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PUBLIC SERVICE VS. AUTONOMY, THE DILEMMA OF CUBAN JOURNALISTIC CULTURE

SERVICIO PÚBLICO VS. AUTONOMÍA, EL DILEMA DE LA CULTURA PERIODÍSTICA CUBANA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: During the presidency of Raúl Castro (2006-2018), the Cuban media system has lost its state-partisan monopoly and has suffered the decentralization of communication production and distribution. In this context of changes, the relationships between the media system components that define journalistic professionalism are analyzed based on the links identified between the journalistic culture and the projection of media policy. Methodology: The critical review of research on media systems allowed us to observe this case study contextualized. A qualitative methodology was applied, based on an in-depth interview with 21 experts in Political and Communication Sciences about Cuba, and qualitative content analysis of political programs, laws, scientific publications, research theses, and other interviews with Cuban journalists registered in previous studies. Results: The central dilemma of Cuban journalism is delineated in the interaction between the journalistic roles and the definition of public service and between journalistic autonomy and the functions of the media aimed at reinforcing nationalism and national defense. Discussion: The meaning of Cuban journalistic professionalism seems to be more associated with the ideals of social justice, citizen participation, political commitment, and national sovereignty, and with a formative model of a humanist and critical journalist, than the autonomy or the consistency of the media system rules.

Conclusions: However, tension coexists between media-political instrumentalization and professionalization -constituted by journalism with a strong vocation for public service and journalists who develop strategies to explore greater conceptual and structural autonomy-.

Keywords: Journalistic culture; Media system; Cuba; Journalistic autonomy; Journalistic roles, Media instrumentalization; Media functions; Media policy; Public service.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El sistema de medios cubano durante la presidencia de Raúl Castro (2006-2018) se ha caracterizado por la pérdida del monopolio estatal-partidista y el descentramiento en la producción y distribución de comunicación. En este contexto de cambios, se analizan las relaciones entre los componentes del sistema mediático que definen la profesionalidad periodística, a partir de los vínculos identificados entre cultura periodística y proyección de la política de medios. Metodología: Se aplicó una metodología cualitativa, con base en la entrevista en profundidad a 21 expertos en Ciencias Políticas y de la Comunicación sobre Cuba, y el análisis de contenido cualitativo a programas políticos, leyes, publicaciones científicas, tesis y otras entrevistas a periodistas cubanos registradas en estudios previos. Resultados: El dilema central del periodismo cubano se delinea en la interacción entre roles periodísticos y definición de servicio público; y entre la autonomía periodística y las funciones de los medios orientadas a reforzar el nacionalismo y la defensa nacional. Discusión: El significado de la profesionalidad periodística cubana parece estar más asociado con ideales de justicia social, participación ciudadana, compromiso político y soberanía nacional, y a un modelo formativo de un periodista humanista y crítico; que a la autonomía o a la consistencia de las reglas con las que opera el sistema mediático. Conclusiones: No obstante, coexiste una tensión entre la instrumentalización política -y económica-, y la profesionalización, constituida por un periodismo con fuerte vocación de servicio público y por periodistas que desarrollan estrategias orientadas a la búsqueda de mayor autonomía conceptual y estructural.

Palabras clave: Cultura periodística; Sistema mediático; Cuba; Autonomía periodística; Roles periodísticos; Instrumentalización de los medios; Funciones de los medios; Política de medios; Servicio público.

SERVIÇO PÚBLICO VS. AUTONOMIA, O DILEMA DA CULTURA JORNALÍSTICA CUBANA

RESUMO

Introdução: O sistema mediático cubano durante a presidência de Raúl Castro (2006 – 2018) caracterizou-se pela perda do monopólio estatal-partidário e pela descentralização na produção e distribuição da comunicação. Nesse contexto de mudanças, analisam-se as relações entre os componentes do sistema mediático que definem o profissionalismo jornalístico, a partir dos vínculos identificados entre a cultura jornalística e a projeção da política mediática. Metodologia: Aplicou-se uma metodologia qualitativa, com base em entrevistas em profundidade com 21

especialistas em Ciências Políticas e da Comunicação sobre Cuba e análise qualitativa de conteúdo de programas políticos, leis, publicações científicas, teses e outras entrevistas com jornalistas cubanos. Resultados: O dilema central do jornalismo cubano se delinea na interação entre os papéis jornalísticos e a definição de serviço público; e entre a autonomia jornalística e as funções dos meios de comunicação que visam reforçar o nacionalismo e a defesa nacional. Discussão: O significado do profissionalismo jornalístico cubano parece estar mais associado a ideais de justiça social, participação cidadã, compromisso político e soberania nacional, e um modelo formativo de jornalista humanista e crítico; do que à autonomia ou consistência das regras com as quais o sistema de mídia opera. Conclusões: No entanto, coexiste uma tensão entre instrumentalização política — e econômica — e profissionalização, constituída por um jornalismo com forte vocação para o serviço público e por jornalistas que desenvolvem estratégias visando buscar maior autonomia conceitual e estrutural.

