

Bringing down self-stigma: Media in prisons as allies for social inclusion

Derribando el autoestigma: medios de comunicación en prisiones como aliados de la inclusión social

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ABSTRACT

Media production within prisons can become an important tool for social inclusion of prisoners. This research explores these initiatives in Spain. Despite the fact that the efforts on media literacy as a tool for intervention in prisons remain invisible to the majority of society, and even to prisons, we have counted 39 different experiences in the Spanish context. Through a qualitative methodology based on in-depth interviews with 29 prisoners and 6 educators involved in these projects, we have concluded that these activities help to bring down stigmas and –even more important–, self-stigmas. Without claiming to be representative, the results show that these activities may become a valuable social insertion tool and also a personal transformation instrument.

Keywords: Prisons, prisoners, communication, self-stigma, media literacy, Spain.

RESUMEN

La producción de medios de comunicación dentro de prisiones puede llegar a ser una aliada importante para la inclusión social de los presos. Este estudio indaga sobre estas iniciativas en España. A pesar de que los esfuerzos de alfabetización mediática como herramientas de intervención en las prisiones siguen siendo invisibles para la gran mayoría de la sociedad, e incluso para las propias instituciones penitenciarias, se han contabilizado 39 experiencias diferentes en el contexto español. A través de una metodología cualitativa basada en entrevistas en profundidad con 29 presos y 6 educadores que participan en estos proyectos en cárceles españolas, se concluye que este tipo de actividades ayuda a derribar stigmas y –aún más importante– autoestigmas. Sin pretender ser representativos, los resultados demuestran que estas actividades pueden llegar a ser una valiosa herramienta de inserción socioeducativa y de transformación personal.

Palabras clave: Cárcel, presos, comunicación, autoestigma, alfabetización mediática, España.

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INTRODUCTION

That a prison—an institution where people are put away from the rest of society for committing a crime—shares the voices of prisoners over the airwaves, paper, Internet, or video may seem like a contradiction. But this is happening in some Spanish prisons with the aim of improving the prisoners' socio-educational conditions, and even as a therapy for persons deprived of their liberty. These media productions additionally aim to transcend the walls of prison¹ and reach society, in order to bring down the stigmas that exist towards prisoners and prisons. The present work emerges from a four years doctoral thesis that has tried to bring to light this fairly invisible reality for society, as well as expose ways in which communication can be a useful tool to work in prisons.

Thus, first of all, the research allowed drawing up a map of activities with media (radio, magazines, cinema, television and Internet) that have been made in the Spanish prisons for 25 years. As we shall see, this map includes 39 experiences of the 68 prisons in Spain. Unfortunately, there is no official census of these activities and, therefore, it is possible that there is one—or more—that has remained outside of this map. In fact, many of these initiatives do not have transcendence outside prison walls and, therefore, for this study we had to perform an investigation prison by prison or through some publications about these activities collected in the press or on the Internet.

In second place, we did a qualitative research, for which we chose five cases based on their prominent development or its uniqueness. In addition to visit each of these prisons, we made 29 in-depth interviews to prisoners; we also interviewed the educators responsible for promoting the activities of the selected sample. Thus, we intended to identify—from the perspective of these actors—the advantages provided by media activities within the prison, and determine whether the production of media in prisons can improve psychosocial and socio-educational aspects, as well as breaking inequalities for persons deprived of their liberty.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The fundamental legislation regulating the life of prisoners in Spain is the Organic Law 1/1979,

Penitentiary General (LOGP)², of September 26. In its preamble, a primordial aspect that gives support to this work is stated:

By firstly defending the re-socialization nature of the sentence, the Law intends that the punishable is not to be removed from society, but a person who continues to be part of the same, even as an active member, while subjected to a particular regime, motivated by its previous anti-social behavior, and aims to prepare its return to free life in the best conditions to exercise its freedom socially. (LOGP 1/1979)

In this legal context in which the Spanish prisons are immersed, there are communication experiences based on the production of contents in different formats (radio, magazines, blogs, etc), made by persons deprived of liberty that, accompanied by one or several educators, give a voice to the everyday life in prisons. These productions often “go” outside the walls and come to the society, but with little or no visibility. When they do, it is because the educators disseminate the materials, mainly via the Internet, through blogs, social networks or other media, obtaining feedback by the audience which, as we will see, will help to strengthen these activities and to the recognition of the persons involved. All this is part of a type of intervention that has communication as a tool, a communication linked to social change and that, furthermore, has a direct impact in an attempt to break social prejudices and the self-stigma of the prisoners involved.

