

Historia y comunicación social

ISSN: 1137-0734

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/hics.69232>

Transpodcast universe. Narrative models and independent community

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Recibido el: 3 de agosto de 2018. / Aceptado: 26 de septiembre de 2019.

Abstract. This article describes the evolutionary process and the state of the art of podcasting from a theoretical and analytical perspective. This work integrates the main results of several researches carried out by the author in different countries, whose main conclusions show that podcasting has acquired a transmedia narrative texture that goes beyond the monomedia model from its beginnings, giving way to a new medium, transpodcast, which presents complex structural systems characterized by a specific multiplatform grammar and a high diversity of contents. Transpodcast is supported by the development of robust affinity communities, users and fans. These communities are built as peer-to-peer communication spaces and algorithmic environments where an evident automation of the fandom takes place.

Keywords: podcasting; transpodcast; transmedia narrative; media evolution; affinity communities

[es] Universo transpodcast. Modelos narrativos y comunidad independiente

Resumen. Este artículo describe el proceso evolutivo y el estado actual del podcasting, desde una perspectiva teórica y analítica. El trabajo integra los principales resultados de un conjunto de investigaciones llevadas a cabo por el autor en diferentes países, cuyas principales conclusiones muestran que el podcasting ha adquirido una textura narrativa transmedia que desborda el modelo monomediático de sus inicios, dando paso a un nuevo medio, el transpodcast, que presenta una mayor riqueza estructural. Este medio se caracteriza por una específica gramática multiplataforma y una alta diversidad de contenidos. El transpodcast se apoya en robustas comunidades de afinidad configuradas como espacios de comunicación entre iguales y entornos algorítmicos gobernados por una clara automatización del fandom.

Palabras clave: podcasting; transpodcast; transmedia narrativa; evolución de los medios; comunidades de afinidad

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Cómo citar: García-Marín, D. (2020) Transpodcast universe. Narrative models and independent community, *Historia y comunicación social* 25(1), 139-149.

1. Introduction

The appearance and development of podcasting have caused a reconfiguration of the media ecosystem based on sound. The aural communication was monopolized by radio in the twentieth century and, after an initial period of experimentation and certain narrative creativity, the last decades of the last century saw the stagnation of this medium, unable to renew itself in terms of genres and formats. The commercial radio stations that did not offer anything beyond information, magazines and sports broadcasts dominated the scene, relegating old formats of fiction like radio drama, whose narrative is much more complex. Obviously, this situation did not occur in all countries equally. For example, in Spain, the absence of fiction radio models was more pronounced than in other countries such as United Kingdom, where this genre acquired greater importance. However, the arrival of podcasting opened a new era in aural communication. The birth, consolidation and subsequent evolution of this medium showed that there were possibilities of communication based on the sound beyond the linearity that the radio offered. Podcasting brings to the aural communication new creative practices and a new relationship

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between users and media producers. The evolutionary process that has radio as a starting point and podcasting as a final station inevitably passes through different phases that, far from being considered from a linear point of view, it is necessary to address as layers that overlap in the journey that aural communication has developed in recent decades. Our studies on podcasting are not based on a specific country or region, but its objective is to describe the evolutionary process of this medium from a global and general perspective, bearing in mind that this process may present differential characteristics in each country.

From a first pre-digital period ruled by the radio exclusively hertzian, the aural communication reaches the Internet with the penetration of mainstream radio stations that use the Web as a differentiated access point to the same programming that was already broadcast in the traditional manner.

In a second phase, the websites that support the online broadcast of these large radio stations complement their content with informative elements constructed in different languages (images, infographics, etc ...) and open spaces for user participation through the inclusion of comments. At the same time, numerous native digital radio projects are born.

The arrival of digital and on-demand radio that enables the downloading and asynchronous listening of content is the next step in the evolution from conventional radio to podcasting. The on-demand model breaks the classic temporality of the radio and triggers the personalization of listening to a type of user who is already capable of generating his own programming grid and adapting content consumption to his habits, availability and interests. Digital and on-demand radio also offers the possibility of consuming content without the need to connect to the Internet by downloading programs for storage in the digital devices available on the market (computers, tablets, smartphones, mp3 players, etc.). Finally, the decisive step for the appearance of podcasting is the introduction of syndication mechanisms that allow the subscription to the contents and, therefore, its automatic download.