Palavras chave: Cultura jornalística; sistema de mídia; Cuba; autonomia jornalística; papéis jornalísticos; Instrumentalização da mídia; Funções de mídia; política de mídia; Serviço público.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In several research works carried out during the last three decades on Cuban journalism, the contradictory presence between, as a rule, a high vocation for public service, and a divergent and limited autonomy have been verified (Estrada, 1996; Pérez, 2006; García, 2013; Elizalde, 2014; Oller et al., 2016; García, 2018; Natvig, 2019; Somohano et al., 2019).

Among the most used factors to explain this behavior, are the ideology and the Sovietization of the press model in the 1970s (García, 2013; García, 2017), censorship practices, the economic organization of the media (Elizalde, 2014; Franco, 2016; Terrero, 2018), the historical tradition (Arencibia, 2017; Salazar, 2017), the communicative inflection of the US political conflict against Cuba whose effects have been associated with the notion of "state of siege" (González, 2017; Vidal, 2017), the quality of university education, the socializing role of politics (Estrada, 1996) and associationism (Oller et al., 2016), generational differences (Natvig, 2019), the accumulation of unfulfilled expectations concerning the transformation of the media system (García, 2013), among others.

The legally instituted Cuban media establish a univocal relationship with the political system, so that "they do not constitute a system in themselves since they do not have the capacity for interdependence or self-referential link" (García, 2013, p. 141). In correspondence with this, it has been found that in journalistic practice a loyal-facilitator role predominates (Olivera and Torres, 2017), although ideals closer to civic and service roles are shared among journalists (Veliz, 2018; Somohano et al., 2019).

During the years that coincide with the presidency of Raúl Castro (2006-2018), the

media system continued to be characterized by the same features since the 20th century: predominance of public-state media outlets (only legal ones), direct and centralized political-partisan-state intervention, subsidy as the main form of financing, the preponderance of the informative-propagandist, and educational-cultural function, as well as the defensive-reactive character in the face of external aggression. However, as an expression of, and in relation to, the ongoing transformations in Cuban society since the end of the 20th century as a result of the effects of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and with the increase in Internet access and global flows of information, the "limits" of the media system are being reconstituted, as a diffuse conceptual space, not territorially bounded, transnational, multi-intended, and multi-regulated (Hallin, 2020; Olivera and De Maio, 2021).

Journalism is linked to a global community, and there are prescriptions-marked fundamentally by the liberal conception of the media-; however, the truth is that journalistic cultures vary significantly, in correspondence with the characteristics of the political, economic, and cultural environments (Voltmer, 2013; Esser and Pfetsch, 2020).

Journalistic professionalism is an interconnected process, among other elements, "with the constitution of a particular conception of what the public really is" (Hallin and Mancini, 2012, p. 292); and with competitive values such as freedom of the press, national security, privacy, stability, consensus, among others. Thus, the meaning of "professionalism" differs between societies (Hallin and Mancini, 2012, p. 290), in practice, and perceptions (Roudakova, 2012). While in some countries greater relevance is attributed to autonomy, in others it is to formal higher education, or normative prescriptions (Mellado et. al, 2017).

In previous studies on media systems in (ex, post) communist countries (Voltmer, 2013), journalistic professionalism seems to emphasize more the conception of a public service vocation than autonomy (Zhao, 2012; Lehmann, 2017), university education, or the consistency of the rules (Lehmann, 2017).

However, the nature, social structure, dynamics, and duration over time of the political conflicts in society shape the pluralism and political action of the media (Hallin and Mancini, 2008; Voltmer, 2013), which in the Cuban context goes through taking into account the US conflict against the country, and associated with it, migration and transnational information flows (Cearns, 2021).

Around the world, political, economic, and technological disruptions have become opportunities to reinterpret the limits of journalism and the logic of appropriation that emerge from the interrelation between internal and external agents of this social institution (Hanitzsch et al., 2019). The context of changes and inflection of the informative and cultural hegemony of Cuban society offers a framework of analysis to understand the journalistic culture of this country —whose media model is atypical at the continental level—, its relations with the structures of the media system, and how its agents conceive professionalism.

2. OBJECTIVES

Describe the relationships between the components of the media system that define Cuban journalistic professionalism during the Presidency of Raúl Castro (2006-2018).

3. METHODOLOGY

The selected theoretical-methodological approach is qualitative, from an epistemological perspective that emphasizes the context and sociohistory (Powers and Vera-Zambrano, 2018). The relationship between journalistic professionalism and other components of the Cuban media system, including media policy, is argued based on the links identified between the dimensions a) State-media relationship, b) political articulation of the media, c) development of the media industry and d) professionalization of journalism, which were defined based on the critical review and (re)conceptualization of the classic categories of Hallin and Mancini (2008, 2017) (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Constructs and dimensions of analysis