BRINGING DOWN STIGMAS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Being a prisoner is a powerful social label and, therefore, a stigma that will pursue the person even if he complies with his sentence and with the society. Howard Becker (1963) held in his work that “the deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied” (p. 35), which will undoubtedly have repercussions in its family life, its affective life, its labor and social integration. These are echoes that will last for a long time, since there is generally discrimination which erodes the capacity of potential for improvement in the lives of these people. But it will also be the same person who internalizes the stigma, in a process that will take her to believe that her identity is as “the others” see it. Among other things, this happens by that mechanism that Goffman (1989) explains in the following way:

Further, the standards he has incorporated from the wider society equip him to be intimately alive to what others see as his failing, inevitably causing him, if only for moments, to agree that he does indeed fall short of what he really ought to be. (p. 17)

Hence, Goffman recognizes that along with the stigma of excluded persons, in this case the prisoners, there is also self-stigma, i.e. people interiorize the stigma and come to think that their identity is really like others see it. But, on the other hand, Goffman adds later, they also have the need to definitively refuse to see themselves as excluded without turning back: "His deepest feelings about what he is may be his sense of being a "normal person," a human being like anyone else, a person, therefore, who deserves a fair chance and a fair break" (p. 24). Finally, the author claims that no feedback, total isolation, makes that person feel fear of what is "alien", emphasizes her distrust and, therefore, seriously affects re-socialization.

Permanently being in a dichotomy of roles, from what should be to what it wants to be or what it can aspire, will also mark the attitude to life of the prisoner, becoming part of its identity. Constantly rebuilding itself against the frustration which represents to accept and be silent without any possibility of arguing back reasoning and decision-making, slowly permeates its life.

Given these conditions, we can assume that a good formula to break the stigma and, especially, the self-stigma, is to perform activities that give visibility to other aspects and skills that these people have and are—in many cases even for themselves—yet to be discovered. Specifically, the production of media that have eco outside the prison and, thus, the development of a media literacy (including the digital) inside their walls could be of great help against stigma and self-stigmas. This is how Cabrera (2005) indicates that "to develop projects for the social inclusion of excluded groups will mean to help them familiarize with the tools, processes and environments that accompany the unstoppable expansion of information and communication technologies" (p. 17). For this reason, we believe that the implementation of a project of media literacy in the prisons should start with several premises. In a first case, we should bear in mind an aspect which affects the rights of people, and that Gil-Cantero (2013) exposes as follows:

The right to education is automatically identified with a right of access to the cultural heritage of society, literacy, virtual literacy, formal levels of education, professional studies, etc (p. 54).

On the other hand, for the socio-educational work with prisoners it is necessary to "convert the inmates in active, participatory citizens committed to initiatives that facilitate their re-education and social reintegration" (Caride & Gradaille, 2013, p. 41). Insofar as we favor that inmates are integrated through their proposals, thoughts or criticisms in our intervention projects, we will achieve that they acquire a greater commitment to them. Finally, the deprivation of liberty should not extend to the other rights of the individual, not even limiting them: "Everything that can guarantee those rights or make the situation of the inmate more dignified should be, in addition to desirable, legitimately enforceable" (Del-Álamo, 2002).

The approach so far raised comes from a type of communication that can only have a social changing nature, i.e., it materializes in projects that are not designed with the formula of mainstream media, but intend to use communication as a tool for the transformation of this group of persons in prison. In this case, we prefer to frame it in the field of the "edukommunication" (education + communication) for social change.

EDUKOMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN PRISONS

In the perspective of communication for development, alternative communication or social change communication (Freire, 1970; Kaplún, 1998; Gumucio-Dagron, 2010; Tufte, 2012) communication is seen through a prism of participation, activism, community and development, all of which acquires greater meaning, especially nowadays, if we include the perspective of edukommunication. No doubt, citizenship being a part, owning and being empowered by the construction of discourses through media will have a greater impact if it is done from the knowledge, from an exercise of literacy and a critical approach. All this will be achieved with a true dedication to educating in media for social change.

