innovation has emerged as a key structural lever in ensuring media prosperity. In this framework, channels become multiplatform entities that distribute content in different ways and forms. The reality faced by most local channels is that their financial and human resources limit them from exploring the possibilities offered by this new paradigm.

However, the Barcelona-based television channel betevé has taken the steps needed to restructure as a transmedia system and thus distribute content via several platforms and in different media, thereby taking advantage of the potential to recycle and update content. By differentiating itself from other conventional media, the channel is an exceptional example in the field of local communication. This case study, which analyses how it has adapted to the digital era and evolved into a transmedia system, highlights betevé as a model within the emerging field of transmedia systems.

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2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework behind this research is threefold, with theories on public service and the way it has adapted to the digital era as the point of departure. We can use these theories to classify betevé as a public medium and specify its purpose, especially bearing in mind that innovation and interaction are now as important as the traditional public-service goals of informing, entertaining and educating. The second theory relates to the way in which local television has been conceptualized and helps us understand the role it plays. Finally, it is useful to analyse the concept of transmedia in order to define how transmedia systems work.

The digital age has brought with it new characteristics to supplement the traditional functions associated with public-service broadcasting (education, culture, aesthetics, identity, political plurality, social issues, economics and development, humanism and moralizing). Different media service providers can no longer be considered independent from each other; rather it is more pertinent to look at how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) providers can develop as one and converge while communication platforms diversify.

With the growth of new technologies, Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) must be reformulated due to the multiplicity of ways to disseminate content and the need for it to insert itself into the digital era. Owen (1999) points out that the Internet can provide information and entertainment to compete with digital television, and nowadays online video consumption is rising while conventional television is showing a decline in audience numbers. PSB is facing a paradigm shift that is affecting all audiovisual models, and these media must adapt to the new existing reality by reinterpreting its concept.

Some European scholars have analysed the role, functions and challenges of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) (Brevini 2013; Van Cuilenburg and McQuail 2003; Ferrell Lowe and Steemers 2012; Bardoel and d'Haenens 2008), paying special attention to the transition and adaptation to the digital era (Moragas and Prado 2000; Trappel 2010; Jankowsky 2012; Iosifidis 2007; Dönders 2012).

The advent of the digital era has added new functions to those traditionally performed by public television. Consequently, public television must now consider issues such as developing a communications strategy, guaranteeing universal access, mediating in the face of multiple information sources and balancing and putting restraints on the new oligopolies. It must also act as the driving force to bring the communications sector and other social sectors together, among other things. In addition, new technologies must be taken into account when constructing theories on the role of public service in the digital age.

As Dönders (2012) argues, European Public Service Broadcasting is now in a third stage, after a first stage of the birth and consolidation of public media (20's-70's), and a second stage of liberalization of audiovisual services and appearance of private media coexisting with publicly owned media (70's-90's). The features of last few decades are the rise of new technologies and the adaptation of audiovisual services to the digital era.

In this context, the change in terminology from PSB (Public Service Broadcasting) to PSM (Public Service Media) stems from a technological evolution that has been influenced by political interests and social demands. Given the diverse number of ways in which audiovisual public service providers can broadcast, especially with the rise of the Internet, referring to public service broadcasting ceased to make any sense. Hence, the B (for broadcasting) was changed to an M (for media) as media encompasses the new modes of public communication which use the Internet as their medium and often comprise various formats. The digital era requires public-service television providers to take on a new role, since they are now integrated into a more global system of public communication services. Moragas and Prado (2000), proponents of redefining the mission of public service, have argued that this mission needs to adapt to the digital age.

The digital age has given rise to more efficient data-compression systems and has witnessed the convergence of different sectors –especially the broadcasting and telecommunications sectors. The number of public-service providers has also multiplied, and even those that are not necessarily broadcasters can now offer an audiovisual public service. The literature on public service in recent years has focussed on identifying the dangers of the decline in public service and the challenges it has to face. Jankowsky (2012) pointed out that public service is subject to rapid changes in technology, shifts and decline in public support, concern surrounding the functions of institutions, an increase in media competition and a redefined relationship between audience and service providers.

The literature on public service has identified several challenges to be tackled, such as leading the way in high technology, offering interactivity and immediacy and creating a sense of community among all citizens. We are currently inundated with media providers, and therefore some scholars are questioning the added value of public broadcasters when consumers' options are seemingly unlimited (Armstrong and Weeds 2007). New technologies facilitate citizens' participation in the media through the Internet and social networking sites while allowing public-service providers to diversify their distribution channels. With so many different information services available, public media providers must adapt to this online environment, since they play a crucial role in the communications ecosystem and should provide a quality service that is diverse, pluralistic and representative.

One of the cornerstones of public service is its representative nature, which extends to local domains. According to Straubhaar (2007), individuals identify themselves on a variety of levels (multiple layers of identity). In a context of globalization and media globalization (Stiglitz 2002; Mattelart 1998), not only has the identity of individuals become global or transnational,

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rather different layers of geographical identity coexist (local, regional and transnational) that are linked on the basis of cultural-linguistic and national regions (Anderson, 1983). According to Straubhaar (2007), local television is popular because people live out most of their lives in a local area and consequently want to remain well-informed about this area and strongly identify with it.