CONSTRUCTS AND DIMENSIONS
State and media relationship
1.1 Projection of media policy It conceives the concertation of actors in its design, the social function defined for the media, its conception as a public service, and the role of the PCC and the political leadership in its organization.
1.2 Institutional participation of the State in the media It includes aspects such as ownership, financing, the definition of the media agenda, the government as a source of access to public affairs, the professionalization of government communication, censorship, and surveillance.
1.3 Legal regulation It integrates the different types of regulation, structural, infrastructural, content, and regarding advertising, as well as the contexts of deregulation.
1.4 Orientation of the media to legitimize the political system It refers to the relationship between the political, media, and public agendas, and the development of democratic functions by the media.
Political articulation of the media
2.1 Media political activity Observe the editorial orientation of the media, their position in the face of the political conflict, and their recognition of the PCC and the political leadership as legitimate interlocutors.
2.2 External diversity It includes the relationship with political groups, civil society, and global actors, the links with migratory flows, and the legal status of the operation.
Development of the media industry
3.1 Media reach Defines the platforms and scope of the media, the development indicators of telecommunications, and alternative-informal distribution networks.
3.2 Audience orientation

Indicates the economic and social value of media production, access and use of ICTs, and media consumption.
Professionalization of journalism
4.1 Journalistic culture Indicates autonomy, ethical norms and standards, and professional roles.
4.2 Social organization of the profession Refers to associations and university education.

Source: Own elaboration

For this, 21 in-depth interviews were applied to experts in Political and Communication Sciences about Cuba (see Table 2). Additionally, content analysis was used on primary documents (10 government programs, 21 legal regulations, 10 political speeches, 19 press articles, 2 study plans) and secondary documents (57 academic publications and 60 theses). Furthermore, as part of the documentary sample, the audios of the interviews applied to Cuban journalists were accessed by two research included in the sample, which addressed elements of ideology and professional culture (Hernández, 2011; Veliz, 2018).

Table 2.
Information about the interviewees

Date	Gender	Nationality	Residence	Especialization
January 26 th , 2017	man	Cuban	resident in Cuba	communication scholar and journalist.
February 10 th , 2017	man	Cuban	resident in Cuba	communication scholar.
February 17 th , 2017	man	Cuban	resident in Cuba	communication scholar and journalist.
February 20 th , 2017	woman	Cuban	resident in Cuba	communication scholar.
February 21 st , 2017	man	Cuban	resident in Cuba	communication scholar and journalist.
February 27 th , 2017	woman	Cuban	resident in Cuba	journalist and communication scholar.
March 9 th , 2017	man	Cuban	resident in Cuba	journalist and communication scholar.
March 10 th , 2017	woman	Cuban	resident in Cuba	communication scholar.
March 23 rd , 2017	man	Cuban	resident in Cuba	scholar of political science and communication.
March 28 th , 2017	woman	Cuban	resident in Cuba	communication scholar and journalist.
March 29 th , 2017	man	Cuban	resident in Cuba	communication scholar and journalist.
April 6 th , 2017	man	Cuban	resident in Cuba	political science

				scholar.
April 13 th , 2017	woman	Cuban	resident in Cuba	communication scholar and journalist.
September 12 th , 2017	man	Cuban	resident abroad	scholar of communication and political science.
November 7 th , 2017	man	Cuban	resident abroad	political science scholar.
January 21 st , 2018	woman	Not Cuban	resident abroad	communication scholar.
January 31 st , 2018	woman	Cuban	resident in Cuba	communication scholar.
March 20 th , 2018	man	Cuban	resident in Cuba	communication scholar.
June 25 th , 2018	woman	Not Cuban	resident abroad	communication scholar.
July 12 th , 2018	man	Cuban	resident abroad	communication scholar.
January 9 th , 2019	woman	Cuban	resident abroad	scholar of political science and communication.

Source: Own elaboration

The in-depth interviews were conducted between February 2017 and January 2019, 15 were conducted face-to-face and six were conducted online. Subsequently, the information was transcribed and processed with the support of NVivo 12. The coding similarity made it possible to identify the group of topics that tended to be mentioned jointly by the interviewees. Thus, a Jaccard coefficient > 0.7 signified a high degree of similarity between two codes, and their grouping using dendrograms contributed to identifying three relationship patterns (Olivera and De Maio, 2021), of which, for this article, the one referring to the relationship between media policy projection and journalistic culture was selected (see Table 3).

Table 3.
Interviews grouped by coding similarity (Jaccard's coefficient)

Code A	Code B	Jaccard's coefficient
Projection of media policy	Journalistic culture	0.7
Projection of media policy	Definition of public service	0.737
Projection of media policy	Professional autonomy	0.714
Definition of public service	Journalistic culture	0.706
Definition of public service	Journalistic roles	0.75
Nationalism and national defense as a function of the media	Professional autonomy	0.706
Journalistic culture	Ethical standards	0.812
Journalistic culture	Professional autonomy	0.882
Journalistic roles	Professional autonomy	0.722
Journalistic roles	Ethical standards	0.75
Ethical standards	Professional autonomy	0.824
Ethical standards	University education	0.8
University education	Migratory flows	0.7

Source: Own elaboration.