Therefore, podcasting -considered as one of the most relevant trends related to digital audio (Martínez-Costa y Prata, 2017) whose popularity is already higher than that of blogs, according to Google Trends (Vía Podcast, 2018)- is a medium consisting in the recording of sound contents in order to be hosted on the Internet and the subsequent listening and/or automatic downloading via subscription by using syndication technologies (usually RSS). These programs are hosted on listening and download platforms specially designed for podcasting (iVoox, iTunes and Spreaker are some of the most used) and apps for mobile devices. The accessibility and ease of production and distribution of content, as well as the existence of vast communities of enthusiasts of the medium, makes it clear that podcasting constitutes a renewal, a break in the traditional aural communication (Berry, 2018), since it offers new expressive possibilities for citizens to participate in public discourse through the creation of their own messages.

2. Podcasting: birth and evolution

The pioneers of this medium were Adam Curry, a former video jockey from the MTV television channel, and Dave Winer, one of the developers of the RSS content syndication engine that already worked on websites and blogs. In 2004, both were able to build a software that made audio files available to be listened to at the convenience of any listener. In these initial moments, the first podcasters did not have centralized online spaces as a repository for hosting sound files, which could only be found on the blogs that each creator previously had or had built ad hoc. RSS syndication engines were programmed by hand, with frequent errors. This first stage was characterized by permanent technical experimentation and a constant connection between the pioneers (non-professional creators) to expand their discoveries and make the incipient medium more popular. Since then, two differentiated phases in the history of podcasting took place, centered, on the one hand, on its definition as a new media separated from radio and, on the other, on its expansion at the international level.

2.1. Phase 1: identity creation

After two initial years (2004 and 2005) in which this medium went practically unnoticed outside the circles of technology enthusiasts -it is fundamental to note that this situation was established in most countries, except in the United States where “podcasting” was considered the word of the year in 2005- the year 2006 marked the beginning of a second era for podcasting, as large American media corporations began to be interested in it. In the same way, important institutions and technology events bet on this new medium, facilitating their knowledge and multiplying the number of programs. These first experiences defined the identity of the medium and its narrative foundations from remediation processes, that is to say of appropriation, reconfiguration and remixing of features that already had other media and previous technologies.

In their book *Remediation. Understanding New Media* (2000), Bolter and Grusin claim that new media does not work in the absence of previous media and that the novel aspects and features of the so-called new media are the ways in which old media is remodeled to respond to new challenges. From this perspective, new

media that has been created over time constitutes the evolution, improvement or sophistication of some of the foundations of old media.

One of the most obvious remediations of podcasting is its way of delivering the contents in chapters in a serialized manner. This medium copies this system of blogs and television series. This model of archival publication distributes its contents in an order inversely chronological placing in the foreground the last update of the series. On the other hand, the production of live podcasts within the framework of major events -which include a higher degree of performance and interaction with the public by the mere fact that they are performed in a physical environment- can be considered an obvious remediation of the theater plays because it forces the podcaster to a greater staging that contributes to offer a media consumption experience much more interactive and immersive than simply listening to the recorded podcast.

The construction of a differentiated identity of the podcasts that can be found in the hosting platforms is established from the logic of the avatar, as it happens in social networks. In order to identify the different podcasts on such platforms, which are configured as environments where all the hosted programs are presented in the same manner, the presence of an identifying image, as a logo, gives them a differentiated personality, as it happens with the profile images that each user must link to their account on social networks.

The serialization, the immersion provided by live face-to-face programs and the avatarization are essential characteristics of other media that podcasting collects and remodels. However, the main remediations of podcasting come from the radio. Podcasts are based on the language that has been developed by radio for decades based on four fundamental signs: the spoken word, music, special effects and silence. The radiogenic model of podcasting is also manifested in the structure and narrative tools that most podcasts use. As in the case of radio, podcasting makes intensive use of header and closing tones, jingles and even promo trailers (which, at the same time, are remediations of printed advertising).

However, despite its multiple remediations, podcasting presents an obvious discontinuity with respect to radio. If the latter is a paradigmatic medium of the broadcast era, the digital essence of podcasting promotes the way of listening to sound products under various disruptive logics that differentiate both media. The podcasts present a greater thematic variety that is clearly reflected in amateur podcasting, whose creators embrace the freedom of content creation without complexes, addressing topics that are usually left out of the mainstream circuit.

Radio is a clear example of mass media, while podcasting tends to atomize its audiences through the dissemination of much more specific content. The ways of listening to podcasts are linked, therefore, with the long tail logic, a model that distributes less quantity of a greater number of products; that is, many shows of varied content for a minority and specific audience. Podcasting, therefore, diversifies the offer of content that can be found in the media ecosystem, offering cultural materials difficult to obtain through other channels. This medium not only provides alternative content, but offers differentiated approaches to issues that are already installed in the agenda-setting, via processes of re-interpretation of their meanings.

