

National Communication Policies: Genesis, reception and evolution of the concept in democratic Catalonia

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Abstract¹

In the 21st century, the field of communication policies studies has launched a timely process of revision of notions of 'communication policy' and 'media policy' in the light of changes observed in their definition, scope and praxis. One of the central aspects of the discussion is the growing strength gained since the mid-1980s by private actors, supranational political organisations and independent bodies with regard to the definition, adoption and implementation of regulatory measures, to the detriment of state government leadership. This article aims to contribute to that debate in two ways. The first is to draw on 1970s' Latin-American thought on national communication policies (NCPs) as cultural autonomy, democratisation and development tools. The second is to present how these ideas were received by a number of scholars in Catalonia in the 1980's and how they have re-elaborated the NCP concept on the basis of the importance of public communication policies for national reconstruction in a stateless nation.

Keywords: Communication policies, Latin-American thought, Catalan thought, Cultural reconstruction.

1. Introduction

In the first decade of the 21st century, the academic field of communication policy studies launched a timely process of debate on the need to revise notions of 'communication policy' and 'media policy' in the light of changes observed in their definition, scope and praxis (Van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 2003; Braman, 2004; Chakravartty & Sarikakis, 2006; Raboy & Padovani, 2010; Sel, 2010). One of the central aspects of the discussion is the growing strength that private actors, supranational political organisations and independent bodies have gradually gained since the mid-1980s with regard to the definition, adoption and implementation of regulatory measures shaping the framework for all activities connected with social communication processes, to the detriment of state government leadership.

In this context, the objective of this article is to contribute to that debate in two ways. The first is to draw on 1970s' Latin-American thought on national communication policies (NCPs), as cultural autonomy, democratisation and development tools. This theoretical and methodological proposal, which has only been partially considered in English-speaking academic circles, had a major impact on the international debate on communication problems that culminated in demands for a New World Information and Communication

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Order (NWICO) (MacBride, 1988). In the context of Spain's democratic transition, these approaches inspired a particular NCP theory to be formulated in Catalonia. Thus, by studying the specific case of Catalonia, the second way of enriching the mentioned ongoing academic debate is to present how these ideas were received and how the NCP concept was re-elaborated in a stateless nation that nevertheless has considerable powers of self-government and, above all, has its own deep-rooted culture and a profound sense of national identity.

In the 1980s, in the context of the restoration of democracy after four decades of hyper-centralist dictatorship, a number of scholars in Catalonia theorised about the importance of public communication policies for national reconstruction. Consequently, the intention here is to bring to the discussion the experience of proposing and promoting non-state NCPs that would have to be implemented by sub-state public authorities, the objectives of which often clashed – and still do – with those of their state government's. It is a case that has not always been taken into account in international forums (Gifreu, 2005; Moragas, 2008, personal interview, July 9, 2010). In this regard, the paper takes an interpretative approach. It attempts to identify the key elements of the Catalan proposal and to contextualise the emergence and further development of such a proposal. It aims, therefore, to describe and explain a phenomenon little studied and barely known outside of Catalonia.

This approach to the Catalan concept of NCPs is necessary and pertinent, not only because of the current international process of theoretical revision, but also because of the profound changes that Catalonia has experienced in relation to the cultural, economic, social and political circumstances that provided the backdrop for the concept's reception and re-elaboration in the now-distant 1980s. In fact, there have been several attempts since 2007 to reintroduce reflection on the notion of communication policies, as well as on the concept of *espai català de comunicació* ('Catalan communication space'), the central element of Catalan theory in this field, with the aim of renewing a discourse originally arising in a context that was radically different from the one existing in the 2000s (Gifreu & Tresserras, 2007; Gifreu, 2009; Tresserras, personal interview, September 2, 2010).

The article is based on earlier research undertaken by its authors in the 2000s on communication policies in Catalonia, communication for development and social change, and Latin-American and Catalan communication thought. In addition, it has been done a documentary analysis of more than 150 reference works for the purposes of this article², including major Latin-American contributions to NCP theory, key documents on the debate that UNESCO promoted in the 1970s on this concept and the NWICO, and the complete works of the authors forming part of this current of research in Catalonia – worthy of particular

² This article is one of the first outcomes of a wider research project on international and Catalan reflection on the concept of (national) communication policies. For reasons of space, not all of the reference works consulted for this research can be mentioned.

note is the work by Miquel de Moragas and, above all, by Josep Gifreu, both of whom are considered to be the main points of reference (Corominas, 1997; Jones, 1998).

In line with the interpretative approach of the article, documentary analysis was complemented with three semi-structured in-depth interviews. Firstly, interviews were conducted with the two lead authors of this line of research in Catalonia, Miquel de Moragas and Josep Gifreu, who, in the 1980s, introduced and disseminated the Latin-American concept of NCPs in Catalonia and put forward a Catalan re-elaboration of it. Secondly, a third interview was held with the Government of Catalonia's Minister for Culture and the Media in the 2006-2010 legislature, Joan Manuel Tresserras. A former university lecturer, he has contributed from this political position some elements pointing towards a renewal of the Catalan NCP concept. These interviews have enabled a deeper understanding of the process of elaboration and discussion of the Catalan NCP proposal, and the collection of important contextual elements for its correct interpretation.