Straubhaar (2007) argues that global technological infrastructures exist as follows: a North American Empire centred on Hollywood; other global exporters; transnational cultural-linguistic producers and geocultural producers associated with geographical proximity, cultures, languages and similar shared stories; translocal producers, who cross borders; national producers; regional producers, metropolitan producers and local producers.

If we look at the closest layers of identity, we can see that Straubhaar distinguishes between metropolitan and local producers. In the former, he includes global cities that are related to global networks and produce a high volume of their own content targeted at both the city and regions, nations and transnational spaces. Local producers are found in the smaller cities, districts or even neighbourhoods.

Local media play an important role taking into account the fact that citizens look for their own signs of identity in their immediate community (Moragas, Garitaonandia and López 1999). Local television accomplishes the goal of representing local culture, traditions and politics, one of the cornerstones of Public Service Media, and they are crucial to tracking what is happening in a small territory and illuminating the relevance of general news to the local area. These media are more specific on local issues and explain them in greater detail than general broadcasters. They report stories, save all stories related to the local area and make them available online.

Costera (2010) identifies seven social functions carried out by local television in relation to its audience: (1) to provide background information (impartial, reliable and comprehensive); (2) to foster social integration and provide citizens with knowledge of how the city works; (3) to guarantee representation (give voice and recognition, and reflect society); (4) to increase local knowledge; (5) to create civic memory; (6) to contribute to social cohesion; and (7) to improve a sense of belonging. According to the author, local television stations must represent the local area and provide reliable stories about their residents.

Local broadcasters are linked to local areas and have the capacity to produce in their territories and promote citizen participation. Moreover, these media perform a public-service function by representing local communities and bringing decentralization to the audiovisual models (Martori 2017).

Local producers are comprised of the hyperlocal media, which are service providers -many of them digital natives- that serve small geographical areas and are community-oriented. They broadcast original information and fill perceived information gaps (Metzgar, Kurpius and Rowley 2011). Williams, Barnett,

Harte and Townend (2014) refer to the hyperlocal media as those that cover information of civic and cultural value, including news about the local community, local groups, events and council issues.

The situation of local television in the digital era is the result of structural changes from the analogue system. In Spain, and specifically in Catalonia, DTT regulated local television and introduced a new model different to the pre-existing ones (Guimerà 2010). These media had to deal with not only the digitalization of the signal but also the new challenges of online consumption, where the audience is fragmented and active. Most local channels became multimedia in recent years, but some of them have the goal of going further to become transmedia.

As part of our analysis, we must examine the concept of transmedia. Nowadays, viewers can engage with television without ever turning on a television set (Evans 2011). According to the author, the television industry has exploited the emerging technologies and the extent to which audiences have embraced them. Journalists can better engage their audiences by adapting transmedia methods storytelling to journalism (Moloney 2011).

For a story to be considered transmedia, it must contain a set of characteristics, such as that the production must consist of more than one medium and all forms of production must be integrated according to their specific potential; furthermore, the content has to be distributed and accessible through a range of devices, such as personal computers, mobile phones and television, and different media platforms should be used according to the needs of the topic, story or message (Scolari 2013).

Jenkins (2003) argues that in defining transmedia narratives, we must differentiate between adaptation and extension. An adaptation consists in telling the same story in different media, while an extension seeks to add new information or arguments to the original. An adaptation can be considered transmedia if the story is told from different perspectives. Jenkins (2007) also defined transmedia storytelling as a process through which the integral elements of a piece of fiction are systematically distributed through multiple channels in order to create a unified, coordinated entertainment experience.

A transmedia story must make sense on all the different platforms, as well as separately on each platform. Therefore, the whole becomes broader and receives more public input. Transmedia involves using new technologies and adapting the medium to the technological paradigm through the use of innovative resources, and it has an impact on the industry. To adapt to the digital environment, media must make internal changes, such as by organizing convergent newsrooms. Despite the multiplicity of platforms to inform citizens, local online services do not always use all its possibilities; likewise, sometimes work routines are based on the production of daily news stories, and then the videos are published on the web pages (Martori 2017). In Catalonia, the websites of the Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals (CCMA) and Betevé

are the most interactive, with more navigating possibilities and the integration into social networks (Gómez-Domínguez 2016), taking into account that much of the audience accesses online news from social media (Fontaine and Grece 2015).

At the intersection between technological change and the provision of public-service news, it should be noted that the PSM have to deal with challenges and opportunities while still grappling with political and economic challenges, taking into account the decline in the financing of public-service facilities in several countries in recent years (Sehl, Corina and Kleis Nielsen 2016).

3. Methodology

The aim of this article is to analyse how Barcelona Televisió (today named betevé) has developed and to examine whether it has become a transmedia system adapted to the digital paradigm. The initial hypothesis is that although betevé was born as a sum of different neighbourhood television channels, it has professionalized so much more that it has become a transmedia system integrated into the digital age. The research has taken the following questions as a starting point:

- How did betevé develop into a transmedia system (if it did)?
- What does it mean for a television channel to become transmedia, and what changes have taken place? What was the strategy?

A case study linked to the theoretical framework described above has been carried out to answer these questions. To provide some context, the case study includes a detailed explanation of the birth of the television channel and how it developed. It also gives a description of the media provider's current situation, which focuses on the multimedia and transmedia aspects of betevé.