The flexibility and personalization of listening are also differential aspects of podcasting. The possibility of operating on the conditions of reception of the content thanks to its automation and digitization features opens up new interactive fields unknown by the traditional and analog radio. In this sense, podcasting is a user-centered medium (Linares, 2018). In addition to performing the traditional operations of adjusting the volume of the audio, a podcast listener can interact in a more personal and profound manner with the shows during the reception process. The technology available around the medium allows impossible operations on the radio such as listening to programs at different speeds or the creation of personalized playlists depending on the interests of the subject or the time available for listening. Likewise, the platforms on which podcasting operates offer internal search engines to select the contents that the subject wants to listen to. In addition, these digital systems have the ability to suggest specific programs to the audience based on the searches previously carried out.

It is necessary to note that in spite of the fact the flexibility and personalization of listening are key aspects of podcasting, they are not exclusive features of this medium. Actually, these modifications in the radio started being implemented with its introduction on the Internet (Meseguer Conesa, 2009), where specific radio broadcasters and services and different information modalities were generated (Cebrián Herreros, 2001). The main feature of this “ciberrradio” is its interactivity, understood as the possibility of breaking traditional communication dissemination models and converting them into dialogue and exchange processes (Cebrián Herreros, 2008) where the sender can no longer impose a discursive temporality and the receiver (listener) organizes the time according to their personal logic (García-González, 2013) in a sort of “radiomorphosis” (Prata, 2008) that reconfigures the relationship between senders, temporary listening patterns and receivers. In this sense, Cordeiro (2010 and 2012) proposes the concept of “r@dio” to define online radio experiences characterized by new distribution models, structures and messages, the combination of traditional features of radio with the multimedia nature of the Internet and a fragmented audience that presents a global reach.

This personalization of listening conditions can be linked to the concept of heterogeneity that places us in the absence of a single manner of listening sound creations. Just as each Internet user performs a different route through the Web, podcast listeners enjoy multiple ways of relating to the sound products, ranging from complete

listening from beginning to end, the continuous interruption, jumps forward and backward, finding the most interesting sections for the user or playing at twice the speed to maximize listening time. The possibilities of media consumption are more diverse compared to the linear, standardized and homogeneous consumption of the analog radio.

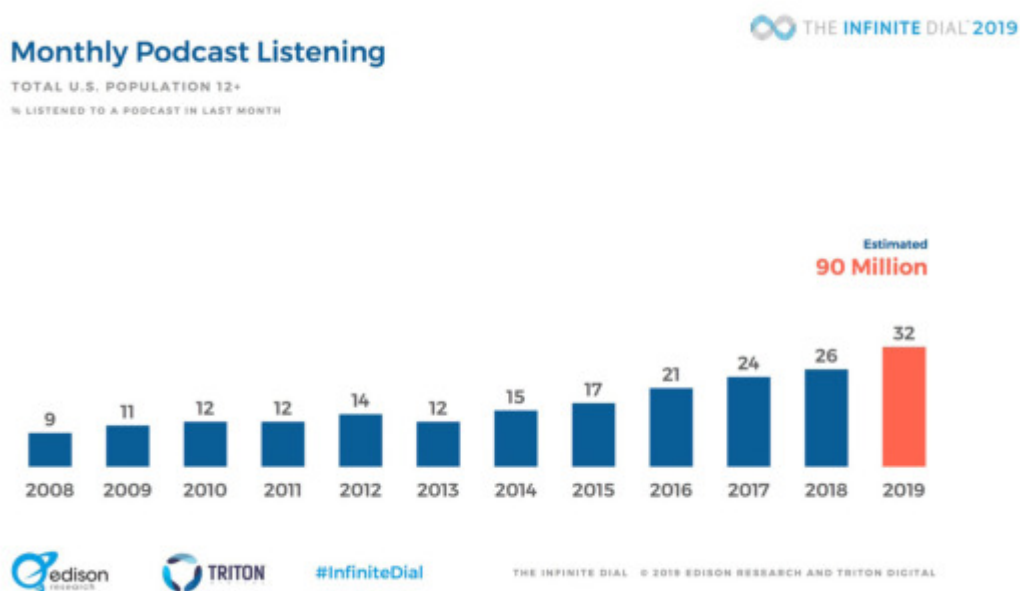
The traditional radio model generates vertical relationships between programmers and users, who are forced to consume the content at the specific moment that such programmers decide and through the platforms imposed by them. Faced with this system, the podcasting model -and, previously, the digital and online radio- destroys these hierarchical relations between publishers and public. In this sense, in podcasting we find numerous shows where listeners participate in a more significant manner than in the radio in the production of the contents or, at least, they are offered this possibility in very different and engaging manners, including the performative participation (Wilson, 2018).