The article is divided into three major sections. The first section summarises the most noteworthy contributions made by the Latin-American school of communication to the emergency of the NCP concept in the 1970s, as well as the international projection of this proposal in the NWICO debate. Greater emphasis has been placed on ideas that were subsequently revisited in Catalonia. The second section describes how the concept reached Catalonia in the 1980s and how it was reformulated by academia to meet the specific communication problems, needs and circumstances of transitional Catalonia. Finally, the third section examines the evolution of academic Catalan thought on communication policies in subsequent decades, marked by globalisation, the spread of new information and communication technologies (ICT), and the gradual strengthening of political decentralisation in Spain.

2. Latin-American genesis of the NCP concept and its international projection in the NWICO debate

While the adoption of fragmentary, partial and contextual political measures accompanied the emergence and gradual expansion of mass media from the mid-19th century, it was not until the 1960s that the concept of NCPs was formulated as a framework for analysing, planning and globally regulating national communication systems. It was based on the hypothesis that social communication is not limited to traditional media and their content; thus, the communication system would also include telecommunication systems, information technology, advertising, news flows, the publishing sector, journalistic work and training, communication research, interpersonal and institutional communication processes, and the whole legal infrastructure regulating communication activities (Schenkel, 1981, p.16).

Conceived originally in the field of studies of communication for development (Fernández Viso, 2008), this regulatory theoretical proposal emerged from the critical assessment of commercial media's and mass culture's contributions to the progress of societies of what, at that time, was called the Third World (Pasquali, 1964, 1967, 1978; Díaz Rangel, 1967; Beltrán, 1973). Backed by UNESCO, the NCP project was presented in the 1970s as a tool of cultural autonomy, democratisation and development for developing societies (Beltrán, 2005; Capriles, 1989; Fuentes Navarro, 1991; Gifreu, 1986a; Lee, 1976).

2.1. Background to and conceptual construction of NCPs

During the First United Nations (UN) Development Decade (1960-1970), UNESCO supported the formulation of national culture and education policies as components of nations' development and modernisation strategies. For its part, the UN General Assembly promoted the adoption of national programmes to strengthen the capacity of mass media in less developed countries, in keeping with the doctrine advocating the free flow of information, as well as with diffusionist and modernising theories on the role of the media as, at one and the same time, indicators and inducers of development (Lerner, 1958; Rogers, 1962; Schramm, 1964).

The design and implementation of these specific interventions on communication systems required a national planning endeavour that authors such as Pye (1969), de Sola Pool (1969) and Schramm (1964) did not hesitate to describe as political. Faced with the quantitative emphasis of this proposal, the precursory views of the Venezuelan Antonio Pasquali (1964, 1967) marked the start of the denunciation of the 'underdeveloping' effects, in Latin-American societies, caused by the purely commercial orientation of hypertrophied private media systems. He demanded the state's regulatory intervention in order to ensure the effective contribution of culture and mass communication to the progress of nations (Gifreu, 1986a, p.124).

The disappointing results of these early development strategies led UNESCO to instigate a critical review of existing research on the nature and role of communication in society. The debate commenced in 1969 with a meeting of experts in Montreal. Among other recommendations, it pointed to a pressing need to reflect on new objectives for mass communication systems, which could serve as guidelines for policy-makers (UNESCO, 1969). A year later, the UNESCO General Conference authorised its Director-General "to help Member States in the formulation of their mass-communication policies" (UNESCO, 1971, p. 59).

The definition, scope and specific ways of putting NCPs into practice required a series of UNESCO-backed international meetings of experts in communication throughout the 1970s. Due to their importance, worthy of note are the meetings held in 1972 (Paris), 1974 (Bogotá) and 1976 (San José de Costa Rica), and to a lesser extent, the conferences held in 1979 in Kuala Lumpur and 1980 in Yaoundé, where the role played

by NCPs as instruments of decolonisation was highlighted. In this conceptual construction process, Latin America became the most prolific intellectual community in terms of elements of analysis that it contributed to the discussion. Firstly, because of its pioneering application of the thesis of cultural imperialism and dependency to the study of social communication, showing that in the media systems of less developed countries, the invisible hand of the market does not work in favour of development, democratisation or social change, but rather for maintaining the status quo (Beltrán, 1973; White, 1989). Secondly, because it was the scenario for early legislative initiatives (Chile, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela) inspired on the NCP project's underlying philosophy of public service and democratisation of communications (Beltrán, 1976; Capriles, 1989; Fox, 1989a; Tello, 1989).

