Media structures and the Press in Cuba, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, the Repeating Islands.

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In recent years, social scientists navigating the Caribbean archipelago have followed the path opened by Cuban economist and novelist Antonio Benítez Rojo’s (1989) influential work, Repeating Islands, to study inter-island connections. The trope indicates “that amidst the vertigo of Caribbean heterogeneity there is a sameness that proliferates endlessly. Each copy of the ‘island’ is both like and unlike the other. The ‘repeating island’ is not any Caribbean island familiar to us, but rather a construct that allows Benítez Rojo to explore the constancies and contradictions of the archipelago” (Aizenberg, 1994, p. 186). For Benitez Rojo, it is the complexity and repetition of a Plantation culture which have characterized much of the region economy, politics, history, ethnology and literature (Aizenberg, 1994).

The repeating island trope serves as cultural mode to understand the historical, economic, social and political contexts of Cuba, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, as one describe and analyze from a political economy viewpoint the major forces, actors, or organizations that dominate the islands’ media, their traditional and new media formats, the major regulations affecting it, the current conditions of journalism practice, freedom of expression and the press and the emerging media scenarios. As a construct recognizing the importance of the Plantation culture in contemporary Caribbean, it provides cultural and historical understanding to grasp the underlying themes and difference of the political economy of mass media in the three islands. Moreover, a new point of view to understand media industries’ development in the Spanish Caribbean after the ground breaking 1990 studies in Mass Media and the Caribbean, edited by Surlin and Soderlund, is needed, one that grasps the complex articulations of progress advancement and democratic rationalism in the region. Hence, in bringing to the forefront the Plantation as a system of thought embedded in commonsense knowledge for comprehending contemporary Spanish Caribbean
societies, the repeating island trope provides better appreciation of their inconsistencies in social cohesion and political development and their complex articulations of traditions and alternative modernities, in which multiple logics of development coexists.

Surlind and Soderlund point out that the Caribbean media categorization presented in their book draws from Picard (1983) and Siebert, Peterson & Schramm (1956) notion of liberal press. This ideal of free and autonomous mass media and press follows the liberal legacy which “trust[s] the press to monitor itself, to check governmental abuse, and to perform in an ethically responsible and professional manner” (Gerhardt, 1992, p. 1028). One might add that, overall, media descriptions in Surlind and Soderlund book tuned with discussions carried during the 1970’s and 80’s on “the problems of communications in contemporary society as seen against the backdrop of technological progress and the developments in international relations” (Altschull, 1984, p. 218). These debates were crucial in UNESCO’s 1980 report “Many Voices One World”, commonly refer to as the Mac Bride Report on New World Information Order. Regarding the English-speaking Caribbean, the establishment of the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication was pointed as an example of the reports’ impact on Caribbean media and media structures (Brown, 1990. p. 262).

Nonetheless, although process of mass media development has been market-led in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico (Brown, 1990; Sánchez Ruiz 2006) and “Cuba worked to develop a new world-market oriented sector, based on the massive expansion of international tourism and an opening up of the economy to joint-venture enterprises with foreign capital” (Hoffmann, 2004, p. 140), the long-term effects of the report have been very limited (Fuchs, 2015; Sánchez Ruiz, 2005). But nevertheless, one of its main legacies has been maintaining at various levels of society in Latin American and the Caribbean an on-going discussion on the need for regulation providing access to public
information (Michener, 2010; Hoffmann, 2011). This is discussion that, in the case of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, denounces high level of commercial media concentration ownership (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2014; Global Media Monitoring Project [GMMP], 2015), while in Cuba might serve to explain the “emergence of a self-assertive ‘citizenship from below’, which demands, and to some degree enacts (empowered by digital and web-based technologies), a widening of the public sphere and a greater degree of citizen autonomy from the state, leading to a different type of civil society activity” (Hoffmann, 2011, p. 25).

The academic literature to often has grouped mass media in Cuba (Carty Jr, 1990), the Dominican Republic (Alisky, 1990) and Puerto Rico (Subervi-Velez, Hernández-López & Frambes-Buxeda, 1990) within the unescapable dichotomy of authoritarian state-socialist economy and a capitalist market-oriented economy. However, as foretold in Surlind and Soderlund’s (1990) last two chapters on Calypso (Manning, 1990) and Reggae (Wilson 1990), one cannot bypass the fastened complex and deeply intertwined interactions between cultural and economic factors, to understand the complexities of media structures, its technologies, its narratives, its formats and their role in society’s transformations. In studying mass media in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, the repeating island trope allows social scientists to move beyond this dichotomy, while recognizing the islands’ political, economic, social and cultural specificities.

