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### **We are all well (and undisrupted) in the shelter - the 33 of us:**

Narratives in the rescue of the Chilean Miners as a Live Media  
Event

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MSc in Global Media and Communications

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# **We are all well (and undisrupted) in the shelter – the 33 of us:**

Narratives in the rescue of the Chilean Miners as a Live Media Event

**César Antonio Jiménez Martínez**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Two different forms of understanding media events have dominated the literature in recent times. One of them, represented by the original framework of Dayan and Katz, proposes that these extraordinary situations have positive hegemonic effects and cohesive identities. The other one, which seems to predominate nowadays, supports the argument that media events are performative constructions, open to a multiplicity of voices and readings, which may challenge or reinforce social structures of power. This paper is based on the suspicion that the latter perspective may not offer a complete understanding of media events. The literature which argues in favour of a multiplicity of voices, has adopted a definition of these events that considers occurrences which are not necessarily covered by television and are not transmitted in real time. Conversely, when looking exclusively at events broadcasted live, it seems that this presupposed multiplicity of voices should be examined more critically. Focussing on the live coverage of the rescue of the Chilean miners as a case study, this research uses Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the narratives constructed by two television stations, one local and another global, in order to identify whether their accounts are hegemonic and cohesive or if they give place to disruptive and contradictory voices. While the limited scope of this research prevents reaching categorical conclusions, the findings suggest that this apparent polyphony is somewhat limited *during* the event, given that, at least in the case studied, the space for disruptive and subversive accounts seems to be scarce.

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## INTRODUCTION

*'We aren't heroes and they aren't heroes. They are victims of bad working conditions. And the bad management of the mine.'*  
(Lily Gómez, wife of Mario Gómez, one of the 33 trapped miners, interviewed by Macqueen, 2011)

When on the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2010 Luis Urzúa reached the surface, the eyes of the whole world were on him. Sixty-nine days earlier, he and another 32 miners had been trapped 688 metres below ground, in a copper mine located in the north of Chile. After surviving for two weeks in complete isolation with almost no food and water, they finally managed to send a note to the surface, stunning the world with the news that they were still alive (Franklin, 2011). The Chilean government led an unprecedented rescue operation that culminated seven weeks later when the men were safely shuttled up through a meticulously contrived borehole. The story seized the attention of the global media, with 1,500 journalists, photographers and cameramen from all over the world covering the operation, followed live on television by a billion spectators (Bachman, 2010; Brooks, 2010). The media showed Chile as a united country with thousands of people celebrating in the streets (Peregil, 2010). The rescue mission was described as 'inspirational' and the world, the papers wrote, felt like 'a better place' (Stanford, 2010).

Because of its historical relevance, omnipresence in media and apparent reconciliatory mood, the rescue of the Chilean miners appears to fit the original definition of a media event by Dayan and Katz (1992). According to both authors, these extraordinary situations not only monopolise the attention of media, but also have positive hegemonic effects, a cohesive identity, and serve to integrate societies (Dayan and Katz, 1992). However, several scholars have contested this framework, arguing that in the current era of globalised communications, it overlooks events which celebrate conflict instead of harmony, and assumes they have a stable identity, failing to draw proper attention to potential counter-narratives or subversive discourses (Hunt, 1999; Couldry, 2003; Katz and Liebes, 2007; Dayan, 2008; Hepp and Couldry, 2010). In consequence, a different approach has gained prominence, considering media events as conflictive performances, open to several voices, versions and interpretations, which may contribute to reinforce or challenge the structures of power in a given society (Dayan, 2008; McCurdy, 2009; Hepp and Couldry, 2010; Ribes, 2010).

This paper is based on the suspicion that this current perspective may not offer a complete understanding of media events. The growing body of literature that argues in favour of this

multiplicity of voices, has adopted a definition of these occurrences which goes beyond the one originally proposed by Dayan and Katz (1992), incorporating events that are not necessarily covered by television and are not transmitted in real time (Fiske, 1994; Hunt, 1999; Volkmer, 2008; Krotz, 2010). Conversely, when looking exclusively at events broadcasted live, it seems that this presupposed multiplicity of voices should be examined more critically. Some circumstantial evidence hints that the real time coverage of these situations remains largely uncontroversial (Kennett and De Moragas, 2008; Fernández Peña et al, 2010), posing the question of how open they actually are towards disruptive discourses.