From the first meeting of experts in Paris in 1972 came an initial conceptual framework for communication policies, "sets of principles and norms established to guide the behaviour of communication systems" (UNESCO, 1972, p. 8), and several suggestions for their planning and implementation. Among the latter, worthy of note is the proposal to create Communication Policy Councils, in which all of the sector's actors would take part in order to decide on and coordinate NCPs. A more comprehensive definition of the concept – generating wide acceptance – was put forward by Luis Ramiro Beltrán at the meeting of Latin-American experts held in Bogotá in 1974: "an integrated, explicit and durable set of partial policies organised into a consistent body of behavioural principles and norms for a country's communication activities or processes" (UNESCO, 1973, p. 5). There was an insistence on the fact that communication policies should be linked to regional and national development policies³, hence the importance of the state in their formulation and promotion.

Regarding the scope of NCPs, it was specified that they should embrace all aspects of a social communication system, including the economic, cultural and technical infrastructure, messages content, the recipients' rights to express themselves, to inform and to be informed, and political communication processes. This focus required that empirical research activities had to be undertaken constantly and that participatory decision-making bodies had to assess and coordinate the policies. Finally, a further objective was added to the goals of NCPs: the preservation of national culture and sub-cultures (UNESCO, 1974: 9).

The Final Declaration of the Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in San José de Costa Rica in 1976, furthered the previous conclusions and linked discussion on the reform of national communication systems to demands headed by the movement of Non-Aligned Countries for a new international economic, information and communication order. Throughout the 1970s, the paradigm of cultural imperialism gained strength in relation to thought on NCPs (Gerbner, 1977; Mayobre, 1978; Reyes Matta, 1977; Roncagliolo, 1985; Schiller, 1975).

³ In the final document of the meeting, the concept of development is understood as being linked to social change and people's participation (UNESCO, 1974, p. 7).

Among the specific measures put to UNESCO and its Member States by that document, the following are worthy of note: to adopt policies that foster the emergence of more balanced communication relations, both nationally and internationally; to set up regional and national news agencies; to promote national film industries; to ensure every citizen's right to access and participate in social communication; to develop public media systems; to create new communication services and infrastructures; to ensure and protect freedom of opinion, expression, communication and information; to include communication in development planning; to form national NCP councils and regional coordination mechanisms for them; to allocate public resources to research on social communication; to increase the regional exchange of self-produced content; and to define a clear policy on the use of satellite communication systems (UNESCO, 1976, p. 25-45).

Strong opposition from the bloc formed by private media (national and international), advertising agencies and major advertisers, not only to any attempt to regulate the sector but also to the growth of public media, thwarted the implementation of most of those recommendations and of NCPs in Latin-American countries (Capriles, 1979; Quirós & Segovia, 1996)⁴. Part of the failure is also attributed to the time of the meeting, when authoritarian governments sprang up throughout the region (Fox, 1989b), and to the absence of a support base among political parties and civil society (Muraro, 1989; Pasquali, 1992).

2.2. Incorporation of the NCP proposal into the NWICO debate

The discussion on NCPs regained in importance in the context of the work undertaken by the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, set up in 1977 by UNESCO. The Commission's final report corroborated the global dimension of communication problems denounced in Latin America and documented the imbalances of international flows of information and culture (MacBride, 1988). It confirmed the idea that the free circulation of information defended by the sector's companies and by some Western governments was, in reality, a one-way flow that, moreover, represented a threat to cultural identities and national development projects of the Third World.

The MacBride Report also suggested strategies to resolve the problems that identified. Among these was the regulation of communication networks and international information exchanges in order to establish a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), a prerequisite for the New International Economic Order (NIEO) (1988, p. 79). NCPs constituted yet another tool for change, which, in this case, would be at the service of every state's cultural autonomy and development objectives and policies (1988, p. 351). The MacBride Report recommendations were never put into practice either⁵.

⁴ Of all the measures proposed, the creation of a Latin-American news service (ALASEI) and an intergovernmental information service (ASIN) were the only ones implemented.

⁵ Its proposal for the decolonisation of information and culture was something that certain national and international press bodies were not prepared to accept: nor were the governments of the United States and of Great Britain which, in view of the failure of their lobbying, chose to leave UNESCO in the mid-1980s, dealing a fatal blow to the NWICO and a very harsh one, albeit not fatal, to the UN cultural agency. Great Britain returned to UNESCO in 1997, as did the United States in 2003.

With the NCP debate being absorbed by the NWICO debate (to such an extent that one was practically mistaken for the other), the theoretical maturation of its initial proposal was cut short. Certain issues were avoided, such as the pressing need for the democratisation of communication processes, flows and systems within each country (Capriles, 1979, p. 123); the risk of state instrumentalisation of NCPs for authoritarian purposes (Motta & Silva, 1982); the lack of recognition of cultural and social diversity shaping 'national identity' (Martin Barbero, 2001, pp. 72-3); or how small-scale, anti-establishment, decentralising self-managed initiatives could fit into the macro-planning of the state (Bustamante, 1985, pp. 133-5). In the end, the change of perspective led to a reduction in the communication inequalities and problems taken into account, resulting in focusing on the control and manipulation of information by dominant centres, thus bypassing the importance of cultural processes (Capriles, 1979, p. 123). These concerns, however, have reoriented Latin-American reflection on communication policies in recent decades.