The relationship between both constructs, and its in-depth analysis, was argued through the review of 11 research works on journalistic cultures in Cuba developed during the last three decades, content analysis, reflexive contextualization, and reinterpretation of empirical information.

4. RESULTS

The Cuban media scenario during the presidency of Raúl Castro (2006-2018) has been characterized by the loss of the state-partisan monopoly and the decentralization in the production and distribution of communication (personal interview, July 12th, 2018); as well as changes in the content production capacity, citizen participation, and information consumption of the audiences (personal interview, February 20th, 21st, 2017). To account for both processes, a transnational understanding of information flows is necessary (Cearns, 2021) and operations of the media system within the framework of the nation-state, given by the intervention of factors such as the development of the Internet, migration, disconnection between the social-political project and individual and family projects (Espina, 2009), among others¹.

The media system would be constituted centrally by state-owned or socially-owned media, governed by the information policy of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC by its acronym in Spanish). But also by the foreign correspondents whose political operation and audiences make them relevant to understand the flows of information on the Island; the emerging-independent media (non-state, non-legal, created during the last decade), which with a vocation for public service operate through networks of collaborators inside and outside the country; and the media that, within this spectrum, act as political opposition actors with strong ties to Cuban migrant communities, and in many cases financially and editorially backed by the policies of the US Government against Cuba (personal interview, February 8th, March 23rd, 31st, 2017).

Regardless of geographical latitude, political alignment, or the legal framework of action, multiple transactions are recorded between the different media institutions through thematic agendas, mutual complaints, learning by imitation and competition, and circulation of personnel. Consequently, it is impossible to understand the existence of some without taking into account the others, and it is necessary to "de-ideologize" how the Cuban media system has been conceived (personal interview, March 9th, 2017).

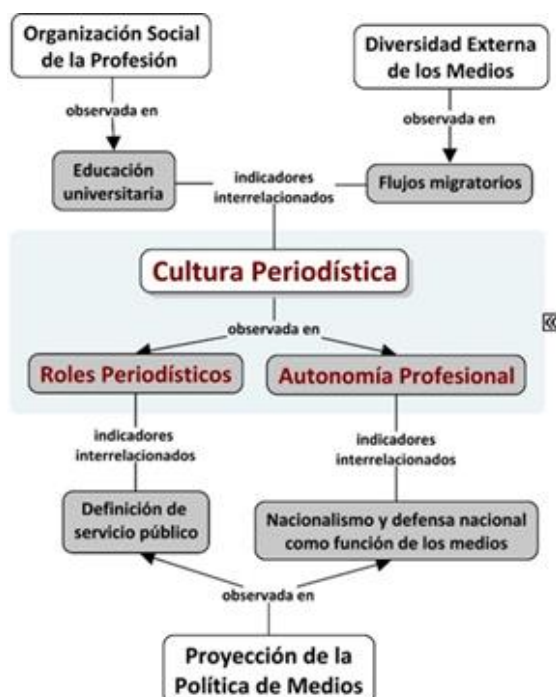
In the broad framework of understanding the identities and limits of the media system, as well as its transformations and continuities during the period under study, the relationships by the similarity of the codes applied to the in-depth interviews suggest a reciprocal and multilevel pattern between the projection of media policy and journalistic culture (Figure 1). This is structured given the interaction between the indicators: a) journalistic roles and definition of public service; and b) autonomy and functions of the media aimed at reinforcing nationalism and national defense.

¹ To expand on the Cuban media context between 2006 and 2018, it is suggested to consult Elizalde (2014), García (2013), García (2018), Henken and García (2021), Oller et al (2016), and Olivera and De Maio (2021)..

Complementarily, a relationship was also found between journalistic culture, university education, and migratory flows, which allows a broader understanding of the normative role of professional education and the expression of external diversity that has begun to characterize the media system. In general, such relationships contribute to proposing a definition of journalistic professionalism in dialogue with the universal ideals of journalism and correspondence with the contradictions and challenges of the Cuban cultural, political, and economic context.

Figure 1.

Diagram of the relationships between journalistic culture and other components of the Cuban media system



Source: Own elaboration.

4.1 Journalistic roles, university education, and conception of public service

In studies on professional cultures that have been carried out from the 1990s to the present, Cuban journalists, journalism students, and even media managers, without exception, show a strong orientation towards civic-citizen and vigilante-investigative roles (Estrada, 1996; Pérez, 2006; Estenoz and Martínez, 2006; Hernández, 2011; Franco, 2016; Oliva, 2016; Oller et al, 2016; Olivera and Torres, 2017; Terrero, 2018; Veliz, 2018; Somohano et al, 2019).

Estrada (1996) indicated among the roles assumed by Cuban journalists are the "defender of the rights of the population" and the "educator of the audience" (p. 25). A decade later, Pérez (2006) stated that 'the people' was a "fundamental notion of the professional ideology of this journalist" (p. 249). More recently, Hernández

(2011) referred, among the functions associated with journalism shared by his interviewees, "informing, analyzing, interpreting, and giving an opinion on reality", "mediating between the state and the public", and "criticizing, educating, and serving society " (p. 83); while Veliz et. al (2019) maintain that the professionals interviewed belonging to both partisan-state and emerging media (legal or not) "conceive the population not as consumers but as citizens" (p. 303).