Nowadays, the need of media-literate citizens (which includes both traditional media and information and

communication technologies) is pressing. Organizations such as UNESCO, the European Commission and the UN have promoted various statements and documents to defend such literacy and alert States to carry out media literacy programs both in formal environments (schools) such as non-formal (family, civic centers, etc).

In these matters, Barranquero (2007, p. 17) provides a number of premises related to educommunication for social change, which should also mark the intentionality of projects such as the creation of media in prisons. Among them, he highlights that the important part of the experience is not the final product, but the path undertaken to achieve it, where huge potential for development of skills and abilities, construction and improvement converge, which can be planned transversely along the process. This is important, but also important is the fact that it is the community that needs those changes that is making such activity. Thus, it favors their true empowerment through participation. The respect for culture, customs and life situations of those involved against the imposition of educommunicators becomes fundamental. In the same way, empathy, listening and trust must be permanent attitudes in the development of the work.

Another of the factors to be considered is the comprehensive look, the construction of networks, the exchange, in short, that will make the educommunication process and its outcome much more enriching. This implies the use of a proper technology, with a training period to make the users know and control the instruments. It also implies that the activity is planned in a longer term, without having as a constant pressure the dynamics affecting big media, with a more short-term look. In short, all of these are factors that facilitate a greater degree of success in this type of activity.

Characteristics of educommunication for social change as the above are useful for communicative projects designed to be developed in prisons, because in them the final product is not decisive; what matters is the process, the path, the acquisition of skills such as communication or teamwork, and, of course, the improvement of self-esteem and the quest for a better and greater social inclusion.

For all of the above, it is worth studying what kind of media experiences are undertaken in Spanish prisons.

Some have more than twenty-five years of seniority and others emerge with more recent perspectives, such as the promotion of digital literacy, the latter developed exclusively in Catalan prisons. To know what this type of experiences means, how many are there and the benefits for the people participating in them will be what occupies the following pages.

OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

This research has as general purpose, and following the completion of 29 interviews with prisoners and 6 to educators, to expose media experiences currently carried out in Spanish prisons, as well as checking if these workshops are useful for prisoners, if they favor their positive self-image and their expectations for the future. As specific objectives, we seek: (1) to expose the media production workshops held in Spanish prisons; (2) to know the relevance and usefulness for prisoners and educators of these media workshops; and (3) to identify how participation in the media developed in the context of prison provides positive expectations in the prisoners about their future.

The methodology for this research is qualitative, particularly because of its context and the profile of the research subjects. The interviews have a semi-structured format and NVivo 8 software was used for their subsequent analysis. The first step was to request the necessary permissions to conduct the interviews. At first, the investigation was rejected by the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions because, according to them, they had no record that such activities were happening in those prisons. After providing information in this regard, the permission was granted. The interviews, which lasted between 45 minutes to an hour approximately, were conducted between March 2012 and January 2013; only audio was recorded and then we proceeded to transcriptions. This task became a very time-consuming process, considering the difficulties with which some of the recordings had been made, mostly because of the space provided by some prisons to interview inmates and educators. Sometimes the interviews were almost inaudible by the structure of the room where they were recorded, with metal doors or bars by which the intense noise of the modules' hall leaked into

the room. As a result, we had to clean the noise and improve the file in order to transcribe in a faithful way throughout the conversation.

In this article we have selected a non-probabilistic sample and that data may not be extrapolated to the studied population. I.e., we performed a directed or intentional sampling, due to the features of the studied population and the context in which it is located. Note that for this study we did not collect specific data from the interviewees in terms of age, sex, cause of imprisonment, time of conviction, etc. In fact, the interviews did not have any premise concerning the inmates as a requirement to participate in them, beyond their will and commitment to the activity. As for educators, they all preferred not to share their socio-demographic data, although it should be noted that they were the drivers of the various media production projects and continue with this activity nowadays. Finally, we must point out that the amount of interviews between prisoners and educators varies, since the number of educators through workshops tends to be one and two, which demonstrates the difficulty to put in place and, above all, to maintain such projects.