With limited recent empirical research centred exclusively on *live* media events, this study attempts to contribute to this debate, focussing on one particular situation broadcasted in real time to the whole globe: the rescue of the Chilean miners. Accordingly, and based on the previously described controversy, I will attempt to answer the following research questions: Which narratives can be identified in local and global television during the live broadcast of the rescue of the Chilean miners? And, fundamentally, are these narratives hegemonic and cohesive, or do they give place to disruptive and contradictory voices?

Considering that the definition of a media event has been a contested issue, I will concentrate mainly on the discussions which have followed the aforementioned work of Dayan and Katz (1992). With this aim, I shall begin with a synthesis of the ideas of both authors, briefly mentioning some of the main criticisms that have been made to their framework, and summarising new perspectives to understand these events, in particular the one proposed by Dayan (2008). Using Critical Discourse Analysis, I will then try to sketch some of the possible narratives which can be identified in the coverage of the rescue of the Chilean miners by two television stations, one local and one global. Finally, I shall seek to provide some insight not only into the differences or similarities between these narratives, but most importantly, towards the possibility of hegemonic or polyphonic discourses of the same occurrence, which has been labelled as one of the most important media events ever (Brooks, 2010; CBSNews, 2011).

## THEORETICAL CHAPTER

### Literature review

#### *What is a media event?*

During the second half of the twentieth century, several scholars analysed the social implications of extraordinary events –pre-planned or spontaneous- which attracted a huge coverage of mass media. For example, Shils and Young (1953) saw the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II as an instance in which the British people united around certain sacred values; Chaney (1983) examined the BBC's coverage of some post-war events as occasions in which the public could see themselves reflected; and Boorstin (1961) warned about 'pseudo-events', a series of episodes such as political debates or press conferences, created with the exclusive purpose of being reported by the media. However, it was not until the early 1990s that perhaps one of the most influential and contested theoretical approaches in this field emerged.

In *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*, Dayan and Katz defined a new television genre which they metaphorically described as 'high holidays of mass communication' (1992: 1). With this, they were referring to those extraordinary historical situations reported by journalists in a ceremonial style, which are planned in advance outside the media and transmitted in real time, simultaneously monopolising the attention of all television channels and interrupting the normal flow of broadcasting. Using an approach grounded on the works of Durkheim, who argued that rituals serve to keep people together and preserve national social order (1915), Dayan and Katz held that, even when addressing conflictive situations, media events reconcile and integrate the dispersed members of a society –mainly a national one but potentially even a transnational one-, highlighting a specific set of values, reinforcing a shared awareness in a community and giving legitimacy to its institutions (1992). Nevertheless, both authors warned that media events 'portray an idealised version of society, reminding society of what it aspires to be rather than what it is' (1992: ix).

While the array of media events is vast -including occasions such as the Olympic Games, the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Di, the visit of Pope John Paul II to Poland, or the Academy Awards, among many others- they were categorised into three basic narratives, inspired by the types of authority proposed by Weber (1948): *Conquest*, linked to a charismatic authority, in which a hero pushes herself to her limits to reach a particular goal; *Contests*, related to a rational-legal authority, in which sporting events or political debates

are depicted as if they were battles; and *Coronations*, associated to a traditional authority, inviting people to reaffirm customs and traditions through ceremonies such as inaugurations, royal weddings or State funerals (Dayan and Katz, 1992).

### *Media Events under revision*

The work of Dayan and Katz has been regarded as innovative and influential, due to its mixture of semiotics and mass communication research, as well as its emphasis on the 'extraordinary' rather than on the 'ordinary' or 'average' (Hepp and Couldry, 2010). Nevertheless, it has also been subject to several criticisms, such as the emphasis it places on the reconciliatory or integrative functions that these events purportedly have, their exclusive focus on pre-planned events and the assumption that they have a defined identity, with their hegemonic and cohesive narratives endorsed by the media and equally engaged by audiences (Hepp and Krotz, 2008; Finlay, 2010).