However, the notions of the population, the town, the people, the citizen, is a "discursive territory in dispute" (Pérez, 2006, p. 249), where a certain declarative distance coexists in regard to the sensationalist functions of journalism - not so of entertainment- (Veliz et. al, 2019, p. 303-304), with significant, but in a certain way neglected, practices of bonds with citizens, socio-political mediation, and control of the public function. For example, the Acknowledgment of Receipt section in Juventud Rebelde, the Alta Tensión program in the CMHW radio station, the deliberative spaces through discussion forums with users in Cubadebate, the recent investigative work by Periodismo de Barrio, the exceptional journalistic work by leaders of the guild such as Guillermo Cabrera Álvarez, the consolidation of the audiences of critically oriented media projects such as OnCuba, El Toque, among others, stand out.

With more than 20 years of difference, the research of Estrada (1996) and Veliz (2018) also agree that the roles of vigilante and denunciation are shared by their interviewed journalists, from a vision of defense of citizens and control of power. Furthermore, they agree that the conception of these roles mediates an idea of the functionality of journalism in the political system and an 'aspirational' expression, of what should be. However, in the emerging non-state media –a reality that, as has been pointed out, is recent-, "although a position of confrontation with the powers was not identified, the notion of journalism as a social watchdog is widely considered" (Veliz et al., 2019, p.302); while in the political opposition media, adversarial and denunciatory roles tend to be the most common (personal interview, March 23rd, 2017). The contrast in levels and direction of the propagandistic, vigilante, and militant models in Cuban journalism has also been found in other recent studies (Celecia, 2020).

Likewise, these results, which show the predominance of civic and vigilante roles among the professional perceptions of journalists in Cuba, are in line with the findings of studies that have focused on university students in this career. Estenoz and Martínez (2006) argue that the professional ideal is that of "a press based on the people, that alerts and denounces social ills", and "a journalism that is humanistic, ethical, reflective, participatory, critical, revolutionary, that reflects reality by nature" (p. 124); while Somohano et al. (2019) explains this behavior based on the importance that students give to the functions of "educating, informing, and motivating citizens to participate in public discussions", the motivation they express for "participating and influencing public affairs", and the possibility of "specializing in the informative area related to politics" (p. 325-326).

The perception around these roles coexists with "the socializing influence of the political leadership" on the media (Estrada, 1996, p. 22), which is manifested in the importance given by the interviewees to the loyal-facilitator role at different historical

times, as well as in the hierarchy that political commitment and social responsibility have among their professional values (Hernández, 2011). Furthermore, in the journalistic performance of the partisan-state media, the loyal-facilitator journalistic role predominates, with a strong structural behavior in its relationship with the elites regarding the promotion of the positive image of the country (Olivera and Torres, 2017).

The instrumental political relationship between the PCC, the State, and the media (García, 2013) has reinforced a culture focused on obeying (personal interview, March 31st, 2017) and a journalistic practice little accustomed to contrasting sources of information and points of view, which to a certain extent is also manifested in the "unofficial" media (personal interview, March 20th, 2018).

However, several interviewees (personal interview, February 17th, March 31st, September 12th, 2017) acknowledge that journalists from emerging media position themselves at a greater distance from the powers constituted around the Cuban State, but also from the sanctions and regime-change policies of the US Government, a critical balance that is not usually appreciated in the political opposition media. All of the above confirms the "conflictive and non-homogeneous nature of the cultures of journalism on the Island" (Somohano, 2020, p. 323).

This behavior is usually understood in the logic that the public service vocation comes before, with different levels of contrast, the loyal-facilitator role in its propagandistic expression (Veliz et. al, 2019), which marks a tension shared by professionals and students between the ideal of journalism and its real practice (Estenoz and Martínez, 2006; Oliva, 2016; Somohano et al., 2019). But at the same time, the media policy and other instances of cultural reproduction of the media system (e.g. university education and professional associations) have established, in the opposite direction, a political profile and social commitment that has led to the configuration of this vocation of public service (Oller et. al, 2016).

During the last three decades, the definition of the journalist model elaborated by the Cuban academy evolved towards the conception of a professional of social communication and politics with a marked vocation of service to society, so that the notion of journalist-humanist has served as a platform for action and horizon for the successive cloisters of this career (Arencibia and López, 2016).

Professional education is not totally independent of partisan-state intervention, but unlike in other communist and/or ex-communist countries (Mancini, 2015a), in Cuba, a process of professionalization of journalism has been evidenced as a result of the consolidation of social and cognitive institutionalization of investigative, educational, and knowledge-application practices in the field of social communication (Saladrigas and Olivera, 2016).