The present study places the analysis of mass media in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico within a continuous process of transition and transformation towards democratization, interlocked to current international forces of neoliberal-globalized financial and economic structures and the cultural transformations this
entails. As the three islands approached the end of 21st century second decade, the Plantation culture-repeating island system of thought allows for understanding of the course taken by mass media industries within the context of Caribbean neoliberalism, after Surlind and Soderlund’s Cold War-Soviet bloc contexts descriptions. Since 1990 Cuba has been undergoing a continuous transition-like state, of an authoritarian socialist-state in a process of re-articulating socialism in the new international neoliberal context, with no provisions for a market economy or pluralization within the society (Hoffmann, 2003 & Hoffmann, 2004). Moreover, the International Monetary Fund finds the Dominican Republic a regional star growth performer (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2016), however, the island carries a 2000-2015 averaged unemployment rate of 15.40% (Trading Economics, 2016), as well as and eroding rule-of-law. Furthermore, Puerto Rico finds itself trapped as “[...] a territory appurtenant and belonging to the United States, but not a part of the United States within the revenue clauses of the Constitution [...]” (Downes v Bidwall, 1901; Torruella, 2007), ruled since June 30 2016 by a Financial Oversight and Management Board whose supremacy “reaches over any general or specific provisions of territory law, State law, or regulation that is inconsistent with [the Board]” (Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act 48 USC 2101, 2016), and is plagued by corruption and an unpayable government debt (Quiñones-Pérez & Seda-Irizarry, 2016).

A. Media Ownership: The major forces, actors, or organizations that dominate the media

Except for Cuba, the most important media outlets in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico for the last five decades have been commercial, privately own, market oriented enterprises. Changing forces of the global media sector during the last three decades, such as internationalization of media industries, concentration and
conglomeration of media organizations, and diversification of media products, have transformed forces, actors or organization that exert media control and ownership of media distribution venues in the three islands. These forces have had its impact on media ownership in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. As in other parts of Latin America, a rapid monopolization of the media in both islands by powerful private sector players has disqualify citizens and helped entrench those elites in power (Podesta, 2016). The long list of government and business elite members holding control and owning the islands’ organizations and media groups resembles a plantation culture socioeconomic matrix where human relationships are more individualistic, more dynamic and families are held together through marriages, compadrazgo ties and clientelism (Benitez Rojo, 1989). However, it has been the emergence of new media in Internet (Manovich, 2001; Dewdney & Ride, 2006) that has permitted new venues of ownership to occur not only globally but also in the Spanish Caribbean, as Cuban Yoani Sánchez’s 14 y medio generación y blog, Dominican Republic’s El Grillo and Puerto Rico’s Centro de Periodismo Investigativo exemplify. The Internet networking and hyper media freedom in Caribbean new media follow centuries long contraband piracy and bandits’ tactics to override government, self and cultural forms of censorships and promote new social, economic and cultural formations (Hobsbawm, 2000; Ludlow, 2001).

The media elite in Cuba, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, regardless of centralized or market economy to exercise control and ownership over mass media structures, follows Palmas’ (2016) description. “The unique comparative advantage of Latin America’s oligarchies seems to lie precisely in being able to use different institutions (often quite astutely) — and in being flexible enough to enlarge its membership to include individuals coming from these ‘center-left’ coalitions — in order
to keep achieving their fairly immutable goals. In other words, few oligarchies in the world have shown such skills in their struggle for the “persistence of élites” despite the otherwise substantial institutional change” (Palma, 2016, p. 6). The Castro family in Cuba, the Corripio in Dominican Republic or the Ferré Rangel in Puerto Rico are three of the oligarchies that exercise power and control in three repeating islands lacking a stable class formation while help reconfigure what constitutes an upper-class identity structure in each island through family ties and kinship, like the restoration of class power of the neoliberal project (Harvey (2007). Available data shows that the neoliberal economic project “was from the beginning a project to achieve the restoration of class power” (Harvey, 2007, p. 16). Whether from an idea of class in a totalitarian or a free-market regime, media ownership and the various ways to exercise its control in the three islands follow much of the trends of the neoliberal project such as fusion of media ownership and management in the three islands and in Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, reducing the gap between capital and production earnings by connecting themselves with the world of finance.
1. Cuba

The Cuban government has kept tight ownership and control of the island’s traditional print and electronic media outlets through the Ministry of Communications created in March 2013 and substituting the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications which had been established in 2000. It regulates, directs, supervises and controls the policy of the Cuban State and government regarding telecommunications, information technology, electronics, postal services, automation, infrastructure for radio and television transmission and the administers the radio-electric spectrum. Under its tutelage are the various organizations handling electronic mass media, Internet and telecommunications. Current conditions of slow and gradual changes such as allowing newspapers and television to promote criticism sessions, where citizens could complain about public services (Marreiro, 2014), make UPEC, ICRT, RADIOCUBA, ETESCA and LACATEL the organizations affecting directly mass media circulation in Cuba.
“The Unión de Periodistas de Cuba (Union of Cuban Journalists, UPEC) was constituted on July 15, 1963, as an expression of the will of Cuban journalists to organize for the defense of the Cuban Revolution, national independence and the exercise of the profession” (UPEC, 2016). UPEC organizes the press in each provincial capital of Cuba. There are various branches, one groups print media journalists, with delegates in each national newspaper. Granma became in 1965 the only nationally distributed newspaper, followed by Granma Internacional in 1966. The government owns two other national newspapers Trabajadores and Jueventud Rebelde, which are distributed weekly. Another UPEC division gathers journalists belonging to the Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión, ICRT - Cuban Institute of Radio and Television. ICRT is the agency in charge of directing, executing and controlling state and government policies for radio and television in Cuba. Created in 1962 as the Instituto Cubano de Radiodifusión (Cuban Broadcast Institute), in 1976 became known as ICRT. The Institute takes charge of radio and television programming throughout the entire island.