One of the most contested issues has been the integrative function assumed for them. As Couldry and Hepp (2010) have observed, with its Durkhemian perspective, the theory of media events suggests that they *reflect* the values of a pre-existing social order, implying that societies –in particular nation-states- are stable entities settled within specific territorial borders. However, it is not clear if communities of these characteristics have actually existed, but even if they have, this assumption may be severely questioned in the current period of globalisation, in which the world appears to be inhabited by cultures that are becoming more or less hybrid (Couldry and Hepp, 2010). Additionally, in her original review of *Media Events*, Zelizer (1993) points out that Dayan and Katz did not deal with some of the most conflictive issues of their framework, such as the intentions and objectives that lie behind a media event.

For these reasons, it has been argued that media events are actually *constructions* seeking to legitimate particular positions that reinforce the dominant structures of power in a society (Couldry, 2003). Similarly, Krotz (2010) has proposed that media events do not exist 'naturally', but instead -following the concepts developed by Bordieu (1986)- are an investment of symbolic and economic capital made by certain organisations to create, maintain or legitimise hegemonic relations. Likewise, other authors have examined media events as tools of political communication or public diplomacy which can be used by governments to disseminate specific messages or improve their public image at a national or transnational level (Schill, 2009; Rivenburgh, 2010).

Consequently, Dayan and Katz's original approach has been seen as essentially conservative, because it celebrates precisely those events which confirm the dominant set of values of a community (Couldry, 2003). While this position has been debated, under the observation that media events can be utilised by either establishment or anti-establishment groups as *platforms* to draw attention to particular issues and potentially modify the balances of power (Price, 2008; for the controversy about this issue, see Cottle, 2006; Couldry and Rothenbuhler, 2007; and Cottle, 2008), these perspectives suggest that media events are far from being mere spaces of integration and social harmony. In this way, they seem to be more in the line of the secular rituals defined by Moore and Myerhoff (1977), which can create or reorganise social arrangements, legitimising particular points of view, people or institutions.

Another debated issue is the scarce attention that has been paid to potential counter-narratives or disruptive readings which may arise around the same event (Hunt, 1999). Albeit Dayan and Katz (1992) admit that media events must be negotiated between organisers, broadcasters and audiences, they imply that these occurrences have a positive hegemonic identity. However, according to Price (2008), determining the dominant narrative of an event can be difficult, and even when it is possible to identify one, this may compete with contradictory or subversive tales of the same occurrence. Such perspective echoes the observation that media events should be seen in the line of the model of hegemony proposed by Gramsci (Hunt, 1999), which admits the power of integrative forces in society without discarding the possibility of counter-hegemonic positions (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971).

This aggregation of narratives appears to be accentuated when we look at the media coverage, an issue that has grown more complex in this era of globalised communication. Despite the efforts of the organisers to impose a preferred meaning, media events might have different characterisations at a local, national and global level, depending on the cultural frameworks of reference of the broadcasters (Dayan, 2006; Volkmer, 2008; Hepp and Couldry, 2010). In fact, some authors have argued that the current media landscape triggers a 'tsunami of narratives', thus permitting the existence of alternative voices around particular events (Frew, referenced by McGillivray, 2011).

For instance, several studies have shown how –even when sharing practically the same images– the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games are narrated in a variety of ways by television stations around the world, each one of them emphasising different aspects and sometimes leaving out or misunderstanding the symbols or messages proposed by the organisers (Larson & Rivenburgh, 1991; Papa, 2010; Qing et al, 2010). To mention a few examples, in the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, the Chinese television failed to

recognise the Catalan national identity and focussed exclusively on Spain as a whole nation-state; similarly, in the closing ceremony of Athens 2004, the commentators of NBC trivialised the significance of the cultural exhibitions designed to introduce Beijing as the host city of the 2008 games (Kennett and De Moragas, 2008).

This multiplicity of meanings is accompanied by a multiplicity of readings. The theory of media events has been regarded as functionalist, because it assumes a direct relationship between a specific kind of event and the way spectators engage with it (Kyriakidou, 2008). However, some evidence shows that people perceive these events in various, sometimes conflicting ways. While not a media event in the 'classic' definition of the term, the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 have been interpreted as a major global disaster that prompted a universal expression of solidarity (Haes, 2002). Nevertheless, some studies demonstrate that part of the audience expressed hardly any sympathy towards the suffering of Americans (Kyriakidou, 2008). Dayan believes that, albeit media events still gather large audiences, the spectators have been segmented by new communication technologies and their mood has moved towards disbelief and cynicism (2008).