The curriculum and an environment of relative freedom and political tolerance (Pérez, 2006), favor the development of analytical and critical capacity, as well as the construction of socio-cognitive schemes and normative standards, which enable cultural changes in the profession (interview staff, January 31st, 2018). However, it is not enough to address contemporary journalism with a generalized sense (personal

interview, March 10th, 2017), nor the tension between the preparation received and the "dysfunctional" dynamics of management and production of the media (García, 2016, pp. 131-132).

On the other hand, the Union of Journalists of Cuba (UPEC), a unitary professional association, has supported functions associated with the loyal-facilitator and civic roles such as defending the Revolution, supporting the Party, informing, guiding, and educating public opinion. Furthermore, it has been a leading actor in separating, not always successfully, journalism from marketing, advertising, and propaganda (Oller et. al, 2016).

However, the interviewees insist on emphasizing that "the academic world is unequivocally a source of change" (personal interview, January 21st, 2018) and that the quality of journalistic training affects both partisan and emerging media, and even opposition media (personal interview, January 26th, February 17th, 20th, 21st, 27th, March 29th, 31st, September 12th, 2017, January 21st, June 25th, 2018). One of them synthesizes the contradiction that occurs between the culture (re)created in the university and the structures of the legally instituted media system: "We are training professionals who are 15 years ahead of our media" (personal interview, February 27th, 2017).

On the other hand, in the Social Communication Policy of the Cuban State and Government (PCC, 2019), a document that synthesizes and updates the -unwritten- media policy that has governed since the second half of the 1960s, a notion of statist-official-governmental public service is proposed, in opposition to the capture of the media by private and market interests in capitalist societies. However, in this policy, and the recently approved Constitution of the Republic of Cuba (Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, 2019), freedom of the press is limited to the purposes of society and by subsequent regulations of a lower rank.

Such a conception constitutes an identity mark of the political process of the Cuban Revolution (Díaz-Canel, 2018; Redacción Cubaperiodistas, 2018). On the one hand, a broad definition is established, where "the mass media, in any format or technological support, constitute a public good and service" (PCC, 2019). On the other hand, a distinction between public and state media is not provided, "prevailing, not officially, but informally, the idea of a 'party press'" (personal interview, July 12th, 2018).

The public media in Cuba were born with the Revolution, in a context where the State-government dilemmas, content definition, and financing were surpassed by a political practice that denied all the previous status (Elizalde, 2018). At present, the forms of ownership of the media are not a sufficient criterion to guarantee the representation of social diversity and the common good of society. In this direction, it has been pointed out that "the professional practice of the media today does not contribute effectively to the general social interest or the continuity of the emancipatory project of the Revolution" (Vidal, 2017, p. 224).

In this way, journalism has been displaced by political propaganda, it suffers from autonomy (Terrero, 2018), plural visions (personal interview, March 23rd, 2017), and

there is a notable consensus in the professional sector regarding the need to rescue, in paper and the actual operation, that the media be public (personal interview, February 8th, 27th, March 23rd, 28th, 2017, March 20th, 2018).

Cuba has had a public communication system that would make it possible to "consider a new professionalism" (Estrada, 1996, p. 31), even in the complex and fluctuating margins of the critical relationship of journalism with the project of the Cuban Revolution and radical nationalism. Furthermore, in this context, unlike in other ex-communist countries (Votmer, 2013), objectivity was never ruled out as a journalistic value, although a high degree of interventionism and opinion was observed in professional practice (Olivera and Torres, 2017).

But, "although there are signs of shared essential values, such as patriotism, social justice, or dignity" (García, 2018, p. 146), the contradictions that exist when balancing the political project and the roles of journalism generate frustration and facilitate decision-making in terms of professional mobility (emerging media, entertainment industry, political activism, reorientation-improvement, etc.). All this, moreover, seems to strongly support the thesis on how "national, generational, or professional identities are becoming more relevant than political ideology" (Pérez, 2006, p. 260); and awareness of the deep contradictions between the State and the public (personal interview, February 17th, March 10th, 2017, March 20th, June 25th, and July 12th, 2018).

The previous results, in any case, corroborate that the aspirational values of the political project of the Cuban Revolution, together with socializing instances such as media policy and university education, persist in modeling a journalistic identity anchored in ideals of public service. At the same time, they indicate that the sense of what is public has been based on universal values such as social responsibility, dignity, justice, and freedom but also particular political notions such as citizen participation, the socialization of power, popular control, and national sovereignty.

The projection of media policy aimed at building an alternative media system to the liberal model, however, has not created a strategically sustainable press model (García, 2013) and has co-opted the monitoring function of the media in society. With this, it has limited the options to materialize in the institutional framework of the country's practices closer to the ideals shared by journalists (Vasallo, 2020), and the search for these options has been promoted in transnational, emerging, and political opposition media projects.

4.2 Journalistic autonomy, national defense, and nationalism.

Cuban journalists share high ethical-professional standards (Krudtaa, 2013), show a critical sense of the need to do a different type of journalism (García, 2013), and have been open to public questioning or censorship (personal interview, February 8th, 2017). But they work in an unregulated and/or regulated environment based on informal rules (personal interview, March 28th, 2017), they are not exempt from social problems such as political and economic opportunism, double standards, and falsehood (Díaz, 2017), and tend to uncritically accept pre-existing norms (Estrada, 1996, p. 16).