3. The concept's reception and re-elaboration in autonomous Catalonia

The debate raised by UNESCO on NCPs and the NWICO was followed with great interest in Catalan academic circles from the second half of the 1970s. It was particularly followed by a specific group of lecturers in what, at that time, was called the Department of Communication Theory at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) (Gifreu, personal interview, September 9, 2010; Moragas, personal interview, July 9, 2010; Guimerà i Orts, 2002).⁶

3.1. Historical context of the NCP concept's reception in Catalonia

According to Josep Gifreu (2005, p. 79), there are two main explanations for the interest aroused by the NCP concept. First, in the late 1970s, a new historic opportunity was opening up for the national reconstruction of Catalonia, and specifically for the recovery of the Catalan language and culture, in the context of Spain's transition towards democracy, after four decades of hyper-centralist dictatorship. Second, there was a certain sensitivity in professional and academic circles towards the central role of information and the mass media in processes of cultural and national assertion in the new information society.

In fact, in Catalonia in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was broad social consensus on the need to reconstruct the nation and to recover its language and culture, as well as to articulate its own democratic media system (radio and television above all) to help it overcome the consequences of cultural persecution under Francoism. Account should be taken of the fact that one of the very first decisions that the Francoist regime took after occupying Catalonia was to dismantle the whole Catalan-language and/or democratic

⁶ The UAB Faculty of Communication Sciences was, at that time, the only university centre offering communication studies in Catalonia.

media apparatus and replace it with a highly centralised Spanish-language one that was loyal to the new fascist state (Congrés de Cultura Catalana [CCC], 1978, pp. 69-70 and 128-9; Gifreu, 1983, p. 8).

In this context, a group of UAB researchers, led by Miquel de Moragas and Josep Gifreu, began to reflect on and research into the situation and role of the media in autonomous Catalonia. Their intention was to develop a research plan that would provide data, guidance and action programmes for the restored Government of Catalonia ⁷. They considered that research should play a key role in the diagnosis and correction of communication dependencies, and also in the theoretical underpinning of policies that needed to be applied (Moragas, 1983, p. xii; Gifreu, 1986c). As Moragas asserted, the objective was 'to know in order to act' (1982, p. 16).

3.2. Influence of Latin-American theses and of the MacBride Report

In 1982, appealing to the international debate led by UNESCO, Miquel de Moragas denounced the situation of dependence that Catalonia was experiencing in relation to the Spanish State, and called for the opportunity to formulate and implement corrective communication policies (1982, p. 16). At that time, a key element emerged: Josep Gifreu's doctoral thesis, which had been supervised by Moragas. In the preface, the latter asserted that this was a project for the construction of the theoretical foundations of a National Communication Policy for autonomous Catalonia (1983, p. xii).

In his thesis, which was based on extensive field work, Gifreu presented, for the very first time, a well elaborated articulation between the precepts proposed in Latin America and by UNESCO, and those considered in Catalonia, on the role of the media in national reconstruction. This author (1983, p. 10) pointed out that the international debate on the circulation of information and, more specifically, the debate on communication policies was of particular interest to Catalonia because, in the framework of the Catalonia's Statute of Autonomy, it raised the need for a policy and plan for national recovery that had to include a determined, decisive action policy in the field of communication and information, which had become increasingly vital to safeguard Catalonia's own language and culture. He analysed the state of the media system in Catalonia between 1970 and 1980, and concluded by describing it as centralised, minimally 'Catalanised' and hardly democratic. On that basis, and under the revealing title 'Por una estrategia contra la dependencia' ('For a strategy against dependency'), he proposed six lines of action to correct the shortcomings and to meet the communication needs of democratic Catalonia. In his thesis,

⁷ The Government of Catalonia (*Generalitat de Catalunya* in Catalan) is the institution under which the autonomous community of Catalonia is organised. It stems from a mediaeval institution set up in the 13th century and abolished in the 18th century as a consequence of a dynastic war won by the House of Bourbon. The Government of Catalonia was restored and given its modern political and representative function as the regional government of Catalonia in 1932, during the Second Spanish Republic. In 1939, it was abolished again by the Francoist dictatorship, and remained so until the restoration of democracy in Spain following Franco's death in 1975 and the subsequent transfer of powers under the 1978 Spanish Constitution.

Gifreu insisted on the need for democratic – and even people’s – control of decisions taken in that regard (Gifreu, 1983, p. 507 onwards).