A qualitative methodology was used, consisting in researching official and unpublished documents as well as in-depth interviews of the following people:

- Sergi Vicente. Director of betevé.
- Xavier Muixí. Head of news at betevé.
- Ernest Maragall, General Director (1983-1989) and CEO (1991-1995) of Informació i Comunicació de Barcelona (ICB).
- Pepi Rafel. Coordinator of Barcelona TV, Televisions de Districte de Barcelona.

4. Analysis: The evolution of the Barcelona-based television channel

The origins of Barcelona Televisió

In 1982, the Associació d'Amics de la Ràdio i la Televisió del Clot i Camp de l'Arpa (Association of Friends of the Radio and Television of Clot and Camp de l'Arpa) began broadcasting over the radio. In 1984, at a meeting in Cardedeu with other local television channels to set up what would later become the Federació Pro-Legalització de Televisions Locals de Catalunya (Catalan Federation for the Legalization of Local Television), the members of the association, representing Barcelona, expressed their intention to set up a district television channel, the flagship of which would be its general news service, as explained in an interview by Pepi Rafel (2015), president of the entity which coordinates the neighbourhood television channels. In the two years that followed, other groups started to appear which would also turn their hands to making television.

In 1987, for example, TV Clot offered programmes such as *Parlament català*, which covered issues ranging from neighbourhood association meetings to debates on the future of the Encants market; *Trenkant Aigües*, which was a collection of ideas, projects and reports by people in the neighbourhood; sports news; *Ets jove*, a news programme for young people; and *Això no és Hollywood*, about amateur films. Another television channel broadcasting was TV Eixample, with programmes such as *Barcelonart*, focusing on artistic activities; *Endavant salut*, about health; *El Magazin*; and *L'informatiu Crònica 08*, a news programme. TV Gràcia was also in operation, although it did not broadcast regularly. RTV Popular Sants and RTV Poble Sec were two fledgling television channels in Barcelona at this time.

In 1989, it was decided that a single television channel for the city would be set up; it would broadcast on Channel 39 with a linear emission and operate in different districts on a weekly basis. The aim of this system was to divide the broadcasting time of the channel over the week, with two districts broadcasting every day and repeats at weekends (Rafel 2015, personal interview). District television wanted to offer a public-service television channel to inform its audience of social events in the neighbourhood as well as local council matters.

On 7 November 1994, an agreement was signed between the Coordinadora Barcelona Comunicació (Barcelona Communication Coordinator, CBC) and the Barcelona City Council, to which we were given access for the purposes of this research. The document explains that the CBC was a conglomerate of the television broadcasters operating in the city's ten administrative districts. The document describes the City Council's plan to set up television studios to produce, direct and broadcast programmes for the local community. These programmes would consist in a thrice-daily news broadcast and a weekly debate programme, and it would provide a way for the CBC and the City Council to continue working together.

The City Council's idea was that this measure would give the district television stations a centralized point of coordination for all their work. Both parties agreed that the CBC should be given better technical equipment and materials to improve the quality of its broadcasts, and that the programmes should become more homogenous in terms of quality and style.

The agreement stipulated, first of all, that the City Council and the CBC would use the Barcelona Televisió brand and logo, registered under the ownership of the City Council of

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Barcelona. The second part of the agreement explains how Barcelona Televisió was intended to continue being a local public television channel meant to serve society and broadcast mainly informative programmes about the city and its districts and neighbourhoods.

The City Council promised to make the necessary investments to improve the transmission and reception quality of the programmes broadcast by Channel 39 and therefore agreed to transfer CBC's television transmitter to Telefónica's installations at the Collserola Tower (Torre de Collserola) overlooking the city. The agreement also stated that the weekly programming schedule would be agreed upon between the two parties.

Barcelona Televisió (BTV) began broadcasting on 3 November 1994 from its studios on Via Laietana in Barcelona. It was conceived as a local television service designed for the people of Barcelona offering high-quality programmes, focusing particularly on culture and public engagement. According to Ernest Maragall (2016), the former CEO of ICB, the aim of BTV was to show that Barcelona was more than just a conglomerate of districts at a time when other cities around the world were also launching their own television channels. BTV was devised as an instrument of self-expression, since district television stations were unable to tackle all aspects of life in Barcelona and it was not the role of TV3 — the Catalan public broadcaster — to take on this function (Maragall 2016).

Maragall states that district television channels continued to play an important role by producing information and collaborating with BTV. However, it was decided that additional resources would not be allocated to the district television channels, which differed in terms of size and resources and employed different criteria and styles, as it would be hard to respect their individual characteristics; furthermore, any content produced would not be for the exclusive use of BTV. Maragall (2016, personal interview) claims: "We were not working against them but rather in favour of creating a television service for the whole city".

The agreement was revised on 2 January 1997 and referred to the document signed in 1994 as regulating the relationship between the City Council and the CBC and as confirmation that both parties acknowledged their desire to create a single television project. Mention was also made of the request to the Government of Catalonia to grant a licence for a local public television channel. The agreement stated that the Plenary Council of Barcelona City Council commissioned the private municipal company Informació i Comunicació Barcelona, SA (ICB) with the task of managing Barcelona Televisió.