Five Spanish penitentiary centers (P.C.) were selected to form the sample, briefly described below:

- a) P.C. Huelva. This center has had a radio project for eight years. During the first years it aired live, with a team of prisoners doing the connection from the prison to UniRadio (www.uniradio.es), a university radio station. Nowadays, and for four years now, after a training process in the field of literacy and educommunication for social change, these prisoners make their own program entirely from the P.C., writing the scripts, producing, doing the talking and technical labors. The current team consists of eight prisoners, who have the support of an educator. From them, seven are dedicated to talking and one to technical control. The program is called *El zapato roto* ("The broken shoe") and in addition to be broadcasted by UniRadio, it is shared by Facebook, Twitter and Ivoox, a platform where is broadcasted as a podcast (<http://goo.gl/mlbhhM>).
- b) P.C. El Dueso (Santoña). This center has one of the oldest radio projects in Spanish prisons, with 25 years of existence. It currently has two programs broadcasted in Radio Santoña and Radio Alto Campoo. The first program entitled *Abre la Muralla* ("Open the wall") lasts 45 minutes. It is weekly and focused on the activities that take place within the prison, sometimes with guests from outside. The second is entitled *Bailando con lobos* ("Dancing with Wolves"), lasts an hour, and is broadcasted once a month in the evening, coinciding with the full moon. It is a literary music fanzine. The station has five inmates who usually collaborate in both programs under the supervision of an educator.
- c) P.C. Quatre Camins (Barcelona). This project was born in 2002 with the support of the General Directorate of Justice of the Catalunya Generalitat that created a program called *Internet, programa de convivència* ("Internet, program of coexistence"). Originally, it was a paper magazine that, after the creation in 2007 of the Community of Social Educators in Catalonia, took momentum. An exchange of experiences and materials –also accessible for the inmates– began through Moodle, a platform created for educators. Usually, small magazines are performed in a podcast format. These productions are currently hosted on a blog (<https://espaitic.wordpress.com/dmagazines/>). One of the most important milestones for the team of people taking part in this workshop is the possibility for prisoners to access the Internet, thanks to the location of an Òmnia access point, a project promoted by the Catalunya Generalitat to train inmates in new technologies in order to prevent their social exclusion in this area. This project is conducted in the prison with the collaboration of different NGOs and other associations.
- d) P.C. Albolote (Granada). The magazine *La Voz del Mako* ("Mako's voice"), as defined by the inmates, is "a magazine made by inmates for inmates". The publication emerged from the initiative first of educators and then of inmates who, sometimes with enormous difficulties –mostly of material resources, such as printers or the paper to print the magazine–, do everything possible to maintain this activity. This magazine has gone through different phases. Its paper format has over twenty years and it is

distributed in the prison of Albolote, but thanks to the collaboration of external groups, their producers have had the opportunity to expose it and bring it to light outside the prison walls, through the blog <http://lavoz-delmako.wordpress.com/>. Thus, the articles receive the opinions of external readers. The project was selected for this research firstly because it represents the format of paper magazine inside the sample, but also for being one of the pioneers in transitioning to a blog, opening up to the collaboration of external collectives in the objective of training the participating prisoners.

- e) Seville P.C. Psychiatric Hospital. There are only two correctional psychiatric hospitals in Spain: Seville and Alicante. In Seville, 185 people that have committed an offence under the criminal code and have serious mental disorders are interned, since they are considered to be non-imputable, i.e. exempt from criminal liability. Specifically, the experience object of our study is *Onda Cerebral* (“Brain wave”). This program is entirely made by the inmates of this center, with the coordination of their educator. It broadcasts at 107.8 FM in Seville, with a range of just three kilometers. Overall, it is six hours a week of original programming, which includes interviews, sports information, humor and music. The radio broadcasts from a small study installed in a room next to one of the prison’s patios.

In the presentation of the results we chose –in order to safeguard the anonymity of participants– to use the following nomenclature: firstly, “P” to identify who is a prisoner and “E” to indicate that it is an educator. ‘P’ or ‘E’ are followed by the number assigned to the person interviewed (within its category) and a letter referring to the penitentiary (Seville P.C. Psychiatric Hospital = P...). This is an explanatory table of how the sample is distributed according to the chosen acronym.

RESULTS

First, we show the results of the experiences with media in Spanish prisons. Thirty nine experiences were found throughout the country, from which 14 are magazines, 3 television programs or experiences with films, 1 photography experience, 6 experiences with ICTs and 15 with radio.