For both Gifreu (1987, pp. 14-15; 2005) and Moragas (1982, pp. 14-15; 1983, p. xv; 2005), the interest that Latin-American theories held for Catalonia in the early 1980s was evident. Both scholars agreed on the fact that the situation of Catalonia’s information imbalance and cultural dependency on Spain was not very different from the situation of cultural dependency in countries of the so-called Third World (Moragas, 1982, p. 15). Consequently, its position in the international communication debate was objectively on the side of claims by those countries affected most directly by cultural neo-imperialism (Gifreu, 1983, p. 10). It was on the basis of this comparison that Catalan scholars linked the situation of Catalonia to the situation of developing countries, to the NWICO debate and to the MacBride Report conclusions and recommendations. However, this international debate was not received without a certain degree of criticism. In particular, the MacBride Report was reproached for its ‘state-centric’ approach, which meant that the imbalances and communication problems that other smaller-scale territories might suffer were ignored (Gifreu, 1983, 1986b, 1987, personal interview, September 9, 2010). In this respect, Moragas claimed that Catalonia should get the same treatment as the one advocated by UNESCO and the MacBride Report for developing countries (1982, p. 16; 1983, p. xii).

Both Moragas (personal interview, July 9, 2010) and Gifreu (2005, personal interview, September 9, 2010) consider that Catalan reflection had drawn greater inspiration from Latin-American theses on NCPs than from UNESCO precepts on the NWICO. Both of them highlight the importance of the NCP definition put forward by Luis Ramiro Beltrán in 1974, and of the fundamental contributions made by Antonio Pasquali. In this framework, the MacBride Report to some extent appears rather as a political argument, and an element of legitimization of the theses defended in Catalonia regarding its need for a national communication policy to design, implement and regulate its own social communication system, which would guarantee Catalonia’s cultural autonomy.

3.3. Formulation of the *Catalan communication space* concept

Catalan academic discourse on NCPs developed and broadened up to the early 1990s. The result was an original contribution to the theoretical debate on NCPs and their application to stateless nations. This line of research, also subscribed to by authors such as Daniel E. Jones, Maria Corominas and Joan M. Corbella, among others, gave rise to what some authors christened as the ‘Catalan Communication School’ and others referred to as the ‘Catalan approach to communication’ (Jones, 1998; Gifreu, 2005, p. 80; Corominas, 1997), characterised by taking account of the national issue and of minoritised cultures when studying communication policies and structure.

During this period, the most prolific authors continued to be Moragas and Gifreu (Corominas, 1997; Guimerà i Orts, 2002), while the most influential works were those of the latter of the two⁸. On the basis of the theoretical underpinnings of his thesis, Gifreu led two research projects that resulted in two key works in the field of Catalan communication thought: *Comunicació, llengua i cultura a Catalunya: horitzó 1990/Communication, language and culture in Catalonia: horizon 1990* (Gifreu, 1986b) and *Construir l'espai català de comunicació/Constructing the Catalan communication space* (Gifreu & Corominas, 1991). These works led to the creation of the *Catalan communication space* concept, closely linked to the notion of NCPs and considered to be one of the most influential notions of reflection on communication in democratic Catalonia (Corominas, 1997; Guimerà i Orts, 2002).

In 1984, Gifreu embarked on a research project with the general aim of re-examining certain aspects of his original thesis. The particular objectives were: to update the analysis of the Catalan media system; to broaden knowledge of the situation with regard to Catalan language and culture; to offer a prospective analysis; and to propose necessary political actions to correct any imbalances and/or limitations (Gifreu, 1986b, p. 19-45). The diagnosis for Catalonia continued to be one of dependency on the Spanish media system and of minimal 'Catalanisation' of the media. Confronted with that situation, an action plan was proposed, which was unquestionably a NCP: global, integrated, calling for a strong public leadership and oriented towards taking democratic control of the Catalan media system.

The NCP proposal for Catalonia aspired to create its own private media industry, both private and public (especially in radio and television, where there were considerable doubts about the financial viability of commercial media that broadcast in Catalan). It also advocated the protection and fostering of popular creativity and of local media – a phenomenon that has had a strong presence in Catalonia since the late 1970s (1986b, p. 275-306). Basically, it suggested democratic coordination and control of the whole communication and cultural potential that existed in Catalonia in order to ensure the system's 'Catalanisation' and pluralism as ends in their own right.

In that work, a conclusion was reached that would have a considerable future impact: the need to construct a *Catalan communication space* to ensure the survival of the language and culture. For Gifreu, it was a question of developing close collaboration with the other Catalan nations because the defence of Catalan national identity necessarily involved the strengthening of cultural and particularly language ties between and among the various Catalan communities (Gifreu, 1986b, p. 260).

Shortly afterwards, Gifreu initiated a second research project, which engendered the work *Construir l'espai català de comunicació/Constructing the Catalan communication space* (Gifreu & Corominas, 1991). Even though Latin-American and UNESCO theses had lost some ground to reflections on nationalism theories

⁸ Moragas continued to publish texts of a philosophical and reflexive nature. These texts, some of which were versions of his early-1980s' contributions, appeared up to 1988 (Corominas, 1997; Guimerà i Orts, 2002).