The document also stipulated that the CBC would produce news programmes for Barcelona Televisió and that it would collaborate on the channel's own news programmes. Subsequent agreements were signed on 29 December 1997, 1 December 2000 and 23 May 2000, essentially for the same purpose and with content similar to the initial agreement.

According to Vila-San-Juan (2007),[1] BTV soon became a quite accessible TV station with a participatory spirit. The author pointed out that this "open-door policy" was translated

into many discoveries, the creation of work teams and a host of projects filed on the streets instead of in the indoor sets. Experimentation was one of the goals in the early stages of the channel -with Manuel Huerga as a director in association with the company Oviedo TV as Moebius TV, after a public tender- in order to be different from others, both technically and in innovative ways of reporting stories. "BTV is a young public TV station that puts as much emphasis on creativity and innovation as on the presentation and content of its programming". (Huerga's declaration in Zinger's study 2000).

The differentiation from other media was one of the goals pursued in order to carve out its own niche different to the competition, as Zinger (2000) pointed out. The author argues that Barcelona Televisió worked in a format that clearly had the potential to create urban narratives because it was cheap, entertaining and could offer dozens of ways to involve viewers in the pulse of city life on a daily basis.

The videomathon (where citizens could record a message), the broadcast of live chats or short newscasts in different languages are examples of this spirit. The culture and the city were the unique features of the programming, which was usually made up of short pieces combined with long programs to more deeply explore some topics, such as thematic nights.

The goal of neighbourhood channels to obtain a licence

As BTV became more professionalized and production was outsourced to external audiovisual producers, less content was being produced at the district studios (Rafel, 2015, personal interview) since their budgets were low and, as a result, their technical teams were less stable and professional. Financially, after 1998, municipal subsidies ceased to be awarded directly to the district television channels and were instead given exclusively to BTV, and the funds were then distributed to the district television stations to enable them to continue collaborating.

District television channels saw that their collaboration with BTV was diminishing, and they feared for their future. Then, with the arrival of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT), these channels realized that there were different options open to them for broadcasting local programmes. They submitted a bid to secure one of the Digital Terrestrial Television licenses being awarded for the Barcelona area. Their aim was to operate one of the four programmes within the multiplex (MUX) reserved for private and non-profit channels, given that there was no specific space for third-sector entities and that the terms of the tender process appeared to favour public-service proposals. The CBC defended a mixed television model where the City Council worked together with civil society.

Despite the inclusion of a legal report corroborating the activity carried out by the local channels for years and their ability to operate a channel, the Direcció de Mitjans i Serveis de Difusió Audiovisual de la Generalitat (Government of Catalonia's Audiovisual Media and Broadcasting Services Department) announced that the request had been denied on 3 May 2005 in

a document to which we gained access. The Directorate General based its adjudication of frequencies on a report prepared by the Catalan Audiovisual Council (CAC) which was binding on the issue of granting licenses. The decision-making power was given to the CAC as an independent entity while the law on Audiovisual Communication in Catalonia was being drafted, which would appoint the CAC as the adjudicator of audiovisual licences.

However, the licence request was denied before the results of the tender had been announced. The Government of Catalonia explained that the main reason why district television channels could not be awarded a DTT licence was because of a clause in the aforementioned agreement stating that "both parties [the City Council and the CBC] broadcast on the same UHF channel, which is deemed public, in which the City Council has committed to directly investing, and the programming of which is agreed on by both parties".

Because the Plenary Council of the City Council had already explained in the agreement signed in 1997 that an intention existed to apply for a local public television licence, and it was specified that both parties would broadcast jointly, the Government ruled that:

> "It cannot be concluded that the CBC has exclusive ownership over a local television channel, even though it may have had initial exclusive ownership at one point or during a given period. What is clear is that since 1994 CBC has been working with the Barcelona City Council on a joint project to develop a local television channel, known as Barcelona Televisió." (Statement by the Government of Catalonia's Department of Media and Audiovisual Broadcasting Services, 3 May 2005).

Since neighbourhood television channels were not awarded their own DTT channel, the CBC has continued to periodically renew its agreements with ICB, which is directly responsible for managing the public service channel BTV, now betevé.

The situation of district broadcasters in Barcelona

Below is a list of local television broadcasters in Barcelona, according to a list provided by CBC:

- TV Clot – Sant Martí: Associació d'Amics de la Ràdio Televisió del Clot-Camp de l'Arpa [Association of Friends of Radio and Television of Clot - Camp de l'Arpa]
- TV Eixample: Barkeno, Associació Cultural de Mitjans de Comunicació Popular [Cultural Association of Popular Media]
- Horta – Guinardó TV: Associació d'Amics de la Ràdio i la Televisió d'Horta-Guinardó [Association of Friends of Radio and TV of Horta-Guinardó]
- TV Ciutat Vella: Associació d'Amics de la Televisió de Ciutat Vella [Association of Friends of TV of Ciutat Vella]
- TV Sants-Monjuïc: Associació Audiovisual de Sants-Montjuïc [Audiovisual Association of Sants Montjuïc]
- TV Les Corts: Associació per al Desenvolupament de la

Comunicació Local [Association for the development of local communications]
- TV Sant Andreu: Centre d'Arts Visuals [Centre for visual works]
- Nou Barris TV: Associació Projectart [Projectart Association]
- Gràcia TV: Associació d'Amics de Gràcia Televisió [Association of Friends of Gràcia Televisió]
- TV Sarrià – Sant Gervasi: Associació d'Amics per a la creació de la TV Sarrià-Sant Gervasi [Association of friends for the creation of TV in Sarrià – St. Gervasi]

The district television broadcasters have the legal status of associations and are closely related to other local associations with which they sometimes organize joint activities. TV Clot, for example, organizes educational activities at schools and events for the women's association at its studios. They would be included in the category of hyperlocal media outlined in the theoretical framework.