It has been pointed out that “Cuba has embarked on a gradual but irreversible dismantling of its centralized economic system” (Marreiro, 2014, p. 4) a process that the Cuban government intends to do slowly (Piccone, 2015; Birnbaum, et. al., 2016). Information technologies industries and digital broadcasting services have become major forces and important organizations of these ongoing transformations across the island. Empresa de Telecomunicaciones de Cuba S.A. (ETESCA) provides telephone, wireless and Internet services. Conceived in 1964 as a telecommunications laboratory for applied research, LACETEL, Instituto de Investigación y Desarrollo De Telecomunicaciones, oversees since 2013 the digital television transition in Cuba. Created in 1995, Empresa de Radiocomunicación y Difusión de Cuba (RADIOCUBA) supervises transmission of radio and television networks and stations.
Through LACETEL’s undertakings, Cuba adopted in 2013 Chinese Digital Terrestrial Multimedia Broadcast, DTMB, digital television standard. Transmissions began in Havana, covering the rest of the provincial capitals in 2014. Analogue television signal switch off is expected by 2021. The Cuban Television Portal (2016) lists five national television networks (Cuba Visión, Tele Rebelde, Canales Educativos 1 and 2, Multivisión and Canal Clave), all transmitting through digital terrestrial signal along with Venezuela’s TeleSur, a channel of children's animated programing, a music channel and Cuba Visión International. Each province has a television station, being one of the most important one Canal Habana, which “is often mentioned as one of Cuba's best TV channels since it is innovative, more critical and a "young" channel” (Krudttaa, 2013, p. 18).

The digital sphere shows that “digital newspapers and/or magazines, some of them with veiled support from the communist government, are trying to dispute readership and market in the island and abroad with state controlled media outlets” (Marreiro, 2014, p. 6). Official Cuban media websites provide directories to the online services of the once traditional print and broadcast media and newly virtual ones. The Cuban Radio Directory (2016) lists six national radio stations, eighteen regional stations and twenty-five municipal ones. The most important radio stations are the six-government operated AM/FM national radio networks: Radio Progreso, Radio Reloj, Radio Rebelde, Radio Musical Nacional, Radio Enciclopedia, CMBF Radio and the radio station for tourists Radio Taino. Radio Havana Cuba is the official Cuban international short-wave radio broadcasting service. Radio Cubana (2016) records ninety-four Internet radio stations located across the island’s provinces, in addition to numerous local print and broadcast outlets. The Cuban Press Directory (2016) lists four government owned national newspapers (Granma Diario, Juventud Rebelde, Periódico
Trabajadores, and El Economista de Cuba) and one international (Gramma). Although
the distribution of independent printed newspapers and magazines remains illegal, the
Catholic church newspaper and website, Espacio Laical, “has become a focal point in
the public debate on ongoing economic reforms” (Marreiro, 2014, p. 5).

2. Dominican Republic

The 2010 Latin America Public Opinion Project, Barometer of the Americas
survey, sponsored by Vanderbilt University and United States Agency for International
Development (USAID) and conducted in 26 countries in the region, concludes that mass
media and the Catholic Church are the most trusted institutions in the Dominican
available for analysis of the island’s media. However, there is sufficient facts and
information to affirm that power and control over Dominican media is exercised by
three clouts: government corporations, media labor union and private media groups.
“Media companies are mostly private and pluralistic, though ownership is highly
concentrated” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI, 2016, p. 8). Privately owned media groups,
including various religious, cultural and sports interest associations owns 95 % of
broadcast media (UNESCO, 2013). Dominican Institute for Telecommunications
(Instituto Dominicano de las Telecomunicación, INDOTEL) lists sixty-nine open
television channels across the island transmitting through analogue VHS-UHS
frequencies (analogue switch off is schedule for 2021), ATSC Standard Terrestrial
Digital Signal and ninety cable companies. There are 146 AM radio stations and 233 FM stations (INDOTEL, 2016). Five media groups own the eight national distributed newspapers. Corripio Communication Group publishes four newspapers and the rest are published by Multimedios del Caribe, Grupo Diario Libre, Nuevo Diario S. A. and Metro International S. A.

Government own Corporación Estatal de Radio y Televisión runs Radio Televisión Dominicana television channel 4-17 and radio stations, Quisqueya 96.1 FM, Dominicana 98.9/99.9 FM and Radio Santo Domingo 620 AM. INDOTEL, a government autonomous corporation, oversees and promotes telecommunication development in the island, through trustworthy, sustainable and effective competition among providers (INDOTEL, 2016). In 1991, the Dominican government re-enacted the 1981 law that created the Dominican College of Journalists (Colegio Dominicano de Periodistas, CDP). The College is a voluntary, union forbidding, public institution, make up of journalism professionals. It members are those whose “main, regular and remunerated occupation for subsistence is to search, obtain and release information or opinions in periodical publications, in audiovisual media, in organizations news departments and news and information distribution agencies” (Ley 10-91). Graduates from journalism and communication university programs can also join the College.

The Dominican media labor union was originally founded in 1965 as National Union of Professional Journalists (Sindicato Nacional de Periodistas Profesionales, SNPP). After the 1981 government CDP founding, SNPP became in 1988 the National Union of Press Workers (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Prensa, SNPT). Joining journalists were photojournalists, television news cameramen and the various new professionals in the journalism guild. Through collective bargaining and government endorsement, SNTP has achieved salary increases and some medical,
housing and tax benefits for union members. It has promoted continuing education through educational activities, seminars and workshops. By way of arrangements with universities, it encourages guild members to obtain their academic degrees in journalism or other communication related professions. SNTP has twenty-nine branches throughout the national territory with its own board of directors and specific organizational structure.