After finding out more about the programs, we verified that these activities have increased presence in prisons in Spain, although those dedicated to digital literacy are still very punctual, only performed in Catalonia. Little by little there are signs of change, especially in radio experiences, which in some cases have more than 25 years. One of the conclusions of this research is that these projects are maintained by the goodwill of the educators, since the activities are not regulated within the scope of the penitentiary centers or by the prisons’ management centers. For example, as access to Internet is not possible from

Table 1: Explanatory table of acronyms used for the presentation of results by subject

Penitentiary center	Prisoners	Educators
Seville P.C. Psychiatric Hospital	P1P	
	P2P	
	P3P	E5P
	P4P	
	P5P	
P.C. Quatre Camins (Barcelona)	P6Q	
	P7Q	E3Q
	P8Q	
P.C. Albolote (Granada)	P9Q	
	P10A	
	P11A	
	P12A	E6A
P.C. Dueso (Santander)	P13A	
	P14A	
	P15D	
P.C. Huelva (Huelva)	P16D	
	P17D	E4D
	P18D	
P.C. Huelva (Huelva)	P19D	
	P20H	
	P21H	E1H
	P22H	E2H
	P23H	

Source: Own elaboration.

prisons, their placement in the network is also done on a voluntary basis by the educators and usually outside working hours. This has obviously meant a reinforcement, highlighted both by educators and prisoners, especially because the Internet enables the possibility of recording reviews – “Likes”, etc. – which show that “on the other side” there is someone reading them or listening to them. As stated by Correa-Urquiza (2010, p. 244): “Feedback is part of the phenomenon of consolidation of consciousness, a sense generated by the fact of being there for someone who listens, who responds, who contrasts. In other words, is the certainty that there is someone on the other side and that communication materializes, which reconstructs and gives sense to the process”.

As to the results of the interviews, were prisoners and educators were asked about the contributions of such activities, a clear example is the one of a prisoner and an educator who emphasized its value to connect them with the outside and their families, especially in the case of foreign prisoners serving sentences in Spanish prisons.

P20H: Firstly, because it is the only contact with the outside that many people have. Because it is true that my family comes to visit me, but it is also true that for a lot of people it is the only contact with the outside. Secondly, because those who listen to it here feel important, because it is not

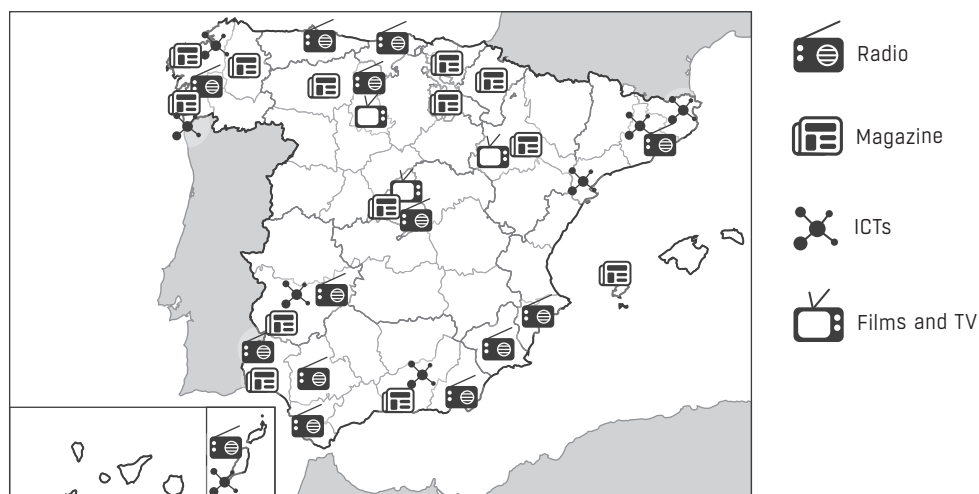
only the five or six people that make the program, but people who are in their cells who have transmitted their message, and it has been heard. Or, listen, this is coming out on the radio, but away from Huelva, or it is being listened by my family, and my family is listening to me.

E2H: Interaction, how they interact, and I love that families write and I love that families listen and I would love that families could see it. Among other things, so that in some way we took away the prejudices we have, that we still have in some things, of prisons, and that are not true.