All ten district broadcasters operate from premises lent to them by the Barcelona City Council, although the terms of the agreements vary for each of them. Some of the local stations share a studio, as in the Clot district, where four television broadcasters operate from an audiovisual centre, part of which is also used as a centre for the elderly. Journalists use this studio as a base, and because of the restricted budget, they must travel to each district on public transport. Due to this limitation, sometimes they are unable to cover some news items promptly. These television broadcasters are equipped so that footage can be sent to betevé via fibre optics.

Some of the local channels have their own websites and YouTube channels in addition to the space given to news from each district at betevé's website. TV Clot, TV Ciutat Vella, TV Horta Guinardó and TV Eixample share the same server and portal structure, and their websites can all be accessed from each other. The local television stations use these websites to post the information they have produced for betevé and sometimes the information is expanded upon (Rafel 2015, personal interview). The websites also serve as a document archive of everything that happens in each district.

A new era for Barcelona Televisió

In the mid-1990s, the Barcelona City Council took over the direct management of local public service televisions in the city, while maintaining its collaboration with the CBC to ensure that local television continued to be produced. In 2004, Barcelona Televisió began a new era with 24-hour broadcasting. This new era was also marked by the relocation of its studios, in September 2005, to a new building located in the heart of the 22@ technological district of Barcelona.

This relocation was the culmination of the digitalization process of Barcelona Televisió, which had started in 2003. The new infrastructure enabled the channel to take an important step forward in terms of producing and carrying out more ambitious

projects, and it increased its range of technological possibilities. That year, 2005, was also when BTV began broadcasting in digital format.

As part of this new phase, the channel also took over management of the municipal radio station. By virtue of the agreement with the Government of Catalonia on 17 March 1998, the Barcelona City Council became the owner of the radio station broadcasting on VHF frequency modulation 91.0 MHz. As part of the Government Commission agreement dated 18 December 2013, the Council provisionally commissioned the private municipal company Informació i Comunicació de Barcelona, SA, to oversee radio broadcasting, to take effect on 1 January 2014. Technical and organizational measures suitable for this purpose were also adopted, and it was determined that this delegation of responsibility would be temporary until the City Council defined a framework for the public service function and organized the public service through the corresponding regulatory policy. However, the radio station has become an integral part of the betevé structure, offering an additional broadcasting channel and becoming part of its transmedia strategy.

Organization

ICB is directly responsible for managing the public-service television channel of Barcelona, in compliance with the law on Audiovisual Communication in Catalonia. The share capital of ICB was provided by the Barcelona City Council, and the company is governed by its bylaws, as well as by the rules of organizing and operating the local public television service of Barcelona. The governing bodies of the ICB are the Plenary Council of the Barcelona City Council, which acts as a shareholder board; the Board of Directors, which is responsible for the management and administration of the company and consists in professionals appointed by each political group represented in the City Council, and which elects a director of the channel; and the director, who is responsible for the executive management of the public service. The channel also has an Advisory Council, which must ensure that social and political actors take part in managing the service.

The channel has a staff of some 200 people, but only 16 workers were traditionally employed by the municipal company. Staff who work to prepare news items and technical staff were outsourced to an external company through a public tender, which was usually won by the audiovisual production company Lavínia, BCN Audiovisual. Programme-making was also outsourced to outside producers and freelancers. In addition, the channel has a large pool of interns who carry out traineeships as part of their university degrees.

Production was outsourced following a legitimate model in Catalonia, governed by Law 22/2005 dated 29 December 2005 on Audiovisual Communication in Catalonia. However, it has caused some problems since betevé workers have requested the same rights as internal staff and are appealing to be hired directly by the public company ICB. Nearly all staff complain about a

loss of employment rights, and 170 employees -according to the Workers' Committee- have formally complained about their contracts and initiated legal proceedings, triggering the start of a process for personnel to be hired directly by the City Council.

The Plenary Council of the Barcelona City Council has approved the amendment of the contract between the City Council and ICB for the management of betevé. The document contemplates the direct employment of 177 workers from news services and technical staff currently subcontracted from BCN Audiovisual (subsidiary of the Lavínia group).

The Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya (Association of Journalists of Catalonia) has suggested that appointing the director of betevé by means of a public competition would be an example of a good practice. At the end of 2014, the Board of Directors of ICB appointed the journalist Sergi Vicente as director of BTV to replace Àngel Casas, who left the post to retire. In a statement, the Association asserted that a successful appointment depended on having applied the professional criteria set forth in the rules of the organization and functioning of the BTV public service.
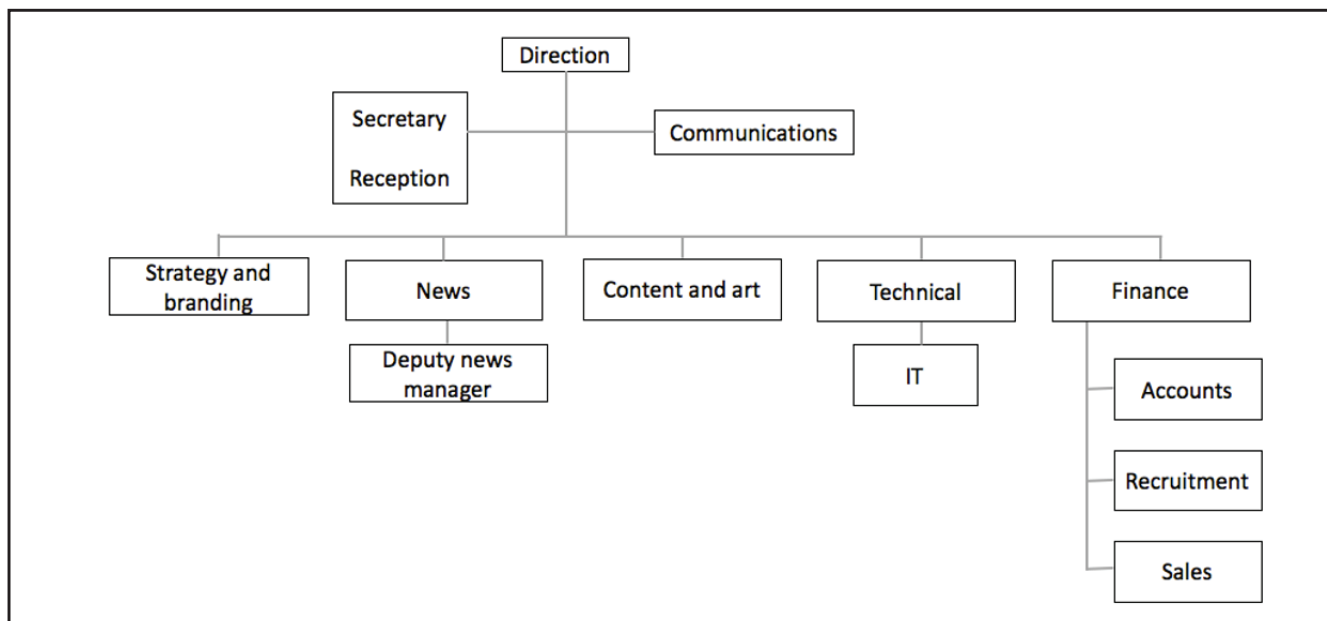
5. The goal of becoming a transmedia station

Organizational changes

According to the channel's organizational chart, the financial and technical managers report to the director (Sergi Vicente, since 1 January 2015). Until June 2015, there was also a chief of television broadcasting, a chief of communication and sales and a chief of radio broadcasting. As explained by Vicente (2015) in a personal interview for this research, the chief of television broadcasting has been replaced by a director of content and art, the sales area has been outsourced (given the 50% decline in revenues from advertising with respect to the amount stipulated in the contract) and communication is now under the responsibility of management.

Radio is no longer managed by a separate team, as a multimedia integrated approach has been adopted and a strategy and participation area was created. This area was created to develop a transmedia strategy for content and a participation strategy as part of a new paradigm to break with a one-way philosophy, open up doors and provide people with new ways of contributing. The diagram below (Figure 1) shows the organizational chart following the aforementioned changes.

In addition to the changes in the organizational chart introduced by management, the entity has implemented structural changes and modified its working methods. In terms of content distribution, DTT is now just one of the media used. Others include a remodelled website (beteve.cat); radio, with its corresponding online portal for downloading podcasts (betevé radio, included in beteve.cat); and mobile applications and social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram). Plans are underway to extend the use of WhatsApp to distribute media content, but now the strategy is more geared towards

Figure 1. BTV Organization Chart

Source: Author, information provided by ICB.

developing a project in order to deliver Over-The-Top (OTT) multimedia content. The aim is for betevé to operate as a transmedia platform able to offer contents that can be adapted to the channel's different distribution methods taking into account the audience fragmentation, and for the content to evolve through the different platforms.

Betevé is practically the only local public television channel to broadcast fictional programmes (in many cases, reruns of old programs acquired from other channels), and it offers more news and entertainment programmes than any other. The channel aims to reflect the international and metropolitan character of the city and has not ruled out producing news items in English and Arabic (Vicente 2015, personal interview). It also has an accessibility service for the deaf and hard-of-hearing through news bulletins offered in sign language as well as subtitled news programmes, films and series. In 2018, these projects are still waiting to be promoted, but a pilot to introduce Chinese subtitles in some content and distribute it through social media is close to starting in order to reach these communities living or interested in Barcelona (Vicente 2018, personal interview).

The media has a single integrated editorial team, and content is distributed in the different media formats according to urgency. There is an editing team, presided over by the television news, website and radio editors. Following the decisions taken by the editing team, teams are distributed and a pair of reporters (ENGs) is sent to cover a particular news item using different media formats.