**Media Ownership in Dominican Republic**

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<th>National Newspapers Content Organizations</th>
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<td>1. Corripio Communications Group</td>
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<td>2. Multimedios del Caribe</td>
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<td>3. Grupo Diario Libre</td>
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<td>4. Nuevo Diario, S.A.</td>
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<td>5. Metro International, S.A.</td>
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<td>3. Grupo Telemicro Media Group</td>
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<td>4. Multimedios Teleradio América</td>
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<td>5. Grupo López Comunicaciones</td>
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<td>6. Radio Televisión Dominicana</td>
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<td>5. Grupo López Comunicaciones</td>
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<td>6. Grupo Bermúdez</td>
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<td>7. Albavision Media Group</td>
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<td>8. Radio Televisión Dominicana</td>
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<th>Multimedia Digital Telecommunications</th>
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<td>2. Grupo Telemicro Media Group</td>
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Media ownership in the Dominican Republic is concentrated in nine important private interest groups, being *Radio Televisión Dominicana* the only government own media system. *Metro International, S. A.* is a Swedish media company based in Luxembourg and *Albavision Media Group* is a Miami based Latin American media network. The other media holdings are owned by Dominican business men and their families. Five family possess multimedia companies that bring together newspapers, radio, television or multimedia digital telecommunications. Two businessmen manage newspapers in print and digital formats. Radio and television stations hold by *Radio Televisión Dominicana, Carripio Communications Group, Multimedios del Caribe, Grupo Telemicro Media Group, Multimedios Teleradio América, Grupo López*
Comunicaciones, Grupo Bermúdez and Albavísion Media Group transmit through analogue and digital frequencies, cable and Internet.

José Luis Corripio, owner of Corripio Communications Group, holds television channels Telesistema 11, Teleantillas 2 and Coral 39, and radio stations HIJB 830 AM and La Nota Diferente 95.7 FM. Corripio also owns Digo Interactive Media Network and four national print newspapers: Hoy, El Día, Listín Diario and El Nacional. Manuel Estrella and Félix García own Multimedios del Caribe. This media group agglutinates the national newspaper El Caribe, television channels CDN37 and CDN2, and the CDM radio stations, FM 92.5 and AM 1040. Both Estrella and García are also know for the various business enterprises. Estrella owns one of the main construction companies in the island, while García is in the agro-industrial business. The third media holding, Grupo Telemicro Media Group (Televisión & Microondas RAFA S.A) owned by Juan Ramón Gómez Díaz, controls two television networks: Telemicro Canal 5, Digital Canal 15, Telecentro Canal 13 and Canal 31. The Telemicro group also owns Primera 88.1 FM, Independencia 93.3 FM and Mortal 104.9 FM. It operates a national cable TV company, TRICOM, and a wireless telephone company, SATEL-VIVA. Luis García Crespo owns Multimedio Teleradio América, managing Canal 45, Neón 89.3 FM, Studio 88.5 FM, Radio HIZ 730 AM. Grupo López Comunicaciones, owned by Juan López, controls AME-Canal 47, Radio Disco 106.1 FM, Escape 88.9 FM, Fuego 90.5 FM, MiXX 104.5 FM and 690 AM. Domingo Bermúdez and Grupo Bermúdez own Color Visión, Canal 9. After a legal battle involving the Dominican Senate refusal to allow the sale of Antena Latina, channels 7 and 21, by majority stakeholders, José Miguel Bonetti Guerra and his family, Remigio Ángel González, owner of Miami based Latin American media network Albavísion, became the network’s main shareholder. The deal has been widely criticized by Dominican press after findings of González’s
illegal government operations in Guatemala and Costa Rica and the way he has used figureheads to acquire television and radio stations in ten Latin American countries (Sacayón Madrigal, 2016). Manuel Arturo Pellerano Peña and his son Manuel Arturo Pellerano García own Grupo Diario Libre. Pellerano Peña was sentenced in 2008 to eight years in prison, accused of the fraudulent bankruptcy of Banco Nacional del Crédito (Bancrédito). However, in 2012 the Dominican Supreme Court annulled the sentence. Pellerano Peña is not the only media owner to be prosecuted for banking fraud. Likewise, Ramón Báez Figueroa, owner until 2003 of the country's largest media group, including Listín Diario, four television stations, a cable television company, and more than 70 radio stations, was charged with bank fraud and money laundering in 2008, following the collapse of Banco Intercontinental, BANINTER. He was released from jail in 2013 after serving in prison five of the ten-year sentence.

3. Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico´s ruined economy was trending topic of European and United States press from 2011 on (The Economist, 2011), when the US territory began efforts to restructure its unpayable bond debt. The total collapse of the island’s economy by 2015 prompted United States President, Barack Obama, to ask US Congress for enactment of Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA). The Act became Public Law 147-187 on June 30, 2016, creating an Oversight Board to manage and generate a method for Puerto Rico “to achieve fiscal responsibility and access to the capital markets” (Act 48 USC 2101, 2016). The Act ratifies “article IV, section 3 of the
Constitution of the United States, which provides Congress the power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations for territories” (Act 48 USC 2101, 2016), thus giving the Board power over territory and State law in Puerto Rico. Congress passed PROMESA after the United States Supreme Court assented on Puerto Rico’s belonging to the United States, but not a part of the United States territorial-colonial status in two important cases that dealt with the island’s jurisdictional powers. The first case was decided on June 9, 2016, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Petitioner V. Luis M. Sanchez Valle, Et Al. On Writ of Certiorari to the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico (No.15-108), and the second on June 13, 2016, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Et Al. V. Franklin California Tax-Free Trust Et Al. Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit (No. 15-233). President Obama chose seven members, experts in finance and law, four are Puerto Ricans (Williams Walsh, 2016) and members through family ties or kinship to the island’s financial, media, real state, political and corporate oligarchies. The island’s troubled economy has had its impact on media industries, leaving two media groups in control of the only three national newspapers, El Nuevo Día, Primera Hora and El Vocero. Bankruptcies have brought capital venture groups and a private equity fund managers to take over long settled media corporations and mergers have narrowed competition among radio, television or multimedia digital telecommunications industries.
The most important media conglomerate in Puerto Rico is Grupo Ferré Rangel, GFR Media. It is a business, banking, media, cultural empire and family succession,

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<td><strong>Newspaper-Content Print Media</strong></td>
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| 1. Grupo Ferré Rangel  
*El Nuevo Día*  
*Primera Hora*  
*Índice* |
| 2. Grupo Publi Inversiones  
*El Vocero* |
| 3. Metro International  
*MetroPR* |
| 4. Latin Media House  
*Caribbean Business* |
| 5. Periódico de la Nación Puertorriqueña, Inc  
*Claridad* |
| **Broadcast Media** |
| 1. Hemisphere Media Group  
WAPA-TV  
WJPX-TV  
WJWN-TV  
WNJX-TV  
WKPV-TV |
| 2. NBC-Universal Telemundo  
WKAQ-TV |
| 3. Univision Communications Inc.  
WLII-TV  
WSTE-TV  
WSUR-TV  
WKAQ-AM  
WUKQ-FM  
WYEL-AM |
| 4. Puerto Rico Public Broadcasting Corp.  
WIPR-TV  
WIPM-TV  
WIPR-AM  
WIPR-FM |
| 5. Spanish Broadcasting System  
WMEG-FM  
WEGM-FM  
WIOA-FM  
WIOB-FM  
WIOC-FM  
WZMT-FM  
WZET-FM  
WODA-FM  
WNOD-FM  
WCMA-FM |
| **Multimedia Telecommunications** |
| 1. Liberty Global |
| 2. AT&T-Direct TV |
| 3. Claro |
| 4. Dish Network |
founded by deceased ex-governor and businessmen, Luis A. Ferré and his wife, Lorenza Ramírez de Arellano-Bartoli, heir to one oldest and wealthiest hacienda land-owner families in the island’s west coast. It is currently headed by son’s, Antonio Luis Ferré-Ramírez de Arellano, heirs: María Luisa Ferré Rangel, María Eugenia Ferré Rangel, María Lorenza Ferré Rangel and Luis Alberto Ferré Rangel. GFR owns *El Nuevo Día*, the most influential newspaper in the island, founded in 1970 and whose origins as a regional newspaper in the city of Ponce dates to 1909-1911. GFR also owns *Primera Hora*, established in 1997 and *Índice* newspapers. *Índice* started in October 2012 as a free-distributed newspaper bringing together two regional papers previously owned by GFR Media: *El Norte*, founded in the city of Arecibo in 1987 and purchased by GFR in 1997 and *El Horizonte* in the city of Fajardo. The Ferré Rangel Group owns two major real estate companies, City View Plaza in Puerto Rico and ENDO Real State in the United States. In Chile, GFR owns Grupo Policenter, S.A., a private ambulatory medical services company. The media group integrates its content distribution services through other companies such as Advanced Graphic Printing, Link Active and Distribution Integrated Services.

*Group Publi Inversiones*, a venture capital group created in July 2013 by Puerto Rican financial investors, bought *Caribbean International News*, owners of *El Vocero de Puerto Rico* newspaper. The second most prominent newspaper in the island was auctioned on November 2013 for 1.9 million dollars at the US Federal Bankruptcy Court in Old San Juan to a group of investors headed by Fernando Ortega, president of Sachs Chemicals, and Hiram Irizarry, president Irizarry Rodríguez and Company. The Group is financially backed by Dionisio Trigo González, president of Restaurant Operators Inc., Gerardo Larrea, executive of South American Restaurants Corporations and International Restaurant Services. *Publi Inversiones* was organized under Puerto
Rico’s corporate laws with the only purpose of owning and publishing *El Vocero* newspaper. The newspaper history goes back to February 1975 and Gaspar Roca-Natali, *El Vocero*’s founder, and his wife, María Luisa Roca, corporate maneuvers. The couple created Carmel Press Corporation to publish newspapers, journals, magazines and books. *El Vocero de Puerto Rico Inc.* which had begun printing in April 1974, became Carmel’s subsidiary. In November 1985, to restructure its debt and improve profits, *El Vocero de Puerto Rico, Inc.* and Carmel Press Corporation were dissolved. Gaspar Roca-Natali, in a joint venture with Commonwealth Capital Partners, an Elliot Stein Jr. equity capital group, started *Caribbean International News* in February 1985 to publish and distribute *El Vocero* newspaper. Gaspar Roca-Natali, born in 1926, was heir to one of Puerto Rico’s XIX century coffee hacienda landowner families, collaborator with Puerto Rico’s government during the 1950’s and 60’s and an important businessman. After Roca’s retirement and 2007 death, an uneven handling of business by family succession ended in bankruptcy. *Publi Inversiones Group* took over the brand name *El Vocero de Puerto Rico* and continued its publication as a free-circulation newspaper. In July 2012, it had turned into the island’s first freely-distributed newspaper. Salvador Hasbún, media and public relations expert, became El Vocero’s CEO and Edward Zayas-Torres, business journalist and press secretary for ex-governor of Puerto Rico, Luis Fortuño, was named Editor in November 2013, followed in January 2016 by broadcast journalist, Juan Miguel Muñiz-Guzmán.