2.2. Phase 2: expansion

Once defined its personality as a media species separated from the radio, podcasting began a growth and expansion phase starting in 2010. Bonini (2015) observes that in the American scene the medium is immersed in a “new era” having evolved from a form of Do-It-Yourself amateur communication to a mass media -from narrowcasting to broadcasting- repeating the same pattern undertaken by the radio when it was adopted by large American corporations and transformed into a major commercial activity during the twentieth century. This author marks the beginning of this golden age of podcasting in 2012 when some of the most popular shows in the United States broadcast by public radio stations leave this medium and become independent podcasts financed via crowdfunding. The fact that these podcasts were presented by known figures of the radio facilitated the massive listening of these programs, causing a migration of the audiences from radio to podcasting. In this way, Bonini explains the conversion of podcasting in the United States in a medium capable of generating its own market, based on a mixed model that unites donations from fans, crowdfunding, conventional advertising model, sponsorship and subscriptions.

The launch of *Serial* (2014-2018), hosted and produced by Sarah Koenig, caused podcasting to become a mass phenomenon in the United States. This show is considered the most successful podcast ever in terms of downloads. It was the fastest-ever podcast to reach 5 million downloads within its first month; 40 million downloads in its first two months (Dredge, 2014); holding the top-1 rating on iTunes’ download chart for three months and the first podcast to win a Peabody Award (Hancock and McMurtry, 2018). This program, endowed with high technical resources, contributed to raise the quality standards of the medium and penetrate into the daily media diet of millions of people (Berry, 2016). In 2019, the monthly listening of podcasts in the United States increased by 6%, reaching 31% of the population over 12 years old (90 million people), according to Edison Research (2019) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Podcast monthly listening in EEUU.



Resource: Infinite Dial 2019. Elaborated by Edison Research and Triton Digital.

This phase has coincided with a greater complexity of the narrative and grammatical structure of the medium. Podcasters (amateurs and professionals) began to overwhelm the language exclusively sound to delve into transmedia creative experiences so as to extend their stories to other platforms that contribute to complete the contents and seek user participation beyond their presence in the show. From a initial monomedia logic, currently podcasting travels towards the elaboration of multiplatform and multilanguage stories that incorporate differentiated contents. Podcasting becomes transmedia, giving rise to a new medium: transpodcast.

3. What is transpodcast?

Before defining what is meant by transpodcast, it is essential to analyze different perspectives on the concept of transmedia, which is understood as the creation of narrative universes formed by different stories distributed in different platforms and media where users adopt an active and participatory role. Since its appearance in the academic arena, certain researchers in communication and marketing have studied it according to different perspectives, from the analysis of strategies to the construction of elaborate theories about the engagement that fans of cultural products of this nature maintain with their favourite content.

The approach of Dena (2008) to the different strategies to build transmedia worlds is useful to propose a classification of this type of stories. According to Dena, we can observe three types of multiplatform segmentation formats of the stories: series (each transmedia extension continues the story while being conceived as a single narrative experience), serials (those that pose contents on different platforms, taking into account that these texts are highly dependent on other textualities) and hybrid (consisting of a combination of both).

In addition to giving the concept a foundational mark, Henry Jenkins (2009) proposed seven essential principles to understand and define transmedia productions: spreadability/drillability, continuity/multiplicity, immersion/extractability, worldbuilding, seriality, subjectivity and performance.

On the other hand, Askwith (2007) built his theory of transmedia narratives through the concept of touchpoints, considered as all content, activity or strategy that allows the media consumer to connect with a narrative product in a different way to the simple traditional consumption, either in real time or time-shifted. The touchpoints can take different forms: expanded access, repackaged content, ancillary content, branded products, related activities or social interactions.

In addition, Scolari (2013) has rightly described the different ways of interconnecting the different textualities or contents present in the transmedia stories: the production of interstitial contents that complete the narrative facts of the seminal works, the narration of events that happened before or will happen after what is narrated in the core text, the creation of new secondary characters to make them interact with the already known ones and, even, the use of parodies can be conceived as effective strategies, especially if they offer their followers the chance to participate in the narrative universe.