Different uses of mobile phone technology have been explored to be used in live broadcasts. At the 2015 Mobile World Congress (MWC), an entire programme was conducted using mobile phone technology. While the quality is lower, this technology allows for greater immediacy. The station has

one mobile unit and four backpacks. Tests have also been conducted using the iPhone 6, which can even be used to edit and send videos. There are still external challenges to explore in this way of producing content such as the implementation of 5G to assure video quality. The idea is to move progressively away from producing news content to be distributed mainly via DTT and to veer more towards providing the most appropriate outlet (website, Twitter, DTT, etc.) for each type of content.

By incorporating radio into the project, the station has consolidated its commitment to working as an integrated, multimedia news producer which distributes content –mostly news– through television, its website, social media and, since 2014, radio. In addition to offering television and radio news broadcasts, betevé also provides up-to-the-minute news on its portal *beteve.cat.* The website now offers more live streaming of official events, press conferences and other events, which can often not be slotted into television and radio schedules.

The tendency to have different platforms to distribute content and producing it in convergent newsrooms is an international trend –as this article pointed out in the theoretical framework– and the first stage to becoming transmedia. However, if we compare the case of betevé with other local stations in Catalonia, we can see that it is a pioneer in exploring technical innovation, narratives and a new internal organization. There are other local channels with transmedia goals, such as Radio Calella Televisió, but with much fewer resources, so the particular case of betevé is even more unique.

Brand change

The new management has promoted several initiatives to accompany the decision to change the media brand. In January 2017, Barcelona Televisió was rebranded betevé. Sergi Vicente

justified this change in the following way: "We no longer want our name to highlight the importance of just one of our screens".[2] According to the director, BTV included the word television, and that was a loaded term. He argued that the choice of betevé as a name reflected the desire to no longer place all the emphasis on television and the fact that they view betevé as encompassing everything, including other media forms. Moreover, the change emphasizes the differences between the broadcaster and the city council, because the previous logo was similar to the image of some municipal areas.

The name change came about as a result of the station director's desire to move towards becoming a transmedia system integrating television, radio, Internet and social media. The most obvious result of this new media concept is the change in the graphic representation of the name.[3] For Sergi Vicente, transmedia is already a reality, and the way content is generated should mirror that. He therefore proposes that changes be made to the way content is generated, reflecting a fragmentation of actors and screens where users have already modified their behaviour and become transmedia.

By adapting this media system, betevé is responding to the reality, as Vicente observed, that "the slice of the pie for the television market, as it was understood until now, is becoming ever smaller". For this reason, the director understands that all screens are important in their own way, and choosing one or another depends on the content, since each has a different use.

The aim of the channel's direction is to go beyond crossmedia, where the same content is distributed on different screens and in different media. Transmedia means that the content evolves, goes through an entire process and grows as it passes through different media. In this sense, the betevé brand applies to television, radio, the website and social media. Therefore, the brand change reflects a willingness not only to break with its exclusive link to television but also to move the brand away from its singular focus on the Barcelona area.

Specific transmedia projects

Some specific projects have been launched that illustrate how the channel is conducting its transmedia conversion. Betevé has established ties with Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) to set up a project based on pilot shows which use new formats. The channel and the university will work together to generate content and innovate since technological innovation and the use of new formats are the cornerstone of betevé.

Tube d'assaig (Test Tube) is an initiative that explores new formats in fiction and non-fiction series. The best projects in this area are chosen jointly by betevé and the UPF among the students' Final Degree Projects. The crowdfunding initiative Verkami is used to raise the funds needed to produce a pilot episode. Public response is then gauged and, if it is positive and accompanied by the necessary funding, a first complete season of the series is produced and broadcast by betevé via social media. Hence, this is a transmedia project that goes beyond the screen; ten projects have been completed so far. In addition, the

programme goes up for auction so that the authors can choose to produce second and third seasons of the series in conjunction with an audiovisual producer.

The director of betevé, Sergi Vicente, summarized the objective of the project:

> "We don't want it to be a traditional TV show where we do it all ourselves. The aim is for public participation tools to play a crucial part and for the audience to give us their opinion and ultimately decide whether or not it's worth continuing with a programme. It's a new way of making television, beyond the traditional audience ratings". (betevé, 2015, news item).[4]

During the Three Wise Men parade in 2016 and 2017, a transmedia initiative was launched to allow children in Barcelona to see their wishes on a giant screen just as the parade passed in front of them, thanks to a geolocation application that allowed the video to be projected when the float passed in front of a particular child.

Another significant project was the innovation laboratory, BTV Media Lab, which acted as a business accelerator and a place for testing out different programmes to potentially be included in the programming schedule. The idea was for start-ups to develop their ideas about big data, data journalism, citizen journalism, virtual reality, smart cities, service information, etc., and create synergies with the sector so that the channel could take advantage of interesting projects, preferably with a transmedia focus. This project was a trial run, but the results did not meet expectations. Betevé realized that some results were interesting for the audiovisual sector but did not fit the corporation's plans and were too expensive. In that sense, in a personal interview Vicente (2017) argued that the focus is now on innovative formats, narratives and languages more than on technical developments due to the economic resources that technology needs.

In that sense, *Ciutadà Novell* (Citizen Novell) was launched in 2018. Produced by Minoria Absoluta, it is a ten-part documentary series which shows the inner workings of the public services, emblematic sites and representative organizations of the city of Barcelona. The objective of this project is to use social media in a transmedia way, with characters created only to interact with audiences in the social media.