Media clout and importance can be achieved through a process of sustained importance over long period or via innovation. The latter is the case of Metro International Group which began its Puerto Rican edition on October 2012 by way of resourceful use of print, Internet and social media. Its publication became the island’s third freely-distributed newspaper. In the height of the Cold War, East-West
confrontation era, three newspapers were established. *Claridad*, a weekly newspaper, originally tied to Puerto Rico’s Pro-Independence movements, began publishing on June 1959. Its cultural supplement, *En Rojo*, is considered one of the best cultural publications in the island. *The San Juan Star* started printing in November 1959. Initially a Scripps-Howard newspaper, won fame through its 1961 Pulitzer Prize for editorials on Roman Catholic bishops interfering in Puerto Rican politics. It was sold in 1996 to media capitalist Gerardo Angulo-Mesta and ceased publication on August 2008. Angulo Mesta had filed for bankruptcy on December 2007. In 1973 Manuel A. Casiano-Asencio, businessman and 1970-72 administrator for Puerto Rico Development Administration Office, started Casiano Communications Inc. He began publishing the weekly *Caribbean Business* newspaper, followed by fashion magazine *Imagen* magazine, health magazine *Buena Vida* and tele-marketing department Direct ResponSource Inc. By 2000, Casiano Communications Inc. was considered one of the largest publisher of periodicals, magazines and websites in Latin America. Casiano filed for bankruptcy protection on October 2014. A year later, the court approved its sale to a media group established on October 2014, Latin Media House, a subsidiary of Ferrer Faass & Co LLC. The latter had been founded on November 2014 by Miguel A. Ferrer, ex-chairman of UBS Financial Services of Puerto Rico and Heiko Faass, ex-CEO at investment management Charlotte Square Capital Ventures in London. Ferrer left UBS in July 2014 as an FBI inquiry into illegal practices at UBS relating to sales of UBS closed-end proprietary bond funds was underway. Before moving to London, Heiko Faass held managerial positions in three media content and marketing industries in Nördlingen, Germany: Mediatext - Media Marketing GmbH, Faaß communication eK and Anumea GmbH.
Recent broadcast media and multimedia telecommunications ownership in Puerto Rico is the product of the 1996 Federal Communications Commission Act, which encouraged deregulation and promoted concentration of owners, creating monopolies. The television industry is dominated by three media groups: Hemisphere Media Group, NBC-Universal Telemundo, Univision Communications Inc. Radio industry main owners are Puerto Rico Public Broadcasting Corp and Spanish Broadcasting System. Four multimedia telecommunication content-Internet-telephony providers service the entire island: Liberty Global, AT&T-Direct TV, Claro and Dish-Network.

B. Major regulations affecting the media

Media and communications regulatory forces influence each island differently. How each island approaches a market economy effects media governing, control and monitoring. However, regulations in the three islands follow the clientelism identified as the defining feature in relations between the political system and the media in Latin America. Like the plantation structure, clientelism opens spaces for negotiating the application of the law, establishing alliances with political actors and reducing or avoiding any consequence of regulations that are contrary to corporate interests (Hallin & Papathanassopoulos, 2002; Guerrero & Márquez-Ramírez, 2014).

1. Cuba

The Cuban Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and press freedom within the state-owned media. Article 53 of the Constitution says that: “Citizens have freedom of speech and of the press in keeping with the objectives of socialist society”. Therefore, it is that same article that limits freedom of speech and of the press and subordinates it to the country’s socialist objectives. Another constraint is that Cuban law prohibits private property, Thereby, government owns all mainstream media outlets,
affecting media’s contents. To practice their profession, journalists in Cuba need to be members of the journalist union, Unión de Periodistas Cubanos (UPEC). UPEC’s code of ethics contains journalists’ duties and rights and the editorial line they must follow, a patriotic writing defending the nation and the Party. Internet and information technology sidestepped tight control partly by opening “a new way to communicate from the island to the world” (Sierra-Praeli, 2010, p. 17). In June 1996, “the Executive Committee of the Cuban Council of Ministers completed action on Decree-Law 209, which regulates the use and development of information networks and Internet services within Cuba. In principle, the decree does not give any single interest or institution the power to dictate what should be done and how. Instead, there is to be a functional division of labor among multiple collaborating institutional players and sectors of authority. This model stands in decided contrast to the 1994 attempt by the Ministry of Communications to centralize control of all facets of networking and telecommunications” (Valdés, N. P. & Rivera, M. A., 1999, p.147).