Taking all these theories into consideration and analogous to the notion of “transradio” (transmedia radio) coined by Martínez-Costa (2015), the concept of transpodcast is proposed to describe those media projects that, having podcasting as a seminal medium, extend and disperse their narrative and expand their communicative environment to other media, platforms and media languages, beyond the sound format, presenting a clear transmedia texture. In the same vein, Wrather (2016) claims the users of this medium are directed towards online spaces different from the core text (the podcast show) in order to improve their relationship, participation and engagement within the shows. McLuhan and Fiore (1967) affirm that media are extensions of some human, psychic or physical faculty. In an analogous manner, the different media that transpodcast uses suppose extensions of the core medium (podcasting) to correct its limitations and offer new narrative possibilities. For instance, a podcast on history that uses an explanatory map on its website as a complement to the sound content expands the limited capacity of orality to explain issues of a certain complexity, very difficult to be explained via aural communication. Indeed, podcasts barely exist as a discrete entity, being constantly linked to other texts and taking part in a hypertextual ecosystem (Barrios-O’Neill, 2018). García-Marín and Aparici (2018) have identified a total of 14 different platforms and media that the independent podcasters use to extend their stories beyond the recording of audio files (see Table 1). These platforms are deployed both online and offline and include a wide variety ranging from websites or blogs to apps for mobile devices or newsletters via email.

Table 1. Platforms used by transpodcast apart from the recording of sound content.

ONLINE	OFFLINE
Youtube channel	Book
Apps	Merchandising
E-book	Traditional radio
Webseries	Live show

ONLINE	OFFLINE
Spin-off podcast	
Social networks	
Digital radio	
Website	
Newsletter	
Cover sheets	

Authors: García-Marín and Aparici (2018).

3.1. Transpodcast models

The core text of transpodcast is usually an initial show in podcast format hosted on the virtual listening and downloading repositories to which media productions are added in different media languages included on the blog and the social networks of the project. On these websites, not only do podcasters share redundant material already introduced on the podcast (adaptations and/or narrative compressions), but also new contents (narrative extensions). Both the blog and social networks play the role of alternative points of access to the stories. In addition, many of these shows make merchandising products available to their fans, completing their transmedia universe. Although this is the general strategy for the transmediation of their stories, independent and amateur transpodcasts present other expansive systems materialized in the following models:

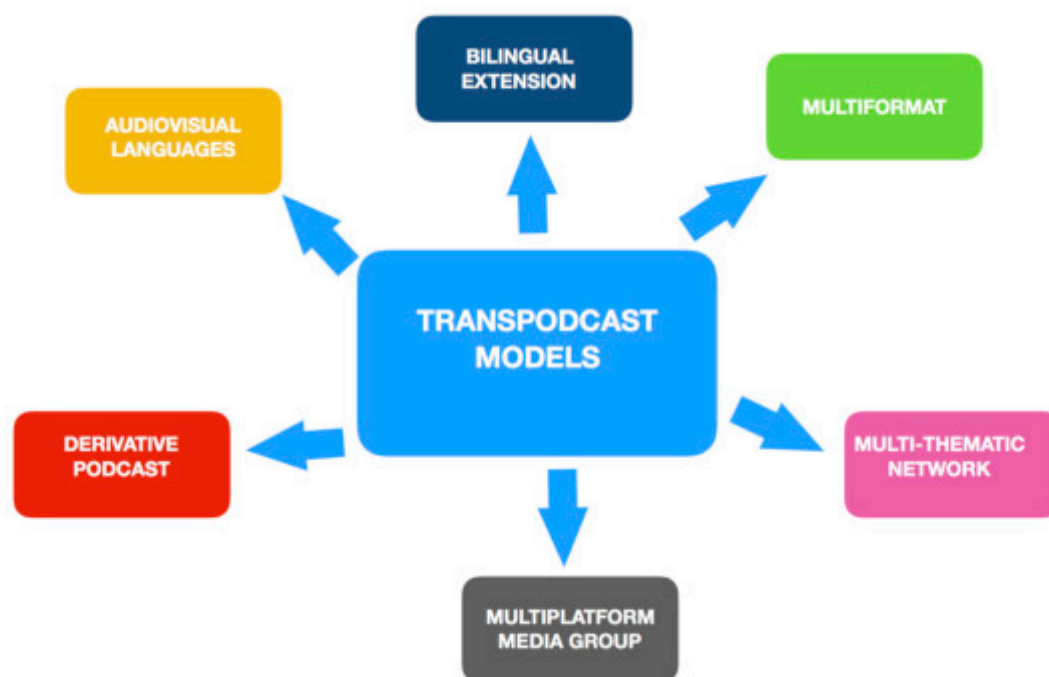
- Multifformat model. From a main show, considered as the essential part of the project, different programs are created about the same topic, but with a different format and duration. All these podcasts are included in the same feed, forcing the user to make a single subscription for all of them. The main content of this type of podcast is usually a show with a long duration and low frequency (fortnightly or monthly) to which other shows in shorter format are added in the period between the appearance of the different chapters of the extended format. For instance, *HistoCast*, Spanish transpodcast on historical issues, can be defined as a multi-program podcast that integrates several types of shows on the same topics. The main one is published biweekly on Mondays. In between these chapters, this podcast releases a shorter show, *BlitzoCast*, hosted by one of the presenters of the core podcast. During the summer, both shows are replaced by a more brief program, titled *EstíoCast*.
- Multi-thematic network model. If the previous model is based on the multiplicity of formats and durations, podcast networks are characterized by their wide variety of topics. These networks are configured by several podcasts with differentiated content and presented by different podcasters. They are configured as autonomous projects integrated in the same website, although each of their programs has an independent subscription, so that the listener can follow one or several programs of the network, ignoring the subscription to the rest of the contents. Although each podcast has a visual avatar/logo, the design of all of them usually keeps a stylistic coherence that evokes in the user's mind their belonging to the network. *Emilcar FM* was one of the first podcast networks coming from the Spanish amateur scene that followed this pattern. Note that, strictly, this model does not develop any transmedia expansion because it does not use different platforms. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to define it as an intra-media extension model.
- Audiovisual languages. This model leads listeners from the conventional podcast to the consumption of audiovisual contents (webseries or self-produced illustrations), which accompany each new chapter of the podcast. Each of these graphic and audiovisual elements work not only as a mere accompaniment or complement to the sound content, but they can be considered as meaningful productions with their own entity.
- Multiplatform media group. In this model, a first initial podcast develops a complex expansion to other languages and platforms, originating a solid aggregation of media -webpage, Youtube channel, apps for mobile devices, etc.- focused on the same topic and offering high quality content, very close to the professional standard. One of the most interesting aspects of these media groups is that in no case the contents of the alternative platforms are redundant texts with respect to those offered by the podcast, manifesting a clear example of triple transmedia expansion consisting of geographical extensions (different platforms), convergence of sound, video and text and expanded narratives (differentiated content). This model, whose main example in Spain is *Apple 5x1*, deploys a range of strategies close to the transmedia techniques used by large entertainment companies.
- Derivative podcast or spin-off. This model is considered to offer shows that arise from previous podcasts having some link or common element, either the topics or the podcasters. Sometimes, the derivative

podcast can also become a product completely independent of the seminal work and configure itself as the central media object of its own transmedia universe. This phenomenon usually occurs in those spin-offs that have both differentiated subscription and different host with respect to the work from which they come from.

- Bilingual extension. Its foundation is simple: it consists in the recording of a podcast with two versions in different languages and different contents, both included in the same project and made by the same staff. Both are published as different shows (with autonomous subscription). An example is the Spanish podcast *Dame la voz*. Not only does this show produce a programme in Spanish, but also it creates a version in Catalan including different (regional) topics and contents, adapted to their listeners coming from this region.

These structural models have been born out of the experimentation and constant debate generated within a voluminous community of grassroots creators and users of the medium (flourished in several countries like Mexico or Spain, where this community is really robust), whose essential aspects will be analyzed below.

Figure 2. Transpodcast models.



Elaborated by the autor.

4. The podcast community

The identity of every medium is defined not only by the technical and semiotic conditions that determine the construction, dissemination and reception of messages, but also by the set of social norms and protocols that creators and users assume in their relationship with such media, in the use they are given and in the connections that the subjects make through their use. In this sense, the podcast community is configured as the addition of different spaces and interactions both online and offline shared by the communicators and their followers and fans. The interactions, conversations, debates and joint projects that take place around this medium contribute to the sewing of a robust grassroots community.

4.1. Space of peer-to-peer communicators

The independent and amateur podcast community is a space where peer-to-peer communicators and a group of media creators outside the field of professional communication produce their own content in a non-mainstream manner. According to Ratto and Boler (2014), this practice that bets on the self-manufacturing of the goods and services implies the appropriation of the necessary materials for such manufacturing and the fact of not leaving others to work for you; it means making decisions without others intervening in the deliberation of what is right and what is not. The essence of this community as a space of non-hierarchical communication

triggers debates and constant discussions about the identity of the medium and its narrative possibilities from a horizontal perspective, to the detriment of the paradigm of the expert who dictates how to produce and distribute contents.