Challenges and opportunities

As transmedia offers a new way of communicating, different methods must be tested to find out what really works. Experimentation with new formats and platforms is one of the opportunities proffered by transmedia, but the challenge of limiting the budget spent on innovating still remains, taking into account that the funding comes mostly from public coffers.

While the television window is shrinking and transmedia formulas are expanding, investment in advertising continues to be concentrated on television, and there are limited resources to innovate. Therefore, a business model needs

to be found to diversify the sources of advertising revenues. Having more windows open does not have to translate into additional distribution costs if the platforms are free (Internet or social media), but it does mean more costs with regard to technological development, as in the case of mobile phone and tablet applications, for example. Moreover, the channel is present in Movistar+ or Vodafone TV, which entails a cost for the broadcaster.

When diversifying platforms, the audience of each is lower, but betevé is able to receive real data on audiences from connected televisions instead of the incorrect share from the low measurements of DTT. Engagement is also increasing in the social media. For example, the Twitter profile betevé notícies tripled its number of followers in several months.

The shift from conventional media to transmedia is taking place to adapt to new consumer habits. However, as the channel's origins are in television, there are many working methods and procedures aimed basically at making television which need to be revised. This also involves structural changes in the way of working, some of which have already been implemented, and training so that the workforce is skilled in the new formats. Another challenge is working as a fully integrated newsroom and giving equal importance to all platforms, especially when breaking news occurs. The radio station is not yet as important as the television or online windows.

Another essential consideration is to ensure that transmedia projects do not get lost in the debate on aesthetics and that they actually focus on what is most important, i.e. the story. Today, there are many more storytelling tools available, but we should not forget the importance of producing quality content.

Betevé also faces the challenge that part of its production is outsourced to producers, who have to be convinced of the need for a shift in model so that the projects presented are not solely focussed on television. Currently, most of the projects that betevé receives, even those described as transmedia, continue to be television-based, since the content is weighted towards television, with extra screens tagged on. To encourage the promotion of transmedia projects, the new way of receiving projects includes the need to specify the way different platforms and social media are used. Therefore, an immense task has been undertaken and will need to be continued if the commitment to transmedia is to be taken seriously.

6. Conclusions

This case study of betevé is framed within the theoretical framework described above in relation to public service in the digital era, local television and the concept of transmedia. In these terms, betevé is a public-service medium that has successfully adapted to the digital age and provides information of local interest. It is adopting strategies currently taking place worldwide, such us diversifying platforms to reach audiences,

but it is a unique case in Catalonia as the local DTT channel with the most ambitious transmedia goal.

Betevé has evolved from being a loose conglomerate of hyperlocal, community-oriented amateur media to being a professional, metropolitan channel, and efforts are now being focused on becoming a transmedia system. The neighbourhood-based television channels that initially launched betevé to share local content of common interest continue to exist as hyperlocal correspondents, and many of them have also launched their own websites to generate and distribute content online.

The transmedia focus of betevé is evident in the wide range of platforms it uses to broadcast content, in the technological innovation underpinning this approach and in the broadcasting of content adapted to the unique potential of each different platform. Moreover, the rebranding of the station also followed this objective.

This current functioning of the channel is the outcome of the combination of several elements. First, content is distributed via both the traditional television medium and others newer media. Secondly, content is not simply distributed in different media but is devised from the outset to be adapted to and recycled in different platforms. Behind this approach is a director, Sergi Vicente, who has firmly advocated this way of adapting to change. Finally, structural changes were implemented in the organizational chart and the newsroom, which were integrated. The changes have also had an impact on production routines and programming. In particular, when choosing programmes proposed by external producers, priority is given to transmedia projects.

Although steps are being taken to make the project fully transmedia, we can assert that the crossmedia stage has been reached but that there is still some way to go before becoming fully transmedia. The two main challenges facing betevé are to ensure that the conception of the programming is not only television-centred and to diversify sources of advertising revenue. Furthermore, this case study has revealed that research to develop technological innovations is very costly for providers, especially for local channels as the BTV Media Lab project has shown, and too expensive and difficult to implement. In this sense, it is necessary to create clusters and technology transfer among providers, especially among those that offer a public service.

Despite the challenges, betevé has a clear capacity to evolve and become fully transmedia. Its management is aware that in our digital era characterized by ongoing innovation and constant changes in formats, formulas to ensure success as a transmedia system need to be continuously explored.

As future research, we could cite the need to examine how former directors and personnel working at betevé (internally but also workers of the company Ovídeo -owned by Mediapro- or Lavínia, to which the informative content production has been outsourced for years) have adapted to the changes in terms of routines, and how the transmedia goal impacts the organization

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of the company and the medium itself. Moreover, future projects about betevé projects should look at how the internal hiring of workers –a process that recently started– is unfolding and affecting the organization of the channel.

7. Funding

Notes

1. Read more: <http://lab.cccb.org/es/de-btv-a-beteve-la-television-imprevisible/>
2. Information taken from the debate, 'Una nova narrativa, el món transmèdia' (A new narrative, the transmedia world") held on 11 July 2017 at La Seca Espai Brossa, with the attendance of Sergi Vicente, director of Betevé <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntMa6MEfHb8>
3. <http://beteve.cat/canvis-identitat-btv-logo-a-logo/>
4. <http://beteve.cat/btv-impulsa-talents-emergents-tube-dassaig/>

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