Traditionally, mass media have served to perpetuate social stigmas through their speeches, as stated by Van Dijk (1984), one of the scholars who have analyzed the issues concerning racism, xenophobia and other forms of exclusion that can also be extrapolated to the field of prisoners and prisons. However, in the words of the people interviewed, it precisely stands out how these examples of media productions can be an effective tool to unseat stereotypes of society towards them and life in prison:

P10A: It is very nice, because it arrives to all the prisoners and into the street. People see us different. The people on the street do not know how we feel. People believe that prison is ohhh! and you see that here we move... People do not believe that there are people from all social environments here...

Figure 1. Map of communication media in Spanish prisons



Source: Own elaboration.

P23H: For me, as an inmate of a therapeutic module, it is also therapeutic. I stopped being in the courtyard, I no longer have habits that I formerly had, and now I interact with other people and, truth be told, it makes me prison stay easier and at the same time I am contributing, aren't I?, giving a different view of the prison to people from the outside, perhaps that is the greatest... perhaps that is what gratifies me the most, on a personal level.

For the following educator of the Seville P.C. Psychiatric Hospital, for example, the importance of the communication project in which he is involved lays in its therapeutic character, being radio, in this case, a useful tool for his work.

E5P: I think that radio covers a little bit what would be a respect module. It agrees with all the philosophy of respect modules, and it is a very valid instrument for that type of modules, and I think that it could be inserted in all... in the way of working a lot of things through the radio: respecting the opinion of the other... confrontation of ideas, respecting the turn to speak, active listening, all the processes of communication and interaction, the conflicts that can be worked through friendship. It is an instrument that gives many, many possibilities.

On the previous pages, we have emphasized the importance of including digital literacy in prisons so that there is a true social reintegration. This is precisely what highlights from the following educator belonging to the prison in Quatre Camins (Barcelona) that has this service, who does not understand why it is not generalized.

E3Q: Technologies are tools that we have to give them from here. If technologies are needed nowadays for reintegration they must exist, mustn't they? The Constitution says so and the Penitentiary Rules says that we have to give a solution to this, so putting technologies behind, for me, does not meet this precept.

Regarding personal contributions and changes resulting in prisoners from media activity, two of the interviewees in Albolote prison note that it serves as evasion, to improve their training, to create bonds of friendship, and even to reduce the self-loathing – self-stigma– that often affects them:

P12A: Before, I only thought on how to make a hole to get out of this wall... it is true. And then, I had a hole from whe-

re to exit, and you stayed happy and the thoughts that you expressed, people would understand them. And it gives you great satisfaction.

P14A: I am no longer the classic prisoner, who makes whatever he wants because we are prisoners. That self-loathing. This is a good opportunity.

The cloud tag (figure 2) –made through the qualitative analysis software– resumes which words are the most repeated in the discourse of the interviewed prisoners when asked about the changes they experienced performing these activities: change, talk, learn, life, capable... all of them primarily show a more hopeful speech than the one expected in an imprisoning context..

The arguments offered to answer if this activity has been a change are always positive. We highlight here the case of the following prisoner of Quatre Camins, who went from belonging to a youth criminal band to use his program to educate young people like him; from being the “bad” to try to be an example, which shows a huge change in his own way of seeing himself:

P8Q: I didn't use to enroll in these activities, because I was the bad one. I didn't like it, I liked to compete with everyone... I was on the courtyard... In the past they wouldn't have left me to talk to you. Now I can talk to you... My own people and all that... my gang... I could not speak with people and less of all with a recorder. It wasn't well seen. Now everyone knows what to say. I suppose that you've heard my program about gangs. I did it, because I was a member. Sure, it was addressed to these kids who are young and have the opportunity to save themselves, and be warned.

In the case of educators, they highlight the involvement with the project, responsibility, empowerment, all thanks to these activities, which have become an engine of change for the prisoners, and even for themselves.

E4D: I think there are changes at all levels. The most immediate is the verbal expression, changed by all this. But then there are other more subtle changes in terms of self-esteem, in assessment of themselves and others. There are also changes in the ability of dialogue, negotiation, undertaking things. The ability to undertake is amazing, because at the beginning they do not dare to do anything and then no one can stop them. The experiences they live here, and the people who comes here,

express emotions or the sense of responsibility are, in short, among the many benefits of this type of activities for inmates. On the other hand, they gain in safety, which until then had been almost unthinkable in their lives context. They are more open, flexible and value friendships. All of these values, as well as other socio-educational activities, are completely opposite to those generated elsewhere within the prison. Arnanz (1988) points out to that “the first destructive condition in Spanish prisons is prison time: inmates, the vast majority, are all day lying in the courtyard (...), their time is a time of nihilism, of psychic wreckage” (p. 29).