4.2. Intermediate layer of socialization

The podcast community can also be defined as an intermediate vector of socialization and a catalyst of “bridging capital” (Swiatek, 2018). The analysis of social life has been carried out traditionally from two fundamental areas: from the study of the large institutions and organizations that structure society (macro level) or from the analysis of the small groups closer to the individual such as the family (micro level). Gauntlett (2011) proposes the study of an intermediate layer of analysis -between the macro and micro levels- of social relations that “could act as an integrator of elements situated between individuals and society”. These considerations connect with the sense of identification and belonging achieved through the personal creation of media objects that can be significant within a community and the subsequent construction of shared experiences. Orton-Johnson (2014) affirms that the connection between individuals and groups contradicts the idea that defends a growing privacy and isolation in the use of the Web for relations between individuals. The transcasting community offers both online and offline platforms to make visible the personal and private (the media productions produced in the home studios of each podcaster) and to create a space of shared meaning that turns an isolated and fragmented activity into a network of networks of producers united through collective creative interests.

4.3. Open source space

Podcasters and users constitute an open source environment where the principle of the free circulation of material and immaterial resources reigns. These resources can offer added value from its originality or remix or constitute mere reproductions of other previous materials. It is also a space for collective intelligence where combined expertise is stimulated for the shared construction of knowledge and the resolution of problems that affect its members from processes governed by a sharing culture where the laws of the market are not applied. Instead, this community generates specific rating systems to assess the work of their most active and/or relevant contributors. As in all open source communities, in the transpodcast the trial and error is regarded as a catalyst for the learning of the technological skills needed to create contents.

4.4. Affinity community

Lange (2009) argues that the so-called affinity media does not offer contents for large audiences, but are focused on groups of people who wish to participate and maintain closer social connections. In the same vein, Reitsamer and Zobl (2014) define affinity spaces as places where “individuals come together to achieve a common purpose and participate through informal learning practices and network connectivity”. These spaces can be physical and/or virtual and generate dynamics of collective construction of knowledge thanks to peer-to-peer interactions where information usually flows from veterans to novices.

Transpodcast can be considered as an affinity medium, since it accommodates niche logics that offer specific contents that try to seduce non-massive users in quantitative terms but who are very committed to the projects. Likewise, this medium is configured as a space where the relationship between producers and users is transparent and direct (especially thanks to the use of social networks and open spaces by podcasting platforms to facilitate interaction among members of the community, even reaching the potential content cocreation). For that reason, the separate roles of communicators and receivers we can glimpse in traditional media are blurred and, additionally, small subcommunities are built around certain shows, especially those that achieve a considerable number of followers and fans. In addition, the podcast affinity communities must be considered as the starting point of several (professional and amateur) podcast networks, like *The Heard* in EEUU (Heeremans, 2018).

At the same time, the podcast community acts as a non-formal learning environment, a large space for the provision of materials and knowledge so that podcasters can achieve the skills necessary for the development of their work through transmedia literacy processes (transliteracy). These skills are of special interest in the dynamics of aspirational labour of those amateur podcasters whose objective is to become professionals (Sullivan, 2018).

4.5. Instrumental dimension

This medium presents a dimension that goes far beyond providing media objects to be consumed, since it offers instruments that facilitate the relationship between users and its own media ecosystem. In this sense,

podcasters refashion the tradition of alternative media, especially the zines that proliferated in the 70s and 80s in United Kingdom.

In this regard, the presence of repositories or directories created by enthusiasts within these media communities is of vital importance in order to collect, visualize, promote and order works and materials linked to the community, originally decentralized and disseminated in different spaces. The purpose of these repositories is to centralize and facilitate access to such resources. For instance, the main purpose of the directory of anarchist magazines *Spunk Library* was to act as an independent hub of works converted or produced in electronic format and to achieve their propagation through the Internet. This platform (available on: <http://www.spunk.org>) contains essays, speeches and master classes of prominent anarchist figures, both historical and contemporary, and includes an alternative section with works that, although they can not be considered strictly anarchist, can be taken into account to trigger debates on issues such as education, environment or nuclear energy.