(Gifreu and Corominas cited authors like Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Anthony Giddens and Joan Francesc Mira), the basis of this work clearly owed a great deal to its author's earlier one (Gifreu & Corominas, 1991, p. 238 onwards). The influence of reflection on NCPs can be found in the definition of the *Catalan communication space*: the project of managing to articulate, through various mechanisms and actions of a cultural, economic and political nature, an effective capacity to exercise control over the organisation and operation of the general system of social communication present in the Catalan-language domain (Gifreu & Corominas, 1991, p. 28). On the basis of this premise, an action plan for all Catalan-speaking territories was proposed, very similar to the one proposed for Catalonia in 1986. There was also an insistence on the need for institutional coordination between and among the authorities involved, and for democratic control of the process, through national councils that would reflect the social diversity and ensure the pluralism of the cultural and media system to be built (Gifreu & Corominas, 1991, p. 231 onwards). However, the idea of democratising the design and evaluation of communication policies vanished from Catalan thought in the 1990s.

This contribution was the culmination of a decade-long project to lay the foundations for a NCP for Catalonia, and for the Catalan-language domain as a whole, throughout the 1980s. In the following decade, intellectual activity fell considerably on NCPs in general and on the *Catalan communication space* in particular (Guimerà i Orts, 2002, pp. 96-105). The few analyses undertaken on these topics in the 1990's were related to issues of cultural identity construction and the impact of communication and cultural policies of the European Union in this process (Gifreu, 1996).

4. Reflection on communication policies for the 21st century

It was not until the turn of the century that this line of research would regain strength. But, unlike the global approaches taken in the 1980s, the characteristic features of contributions to the debate on NCPs in Catalonia in the 2000s were sectoral and fundamentally descriptive; they described the system's components and not the dynamics of the relationship between those components. There has not been any further attempt to address a critical and purposeful analysis of the *Catalan communication space* as a whole, as Gifreu had done in the 1980s (1986, 1991), or an update of that NCP proposal to take account of the challenges posed by phenomena such as the Internet and the convergence of technology and business in the communication sector.

In 2000, the first edition of the *Informe de la comunicació a Catalunya/Report on communication in Catalonia* was published, edited by Maria Corominas and Miquel de Moragas. In its preface, the fact that Catalonia had its own communication space was underscored as a reason for producing the report. In

addition, tying in with the intellectual heritage of the 1980s, there was an assertion stating that the report aimed to become a support tool for communication policies that were so very necessary at that time of accelerated transformation of communication in the digital era (Moragas & Corominas, 2000, p. 6). However, the report only offers a description of the Catalan communication system's structure, without making any suggestions for a specific political action plan to strengthen the *Catalan communication space* or theorising on the NCP that Catalonia needs. This focus has been maintained in subsequent editions of the report (2003, 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2011).

For his part, Gifreu resumed research and reflection on this topic in 2003. In a study commissioned by the Government of Catalonia, he turned his sights to the audiovisual sector of Catalonia, which he described as 'strategic' in the 21st-century media ecology (Gifreu, 2003, pp. 7 onwards). He produced a document designed to guide political decisions that he considered vital to the survival of the Catalan language and culture in a context marked by European integration, globalisation and digitalisation (2003, pp. 7-8 and 12-13). In that work, the reasoned discourse is no longer based on Latin-American and NWICO contributions to NCPs, but rather on the concept of cultural exception (2003, pp. 12-14). In addition, he introduces the subject of the economic significance of the audiovisual sector, which, in his opinion, gives NCPs a strategic importance that goes beyond identity and culture. While the growing economic weight of the audiovisual industry is beginning to be seen as a potential driver of economic development, it is also seen as a threat to minoritised cultures (Gifreu, 2003: 12-14). In this respect, Gifreu acknowledges the need to have more empirical data available on the weight and scope of this sector in Catalonia in order to incorporate the variable into the reflection on Catalan NCPs.

This author drew on those approaches once again in 2007 for a conference and subsequent debate with Joan Manuel Tresserras, a UAB lecturer and, at that time, the person in charge of the Government of Catalonia's Department of Culture and the Media (Gifreu & Tresserras, 2007). As a starting point, both agreed on the need for determined political action in relation to the *Catalan communication space* since, according to Tresserras (Gifreu & Tresserras, 2007, p. 14), in today's mass consumption society, the current and future reproduction of the nation was necessarily political. Gifreu analysed the strengths and weakness of the *Catalan communication space*, and of its reference environment, where he found 'neo-Spanish identity policies' that undermined it (Gifreu & Tresserras, 2007, pp. 5-10). Almost no reference was made to the new digital media landscape shaped by the Internet. His political action recommendations were oriented towards the active defence of Catalan identity and towards issuing a demand to central government to devolve all powers on public communication matters (2007, pp. 11-13)⁹.

⁹ Josep Gifreu sums up his speech in this debate in a paper published in English nearly two years later (Gifreu, 2009).