At the level of media policy, "information, communication, and knowledge constitute a public good and a citizen's right" (PCC, 2019) but they are limited by legislation on defense and national security and the prevalence of an instrumental-disseminative-propagandistic vision in the operative relations between politics and the media.

It is worth indicating that among the social functions of the media in Cuba identified by the interviewees and in the consulted documentary sources, the overlapping of public service values with nationalism and national defense is observed. By way of example, they stand out for preserving sovereignty, promoting the unity of the country in the face of external threats, contributing to national security, and strengthening the patriotic-nationalist features of Cuban identity.

Then, the close relationship between the press and the Cuban political power has not been reversed into legal guarantees for the media in the country, and the existing narrow legal framework focuses on restrictions associated with the functions indicated above.

In substantive criminal matters, several articles of the Criminal Code (1988) typify crimes related to the preparation, distribution, and possession of enemy propaganda and the dissemination of false news; incitement to carry out crimes against State Security; against public order (the illegal distribution of printed publications), and individual rights (free expression of thought, word, and press).

Likewise, Law 88 for the Protection of the National Independence and the Economy of Cuba (Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, 1999) stands out, which criminalizes "any form of direct or indirect collaboration to favor the application of the 'Helms-Burton Law'" or in general the US sanctions policies against Cuba. Among them, collaboration for these purposes and by any means with "radio or television stations, newspapers, magazines, or other foreign media" (Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, 1999).

It is worth noting that the majority of those interviewed agree that the ideas of independence, sovereignty, and social justice, typical of radical Cuban nationalism present in journalistic ideals, are associated with the tensions arising from the US political conflict against Cuba. However, this context has also reinforced the notion of the "state of siege", which translates into control of information and cultural consumption as a result of enemy aggression and self-isolation to protect oneself (Vidal, 2015). Such a conception has limited the critical capacity of journalism, has deepened the distance between the public agenda and the media, and has undermined the credibility of the media as a social institution (personal interview, February 20th, 21st, September 12th, 2017).

Despite the norms described above, it is a deregulated media system in legal terms (in the analyzed period), where the scope of the regulations limited the exercise of quality journalism, the capacity for innovation and development of public-state-partisan media (personal interview, March 9th, 2017), and the emergence of media that operate based on other political, economic, and professional logics (within and outside national borders).

In the state media "there are too many unwritten regulations that hinder work" (García, 2013, p. 139), so the editorial decision mechanisms manifest as deviations from the institutional norm (personal interview, April 6th, 2017) –or possibly constitute the norm-. In turn, in non-state media (alegal or illegal), the rules "come from non-concerted spaces" (personal interview, March 28th, 2017) and surveillance and coercive practices operate in them (García, 2019).

On the other hand, the economic-financial structure of the media (public-state-partisan) is key to understanding their professional limitations since the lack of autonomy to manage income, salaries, investments, and material resources is a problem as serious as editorial autonomy. Economic self-management would potentially favor decision-making on agendas, coverage, and content (Franco, 2016; Terrero, 2018).

The situation described coincides with what Voltmer (2008) pointed out regarding two fundamental characteristics of communist systems: the nationalization of the economy and ideological legitimation. However, in the Cuban context and the period under study, both are manifested as the result of an autochthonous historical process of centralization-statization and ideological tension anchored in radical nationalism.

Now, it is in the space of construction of autonomy (perceptual and objective) where the most important transformation of professional culture has been consolidated during the last decade, largely made possible by the political, economic, and social reform promoted by Raúl Castro, the permanence of the crisis in Cuban society, and the media policy that at an educational level stimulates intellectual development and critical thinking.

In the partisan-state media, practices of external regulation, control, censorship, and information management persist (García, 2013), which are neither homogeneous nor absolute. Faced with this environment, journalists have perfected their survival-negotiation, adaptation-subversion, and/or evasion-confrontation strategies.

At the conceptual level, such strategies have been expressed in the accumulated knowledge, largely favored by the academy, which has enabled greater professional capacities for social and political dialogue. In this sense, the most radical approach is based on the construction and socialization of a bold notion of professional agency, which is synthesized by Professor Julio García Luis: "no one is going to come one day to tell us: you got this far until yesterday; from now, you will get this far. That does not exist and will never exist. No one will speak for us. No one will do what we have to do. We will have what we earn, we will achieve what we deserve, and we will have the space that we know how to occupy. In the world of power, nothing is given away and nothing is added. Ideas, practices, and facts are the only ones that can move us forward" (García, 2012, p.37).

Likewise, professional positions have been reconfigured in regard to the constituted powers, strengthening the role of citizen service in the partisan-state media, that of monitors in the emerging media, and that of adversaries in the opposition media.