Analogously, in the podcast community, there have been many projects (with disparate success) that have attempted to build digital directories in order to gather as many podcasts as possible. In this type of projects, the logic of amateurism governs since they are directories constructed during the leisure time of their promoters and, obviously, they have no commercial purpose. One of its essential values is its ability to function as a promotional space for the contents, for the podcasts integrated in its catalog and for the medium itself. These independent platforms are material providers for individuals and groups seeking information, educational resources and entertainment. They are configured as communication nodes, as well as virtual places to establish conversations and interactions. The creators of these spaces manifest a hybrid identity, since they can be seen at the same time as authors, publishers, curators, editors, disseminators, facilitators and content organizers.

4.6. Algorithmic environment (the automation of fandom)

The podcast community is a space commanded by the influence of algorithms and engines of recommendation of podcasts that decisively influence the discovery of new shows from the interactions of users with the interfaces of the medium. Ananny (2014) introduces the concept of newsware to define the emerging set of -often invisible- technologies, algorithms, interfaces, practices and standards from which the contents emerge. The application of these logics to the transmedia environments places us in the so-called automation of fandom (McCourt and Burkart, 2007), whose aim is to offer the ideal content for each consumer using the known data of each user.

These processes maintain a constant presence in the podcast community. Algorithms track listener activity through podcasting platforms to prepare a personalized offer of shows using the information that each user leaves in such a virtual spaces. The subject who only searches and consumes podcasts focused on history or culture will have more possibilities of discovering other cultural shows. By analyzing the operations and consumption patterns of users, the algorithms that operate in these services are able to improve their ability to make recommendations more adjusted to the tastes of the subjects by developing a personalized offer differentiated for each user. If the mass media era was characterized by the broadcasting of few contents to a massive and undifferentiated audience, the logic of transpodcast is based on the distribution of personalized material tied to a set of explicit instructions (subscriptions and the rest of the actions commanded by the free choice of the user) and also implicit ones (the data trail that the user registers on the platform, its searches, comments and likes). In the same way, podcast directories generate automatic playlists based on the show that is being played at a certain time, also without any intervention on the part of the user.

Algorithms decisively impact on the visibility of some podcasts over others, thus facilitating the connection with certain subcommunities and with certain creators. In this case, it is evident to observe how the technological layer of the medium ends up influencing the social relations that arise around it.

5. Conclusions

Anderson, Bell and Shirky (2012) challenge the traditional notion of media industry, which has been out of date since the emergence of the Internet and has evolved towards a new media landscape that affects institutions, professionals and publics. The arrival of Web 2.0 in 2004 -the birth year of podcasting- did not announce a new stage in the media model, but instead built a new ecosystem by promoting changes that in no case can be reduced to specific institutions. These changes are so deep that impact on the foundations of the traditional media system.

In this general scenario, we must consider transpodcast as a medium that also operates in a complex network of actors with projects of different nature and different objectives. The introduction of new creators who have joined the pioneering independent transpodcast producers contributes to offer a much richer, varied and complex panorama of the digital audio, with multiple cross-effects between radio, podcasting and transpodcasts.

In our days, radio uses podcasts as one more way of distributing its content, allowing the listener to decide how to consume it. There are certain radio shows that have a similar number of listener in podcast format with

respect to the audience that they agglutinate via hertzian radio. If, firstly, the use of podcasting by the radio focused exclusively on making available to the listener the programs that had previously been broadcast in a conventional manner, there are currently stations that produce native content for podcast format without having appeared previously as radio programs.

At the same time, numerous institutions without any relationship with the sound universe are developing transpodcast projects. *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* were present in the first stage of podcasting, afterwards they abandoned or considerably reduced their offer of projects related to this medium but, in recent years, have expressed a renewed interest in the sound language as a manner of connecting with their audiences.

The appearance of podcasting and its subsequent transmedia evolution have generated new narrative possibilities in audio format after a long period in which aural communication was dominated by radio, which, for many decades, remained anchored in a worrying standardization in terms of genres and formats. Podcasting and transpodcast have reconfigured the creative logics and the relationship between producers and listeners. Both media provide renewed opportunities for popular communication and, given that they are not directed by any authority that legitimately dictates how the processes of production, distribution and consumption of content must be, they offer greater thematic diversity and an increasing complexity in terms of narrative structures, opening a new era in the aural communication.

Funding

This work is integrated in the “R & D Network of Media Education” of the State Program of Scientific-Technical Research of Excellence, State Subprogram of Knowledge Generation (EDU2016-81772-REDT), financed by the European Fund for Regional Development (FEDER) and Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of Spain.

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