Tresserras considered the need to renew the discourse and proposed a shift from *old* cultural policies aimed at recovering and maintaining what had managed to survive the Francoist regime, to *new* and creative policies yet to be designed and that would foster the emergence of a new popular Catalan culture, adapted to the new social environment (Gifreu & Tresserras, 2007). In fact, he suggested a notion linked to the idea of social policies, which he understood as being a substantial element of any policy for social cohesion, welfare, civic mindedness and democracy (2007, p. 28). Tresserras states that he conceives communication and culture as key elements for the general development of advanced societies (2007, personal interview, September 2, 2010), a reflection that would link them to Latin-American theses on NCPs and, in particular, to the postulates of Jesús Martín Barbero (2001). Moreover, he agrees with Gifreu on the economic importance of the media sector, a reason that further justifies the need for political intervention to create Catalonia's own industry (2007, personal interview, September 2, 2010).

A final, important and documented contribution was made to the debate in 2008. It was an article by Miquel de Moragas in the collective work entitled *Communication and Cultural Policies in Europe* (Fernández Alonso & Moragas, 2008). The author warned of the short-sightedness of the international debate on culture and communication policies in relation to the specific situation of European stateless nations. He also lamented the insufficient protection that the European Union offered to minority languages and their communication spaces (2008, pp. 278 and 280). In this respect, and recalling the legitimacy that the MacBride Report afforded to the first Catalan NCP proposals, Moragas considers that policies implemented to neutralise those processes of centralism and globalisation affecting Catalan culture could be legitimated by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, in force since 2007 (2008, p. 287).

5. Conclusions

In the 20th century, Western democracies justified the need for political actions on the media system and on the social communication system by alluding mainly to two socio-political arguments: first, the importance of the media as public sphere infrastructures and, second, the scarcity of the radiofrequency spectrum, which had to be organised in line with criteria of rationality and public interest.

In the 1970s, and in the context of international reflection promoted at the end of World War II on nations' development strategies and processes, Latin-American intellectuals highlighted the fact that their respective countries' culture and communication systems were responsible for maintaining the situation of foreign dependency that weighed down their options to overcome their social, political and economic backwardness. Consequently, they proposed a notion of national communication policies (NCPs) as enduring, explicit and

global measures aimed at changing that reality in order to meet the needs of welfare, democracy and autonomy for all citizens.

It represented a clear shift with respect to traditional media policies, which had been a set of fragmentary, partial and contextual measures. UNESCO shared the assessment of the situation, and reflected it in both the MacBride Report (1988) and the proposal for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) – although the international debate promoted by this organisation ended up being dominated by the rhetoric of decolonisation and cultural imperialism, to the detriment the Latin-American scholars' initial emphasis on the democratisation of communication flows and processes also within nations.

On reading their 1980s' works, it is possible to glean that Miquel de Moragas and Josep Gifreu found that perspective inspiring and relevant to their reflection on the situation in and prospects for Catalonia during the democratic transition. Thus, they took it on themselves to analyse the role of social communication and of its media in the reproduction or transformation of Catalan cultural and social reality. At the UAB, they developed and promoted a fertile line of research and thought on the relationship between the communication structure and communication policies in Catalonia on the one hand, and between those elements and the reconstruction of the Catalan nation after four decades of centralising dictatorship on the other. Their works tabled the issue of the significant role of media systems – and the political actions shaping them – in the strengthening or weakening of national identities and minoritised cultures, especially in stateless nations.

The project for a NCP for Catalonia and for other Catalan-language domain territories backed by the group of scholars forming part of the 'Catalan approach to communication' considered the construction of a *Catalan communication space*, as a requirement that would ensure the survival of the identity and the cultural independence of a nation in the process of reconfiguring both itself and its collective project for the future. In this respect, Moragas (personal interview, July 9, 2010) and Gifreu (personal interview, September 9, 2010) acknowledge that Latin-American theses on NCPs and UNESCO's support of the demands of the so-called Third World to decolonise international flows of information and culture – as a prerequisite for its development – have contributed arguments of legitimation to their initial proposal for the political organisation of the Catalan social communication system.

However, while that intervention programme included many of the measures suggested by Latin-American researchers at the conferences held in Bogotá (1974) and San José de Costa Rica (1976), it had the particular feature of attributing the role of promoting it to the Government of Catalonia and not to central government of Spain. In this regard, they clearly differ from the statist bias of the Latin-American thought on NCPs in the 1970s and 1980s and the MacBride Report approach to the issue. At this point, Catalan approaches forged their links to postulates on the protection of cultural diversity, which, over the years,

would gain decisive strength in their NCP proposal. Those approaches also have forged links to reflection on nationalism, which was clearly present in the foundational work of that theory: *Construir l'espai català de comunicació/Constructing the Catalan communication space* (Gifreu & Corominas, 1991).

Moragas has looked further into the arguments of cultural diversity in the international and state media environment, while the nationalistic focus has prevailed in contributions to the Catalan NCP theory made in the 2000's by Gifreu and, to a lesser extent, by Joan Manuel Tresserras. Neither Gifreu nor Tresserras have hesitated to assert that only political action would ensure the continuity of Catalan identity and of a stateless nation like Catalonia, a project in which the media play a key role (Gifreu & Tresserras, 2007; Gifreu, personal interview, September 9, 2010; Tresserras, personal interview, September 2, 2010).