Also noteworthy are the specific benefits that participate in media programs have for people suffering from mental illness. Opposite to their companions, who are immersed by their pathology in apathy and widespread unwillingness, in an almost constant emotional and intellectual paralysis, those involved in *Onda Cerebral* station complete with the radio their usual therapy. Precisely, Correa-Urquiza (2010), in his work on Radio Nikosia, says that “not only they regain a place and return to the process of identity in motion, but they are also transformed into more powerful humans, more autonomous, stronger in relation to themselves and the constant social friction “ (p. 206).

Regarding how participation in media in the context of prison affects the prisoners’ future expectations, the interviewees agreed that it creates the idea of a more hopeful future. They talk about the importance of the change in attitude, also highlighted by educators. Media programs help them to change routines, as well as to learn how to better communicate and express themselves, understanding that this will come in hand both in personal and working relationships. This is therefore an advantage when facing what Valverde-Molina (2002) describes as the daily nature of life in prison, when he speaks of the “*quotidianization of life*“, referring to that living a day at a time that is the way of living of inmates. That, says Valverde-Molina, can bring them in the future significant problems of socialization, learning, labour integration, etc., although it helps them to survive at the time, “being hours, days and years with nothing to do, and unable to do anything, limited to the here and now” (p. 21).

On the other hand, there are prisoners who also considered important to have learned the internal

dynamics of the media. This is closely linked with the exercise of a healthy educommunication and media literacy, since it will give them greater autonomy and critical awareness. For educators, another of the aspects to be considered is the possibility that these programs offers to prisoners to keep in touch with the world, to be updated, to find information and have a say in what happens outside the walls.

This study suggests that creating a communication media in prisons requires much perseverance and will. As any other project of this nature, the instability of keeping a team that endures in time will need to be taken into account. In this case, itinerancy of the prison population, exits and permits, often result in the need to rebuild a team when there was already a stable one. Also, there is lack of resources or, occasionally, little predisposition of the prisons’ management. As stated by the Quatre Camins Center educator: “[I would like that] these projects were most supported by managements and that they gave more space, that they were more promoted from the hierarchy and that they had a value. I think that others—maybe not people who works in prison— but the general institutions or professionals in other areas, I think that they understand them as entertainment projects and do not see the educational value involved “. All of this finally means the abandonment of the project³. Only with a team of professionals who maintain the perseverance, energy and willpower, the project will go ahead.

As for ICTs, while in Catalonia the penitentiary institutions have their own autonomy and are carrying out projects of digital literacy with an important social impact and success in their development, in the rest of Spain there is still a fear of incorporating these tools in the penitentiary field. This void is a form of inequality and a decline in the formation and participation of prisoners outside the Catalan autonomous community, as claimed by Franganillo, Burgos, García and Thomas (2006): “A person held in prison for several years will have enormous difficulties to rejoin society and understand the changes in the field of technology if they had not had the opportunity to experience them and digest them during their imprisonment” (p. 103).

Lastly, as a future line of research, we consider necessary, in the first place, to perform a similar analysis of experiences with media at an international level, to be able to show that this type of activity has

an important trajectory in the case of some countries. It also seems important to carry out a comparative research between countries regarding their policies in this field and their impact not only in the prison population and their reintegration, but in society in general. The study also invites to continue analyzing the impact that using ICTs in prisons can have,

noting how they are embedded in other prisons in the world and, if possible, extrapolating them to the rest. Finally, this paper proposes that both policies and research aimed to claim the inclusion of media literacy programs, which have put their focus on formal education, open themselves to areas where social exclusion is explicit, as in the case of prisons.

FOOTNOTES

1. It is worth noting that not all media productions are necessarily spread outside prisons. This will usually depend on the will of educators. In all the cases analyzed in this study, the educators are responsible for promoting the diffusion either through the Internet or with the collaboration of local media.
2. See the full version in <http://goo.gl/WGGLj5> (03/17/2015).
3. One of the latest projects that failed to maintain itself in time, precisely because of the lack of support and resources, was *Radio Legal* (Legal Radio), performed by young people of the Bay of Cadiz prison (Puerto Real-Cádiz).

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