2. Dominican Republic

Article 49 of the 2010 Dominican Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and information. The Constitution states that every person has the right to freely express their thoughts, ideas and opinions by any means, without prior censorship. Right to information includes seeking, investigate, receive and disseminate information of all kinds and nature, by any means, channel or way, as determined by the Constitution and the law, giving media free access to official and private news sources of public interest. It protects journalists’ confidentiality and provides for citizen’s right to complain if libeled. Defamation is a crime punishable by jail terms of up to six months. The 1997 penal code amendment banned publishing montages of an individual’s image(s) or
quoted speech without the individual's consent, unless identified as a montage. This "crime" carries a prison sentence of up to two years. The Constitution guarantees equal and plural access of all social and political sectors to state-owned media. The Constitution highlights that “the enjoyment of these freedoms shall be exercised in accordance with the right to honor, privacy, and the dignity and morals of persons, especially the protection of youth and children, in accordance with the law and Public order” (Constitución Política de la República Dominicana, 2010). In 2003, Law 134-03 created the State Corporation for Radio and Television (Corporación Estatal de Radio y Televisión, CERTV), whose purpose is to manage and operate the public telecommunication spectrum, whether VHF, UHF, coaxial-cable and digital television, and AM, FM and short-wave radio. The law foresees any future telecommunication technology development. The General Telecommunications Law of 1998 assures a telecommunications service, through “the participation of the private sector, that is efficient, modern and at reasonable cost” (Ley General de Telecomunicaciones No. 153-98).

3. **Puerto Rico**

The Bill of Rights of the 1952 Puerto Rican Constitution states that there shall be no law restricting freedom of speech or of the press. Although there is no law limiting or controlling newspaper publications, the Telecommunications Act of 1996, last amended in 2011, created a regulatory board to create and strengthen market competitiveness with “the powers and prerogatives needed to establish a regulatory code that: (1) ensures the availability of universal telecommunications services at affordable rates for all citizens of Puerto Rico; (2) oversees the efficiency of telephone and cable television services as well as other telecommunications services; (3) assures the continuity in the rendering of services of a social nature, such as public telephones
in urban and rural areas, and telephone directories, according to the public need; (4) promotes competition; (5) allows and guarantees to Puerto Ricans the same telecommunications and information privileges enjoyed by the United States citizens; and (6) safeguards the public interest to the utmost” (Puerto Rico Telecommunications Act of 1996, Act 213-1996, as amended, 2012). Law 204 of August 8, 2008 created a regulatory board to regulate the public relations practice in Puerto Rico. The board set the type of academic preparation, professional ethics and continuing education processes needed to be certified and be allow to exercise the public relations profession in the island (Ley No. 204 para la Creación de la Junta Reglamentadora de Relacionistas de Puerto Rico, 2008).

4. **Current conditions of freedom of expression and the press and journalism practice**


1. **Cuba**

Cuba has the most repressive environment for the media in the Americas (Freedom House, 2016). However, “Cuba’s press, emboldened by President Raúl
Castro’s call for reforms in 2010, are finding more space for critical comment, but harassment and intimidation from authorities, a legal limbo caused by outdated and restrictive press laws, and limited and expensive access to the internet is slowing the island nation’s progress toward press freedom” (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2016). Nonetheless, journalism practice in government media must adhere to UPEC’s code of ethics as government continues to suppress dissent and detaining independent journalists.

2. **Dominican Republic**

   Freedom House (2016) reports that increased threats as well as the murder of a journalist strongly affected the environment for free and critical reporting during 2015. Dominican law guarantees freedom of speech and press but “journalists face serious intimidation and violence when investigating sensitive issues, particularly drug trafficking and corruption” (Freedom House, 2016). Despite this, media concentration is seen in the Dominican Republic as a problem to free speech as “handful of economic groups and political leaders who made their fortunes during their time in office control the most important and influential media outlets in the Dominican Republic” (Liriano, 2015). Dominican Association of Journalists warns that concentrated media ownership and owners and advertisers’ influence fuels job insecurity and encourages Self-censorship among journalists (Freedom House, 2016).

3. **Puerto Rico**

   Puerto Rico’s news media has been challenged by a “decline in newspapers stemming from the ongoing economic crisis, among other factors” (Freedom House, 2016). The island’s democracy is contested by the common and widespread corruption among Puerto Rican politicians and civil servants, and the concentration of power groups behind mainstream media, harming freedom of expression and journalism
practice. A February 10, 2006 clash between United States Federal Bureau of Investigations, FBI, forces and the press during a raid involving Puerto Rican Independence Movement members showed the decades long pattern of FBI violence and suppression of freedom of speech and assembly in Puerto Rico (Comisión de Derechos Civiles de Puerto Rico, 2006). The U.S. Justice Department and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have criticized Puerto Rican police for repetitious police violence against civilians and journalists and suppression of freedoms of speech and assembly. In 2013, the Puerto Rican government formally agreed to a police reform plan to be overseen by U. S. Justice Department authorities; the plan included more police training and increased United States federal oversight (Freedom House, 2016).