The demand to open up the process for defining, deciding on and assessing communication policies to active social-collective and citizen participation has gradually disappeared from Catalan reflection as representative democracy has become consolidated throughout the Spanish State. The reflection of the 2000's on the political project for shaping a Catalan communication space and system has placed responsibility for their formulation on public authorities, either directly on government institutions, or indirectly on independent regulatory bodies such as the Catalan Audiovisual Council -the first one of its kind to be created in Spain after many years of reiterated petitions from Catalan academia.

The aim of ensuring every citizen's access to the media and to the process of constructing public discourse – another key element in Latin-America thought on NCPs – has also become diluted over time in the Catalan thought, especially from the 2000s. Instead, priority has been given to the opportunity to consume any type of cultural and news content in the Catalan language, without sufficiently stressing and calling for the citizen's right to communicate and to participate in content production processes. Assigning a significant role to the cultural and communication industry in relation to Catalonia's economic development may have led to the displacement from the centre of the discourse on communication policies of democratization objectives, citizen participation and the construction of a critical, vibrant and inclusive public sphere.

The emphasis on the orientation of communication policies towards the recovery and assertion of cultural identity – rather than towards democratisation of social communication and the national development, both of which are priority objectives in the Latin-American formulation – represents another distinguishing feature of the Catalan NCP proposal. In fact, the preservation of cultural autonomy and, above all, the standardisation of the use of the Catalan language have become the mainstays of communication policies recommended by academia in order to deal with the national reconstruction of Catalonia, thus eclipsing and even displacing other desirable objectives. For example, we hardly find any references to the importance of ensuring the pluralism of the Catalan media system itself, with measures aimed at giving legal coverage and support to non-profit media connected with social and cultural collectives.

In the current decade, however, the focus is once again on communication policies as potential development tools, although the understanding of the notion of development is mostly limited to its economic dimension. The strength of the cultural sector in the advanced capitalism of the information society would appear to justify the adoption of political measures aimed at fostering its growth in order to turn it into a source of wealth generation for Catalonia. This is an idea that can be seen clearly outlined in contemporary Catalan thought on the need for political intervention in areas of communication and culture (Gifreu, 2003; Tresserras, personal interview, September 2, 2010), although hardly any empirical research has yet been done to document the current weight of this sector in the Catalan economy. Rather more embryonic is the view that this intervention might be regarded as a social cohesion and integration policy in Catalonia, something recently suggested by Joan Manuel Tresserras (Gifreu & Tresserras, 2007; Tresserras, personal interview, September 2, 2010).

Finally, over the last three decades of the construction of Catalan thought on communication policies and structure, attention has constantly been paid to international debates on the situation of communication and culture. In this respect, while Latin-American theories and MacBride Report arguments were echoed in the 1980s, the theses in defence of cultural exception put forward in the context of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations, as well as UNESCO recommendations on cultural diversity, have been incorporated into this academic discourse in the 2000's.

This permanent link between Catalan reflection and discussions held on an international scale fulfils a dual function. On the one hand, it identifies intellectual contributions of interest to the elaboration of a particular academic discourse on the idea of a NCP for Catalonia. On the other, the Catalan scholars used these ideas more as a piece of political legitimation than as a scientific argument to sustain something that never ceases to be a political project: the national construction of Catalonia. The forced comparison between the situation in Catalonia in the early 1980s and the situation in Third-World countries in the process of decolonisation is a patent example of that, as is the use of the clearly state-centric MacBride Report to defend the interests of stateless nations.

Finally, with the first decade of the 21st century now over, there is clearly a need to update the academic reflection on communication policies as a component of Catalan national reconstruction, a line of research and thought that is still largely based on arguments made in and conclusions drawn from research undertaken in the 1980s, which was based on theoretical principles developed in and for other realities (countries in the so-called Third World). In this regard, the ideas put forward by Gifreu, Moragas and Tresserras in the 2000s on Catalonia's communication and culture policies outline some of the components that will need to be considered in this new approach to the topic.

This update is necessary for reasons of theory and, above all, of the social, political, media and economic changes that have taken place in Catalonia in the last 20 years as a consequence of, among other phenomena, the consolidation of democracy and political decentralisation in Spain, an increase in Catalonia's immigrant population, the globalisation of the Catalan economy, the technological revolution driven by the development of ICTs and the structural and functional transformations of media systems in advanced capitalist societies. If Catalan thought on national communication policies does not rise to the challenge of analysing the Catalan communication space in the light of these new circumstances, it may lose its argumental consistency and run the serious risk of becoming fossilised. Moreover, it will lose the vital drive that brought it into existence: the will to provide data, guidance and action programmes for the Government of Catalonia on the role of the media in the Catalan nation's future.

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