Now, neither the presence in the Cuban media system of a new pattern of news construction framed in loyal or legal journalism, as has been the case of the multinational channel Telesur (Krudtaa, 2013), nor the broad professional and political consensus of the UPEC conclaves (2013 and 2017) around the need to transform the media and mediations (Garcés, 2018), nor the diversification of the forms of distribution of information and consumption of symbolic goods of the population from socio-technological developments such as the Internet, have influenced a substantial variation of the propagandistic model of news construction in partisan-state media.

Then, at the structural level of autonomy, the most notable change has been the creation of, integration into, and sometimes expulsion from emerging media projects that operate on digital platforms and challenge the discursive, organizational, and material structures of the instituted media (García, 2017; personal interview, January 9th, 2019). But the establishment of alternative strategies of economic self-management is also appreciated, and the migration of the sector or abroad, which unlike previous periods does not necessarily imply a break with the profession or with the country (Aja et al., 2017).

Journalists linked to the partisan-public-state media system, although they recognize the political direction of communication, are committed to transforming external regulation (control) over the media by professional self-regulation (Elizalde, 2014). In emerging professional sectors, there is a tendency to recognize the role of the government in regulating public space but not the political leadership of the media (Díaz, 2017). Meanwhile, in those linked explicitly or not with hegemonic global powers, and in particular, with political organizations of the Cuban diaspora and the US government, the ignorance and opposition to the political system are radical (Sánchez, 2018).

The journalistic practice of the latter, the political opposition media, generates competition in narratives and interpretive frameworks; but the interviewees do not consider that they are autonomous from global political powers either (personal interview, February 20th, 2017; June 25th, 2018).

However, in this scenario the emerging media are particularly relevant, given how they are challenging the hegemonic position of the State, in terms of: a) ownership, b) structure of the press market, c) organizational connections between the press and external actors, d) promotion of alternative values to those established by the State, and, e) questioning the type of professional associationism (Olalde, 2016, p. 39). But also, because of their position regarding the global powers since: a) they recognize the legitimacy of the Cuban Government, b) they denounce the policies of regime change by the US government, and c) they propose a broad editorial plurality, which ranges from journalism inspired by the ideal of participatory socialism to another that aims to build a transnational nation.

Cuban journalism tends to position itself before a contradictory structuring of power structures: global and national. From there derive notions of autonomy and shared journalistic professional values "from other symbolic articulations instead of market logics or political pressure" (Olalde, 2016, p. 40). But such articulations are also

objectified in and through cultural-generational distances (personal interview, January 9th, 2019), the ways of valuing or not the labor force (personal interview, March 10th, 2017), and the relationship between external regulation, responsibility, and professional freedom (personal interview, March 29th, 2017; personal interview, February 20th, 2017).

The relationship between national security, nationalism, and autonomy in Cuban journalism, everything indicates that it will continue to operate even within the framework of the generational transition in the country's politics, the transformations aimed at a mixed economic model, changes in access and use of ICTs (Internet included), the trends towards the constitution of a transnational society, and the potential adjustments in the norms of the media system that derive from the implementation of the Communication Policy. But the positioning and agency of the actors concerning these values will increasingly express and accentuate the social - and political- diversity of society.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The meaning of Cuban journalistic professionalism during the period of the Presidency of Raúl Castro is more associated with a notion of public service that favors nationalist values, social justice, citizen participation, political commitment, and national sovereignty, and a training model of a humanistic and critical journalist; than to the autonomy or consistency of the rules with which the media system operates.

Media policy, university education, and associationism constitute socializing instances that shape journalistic identity in a context where professional articulations materialize, fundamentally, through multi-situated logics of political power (national and global) and opposition relative to the market.

Cuban journalists show a strong orientation towards the civic-citizen and vigilante-investigative roles, which are placed before and/or complement, with different levels of contrast, the loyal-facilitator role in its hypertrophied propaganda form. In turn, autonomy is limited by the intervention of the Party-State in editorial and economic-financial terms, the deregulated and/or regulated environment based on informal rules, and the inflection in professional and institutional decision-making of variables such as national defense and the political-editorial orientation of the media, both based on the historical nature of the US political conflict against Cuba.

The dichotomies of State vs. market or Politics vs. professionalization, lack explanatory potential to understand the relationship between journalistic culture and the media system given the multi-causality and interrelation of the constructs vocation for public service and journalistic autonomy.

Even so, the positioning of journalists from normative and discursive codes, and institutions or segments of the media system that operate according to different logics, reaffirms the conclusion of Elizalde (2014) regarding the correlation between the external regulation of the Cuban press and the loss of the professional culture of the sector, which is understood as political instrumentation of public communication (García, 2013). Furthermore, it allows identifying patterns consistent with those

registered in other communist countries such as China (Zhao, 2012, Repnikova, 2017).

In Cuban journalism, a dynamic of tensions coexists between the high political -and economic- instrumentalization, and the nature of its professionalization, constituted by journalism with a strong vocation for public service, and by journalists who develop strategies aimed at seeking greater conceptual and structural autonomy. In a certain way, these tensions are based on the contrast between a model that tends toward homogeneity, centralization, and diffusionism, and another that persists in diversity, decentralization, and participation/interaction.

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