The largest and most influential advertiser for Grupo Ferré Rangel’s two newspapers, El Nuevo Día and Primera Hora, and for Grupo Publi Inversiones, El Vocero, is the government of Puerto Rico, including all its Departments and Corporations. In 1993, pro-statehood governor, Pedro Rosselló, signed an executive order to regulate the access to public information. Roselló’s 1993-2001 governorship was plagued with high incidence of corruption at all level of government. Governor Roselló tried various executive orders to control journalists covering government corruption. El Vocero newspaper sued then Secretary of Justice Pedro Pierluisi, receiving the Scripps Howard First Amendment Award for safeguarding whistle blower confidentiality. Meanwhile, El Nuevo Día sued Roselló’s government in 1997 for trying to force journalists covering government corruption to reveal their sources and for pulling out government advertising from the Ferré Rangel’s newspapers. After the 1999 undisclosed court settlement, the Ferré Rangel Group joined Puerto Rico’s Sacred Heart University to establish the Center for Freedom of the Press in Puerto Rico. Created in 2007 by a group of journalists, Puerto Rico’s Center for Investigative Reporting won on April 2016 a
victory over government for undisclosed information on the names of the hedge funds companies causing much of the island’s economic crisis. The court accused the government of lack of transparency in dealing with public information.

5. **Media status in traditional and new formats and new scenarios – closing remarks**

Media convergence and new communication technology has changed media landscape in the three islands. Like in the rest of the Americas, the long-term picture of this new media landscape is not easy to predict. However, Internet and new media have posed a challenge to conventional media in Cuba, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, especially the printed newspaper. The way news circulate has moved from traditional print newspapers to new media and Web-only publications. Internet Live Stats for July 1, 2016, shows that a significant part of the population in the three islands can access the Internet at home, via any device type or connection. Cuba has a 32.4% penetration, the Dominican Republic a 51.8% and Puerto Rico an 82.8% (Internet Live Stats, 2016).

Mainstream newspapers in the three islands have their online editions. James, C. W. (2012) argues that there is tendency in various Caribbean islands, including the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, towards expansion of discrete media platforms to become media companies - moving them into areas that are outside their traditional businesses that were limited to printed products (p. 31). Media outlets in Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and to a lesser extent Cuba follow James (2012) description of Caribbean media maintaining that newspapers “have moved beyond the periodic repurposing of content on websites, to becoming dynamic platforms that deliver updated news and, increasingly, real-time news. The text and graphics of newspapers, the audio of radio and the video of television are available on one platform for a
consumer who is at once the reader, listener, viewer and surfer” (p.33-34). Listín Diario in Dominican Republic, Primera Hora and El Nuevo Día in Puerto Rico are examples of this dynamic media platform. Cuba’s Granma and Juventud Rebelde multimedia rests on still-photographs.

Our data has shown ways press and information control is exerted over mass media in the repeating island, plantation-clientelist cultures of Cuba, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. However, the government control media in Cuba and the market – family ties media control in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico find opposition and contradictory views in new media outlets, product of the Information Technology and Internet. The “temporary autonomous zone”, “island net”, 18th century Pirates built as response to monopolies and restrictions serves as a metaphor to describe these new media outlets for whom the Web is a weapon and not market-end tool (Bey, 2001). Running contrary to certain dominant government – market structures and, like pirates, opposed to control as source of inequalities (Dawdy & Bonni, 2012), new media web-based journalism emphasizes investigative reporting and functions as watchdog for government transparency.

Most literature points out the importance of Information Technology (IT) and Internet in Cuba for the “emergence of a new type of public sphere in which the civil society debate is marked by autonomous citizen action” (Hoffmann, 2011, p. 3). A new autonomous citizen action bloggers movement began in Cuba on 2007 with the publication of Yoanni Sánchez’s 14 y medio Generación Y blog. The number of independent journalists-bloggers leading this new Cuban public sphere has risen, defying state control media but without ceasing to be harassed, intimidated and detained by the government (Inter American Press Association, 2013; Cuba Freedom House 2016 Report).
Piracy as a metaphor helps us navigate the new wave of information technology mass media in the Caribbean archipelago of the Repeating Islands, both like and unlike the other. Sailing the ocean towards Dominican Republic, a new generation of web-news readers find Jhonatan Liriano’s *El Grillo* (The Cricket, http://www.elgrillo.do) and Fausto Rosario Adames’ *Acento* (Accent, http://www.acento.com.do). In Puerto Rico, savvy journalists Omaya Sosa-Pascual and Oscar Serrano founded in 2007 Puerto Rico’s *Centro de Periodismo Investigativo* (Center for Investigative Reporting, http://www.periodismoinvestigativo.com). In 2008, they began navigating the Caribbean web publishing blogosphere and have become one of Puerto Rico’s leading watchdogs through thorough investigative reporting. The Center offers continued education to journalists and helps citizens gain access to public information. On January 14, 2011, Serrano and Sosa-Pascual embarked in the publication of the first daily digital newspaper in Puerto Rico, *NotiCel* (http://www.noticel.com). In locating who exactly will remake Puerto Rico for the 21st century economy, Forbes Magazine’s Giovanni Rodríguez (2013) finds *NotiCel* and *Centro Para Periodismo Investigativo* part of the growing ecosystem that will help Puerto Rico’s development. As the logic of the Internet and Information technologies gravitate the horizons of plantation – clientelism Caribbean Repeating Islands - Cuba, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico -, media industries converge in each island to create platforms joining print – broadcast and Internet within the complexities that articulate both traditions and modernities.
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