Mentioning here the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks as a media event serves to highlight another criticism: the exclusive focus on reconciliatory pre-planned events, failing to consider those occurrences which fulfil all the criteria of a media event but endorse controversy instead of harmony (Hunt, 1999). As Dayan admits (2008), the emphasis that he and Katz put on reconciliation was influenced by the work of Francis Fukuyama, about the end of history and the disappearance of essential disagreements on the organisation of society (1992). However, an ideological shift has taken place in recent years, and nowadays television seems to be dominated by stories about division, schisms and hostility (Dayan, 2008). In consequence, the original narratives of media events –*contests, conquests, and coronations*– have been revised in order to include shocking and disruptive occurrences, such as war, terror, and disaster (Katz and Liebes, 2007; Dayan, 2008). Liebes had anticipated this argument in her description of 'disaster marathons', non pre-planned events which capture the attention of media, and are driven by tragedy, conflict, anxiety and disagreement (Liebes, 1998). According to her, while the original media events may be considered as 'integrative', 'disaster marathons' can be seen as 'disruptive media events' (Katz and Liebes, 2007).

*Alternative perspectives for media events*

Due to the aforementioned criticisms, several perspectives have been proposed to help understand the complexity of media events. From a different theoretical approach, Fiske argues that they are points of ‘maximum discursive visibility’, as well as ‘maximum turbulence’ (1994: 8). Scannell (2002) differentiates between ‘happenings’ (like an earthquake) and ‘events’ (something which has been *made to happen* by someone). Hepp et al (2003) propose the existence of ‘popular media events’, such as the reality television show *Big Brother*. Couldry sees media events as a media ritual that reveals ‘the mythical construction of the mediated centre’ (2003: 56), while Cottle includes them within a wider framework of ‘mediatised rituals’, together with mediatised public crisis, media scandals, media disasters, moral panics and conflicting media events (2006). For his part, Kellner embraces them as one category of ‘media spectacle’ that ‘celebrates dominant values and institutions, as well as its modes of conflict resolution’ (2010: 78), in contrast with spectacles of terror, spectacles of catastrophe and mega-spectacles (Kellner, 2010; see also Kellner 2002). Finally, Hepp and Couldry propose a new definition of media events as ‘certain situated, thickened, centering performances of mediated communication that are focused on a specific thematic core’ (2010:12).

Taking into account some of these criticisms, Dayan (2008) stripped the original framework of media events down to four relevant features in order to characterise them: *emphasis*, expressed through the omnipresence, lack of disruption, apparently endless repetition of some shots and the ‘liveness’ of the event; *performativity*, which refers to their lack of neutrality and gestural aspects; *loyalty*, which alludes to the endorsement of the meaning proposed by the organiser; and *shared viewing experience*, which makes explicit the participatory role of the audience. He states that media events have a dubious single identity (2006), and ‘may be subverted (denounced), diverted (derailed), or perverted (hijacked)’ (2008: 399).

*Disruptive narratives?*

However, it seems that this assumed multiplicity of meanings should be examined more critically. First, in their revision of the original concept of Dayan and Katz, some of the aforementioned authors who observe a variety of narratives use a more flexible empirical approach, not limiting themselves to the live television broadcast of one particular event, but including the coverage in several other media –such as newspapers, mobile phones, blogs or YouTube- and during a longer period of time (see, for instance, Fiske, 1994; Hunt, 1999;

Volkmer, 2008; Krotz, 2010). In this line, occurrences like the crisis provoked by the publication in Denmark of the cartoons of the prophet Mohammed, or the cake competition organised to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Union, have been seen as media events (Eskjaer, 2007; Trandafoiu, 2008).

While this angle does not necessarily exclude the *televisual* aspect of these occurrences –a website can perfectly reproduce the same transmission of a television station (Marriott, 2007)-, the analysis of a longer period of time might cause one to overlook the *live* aspect of media events. Dayan and Katz (1992), nonetheless, had already noted that ‘liveness’ is one of their essential characteristics, because the uninterrupted continuum of images allows the audience to witness the situation ‘through the eyes of those directly involved’ (1992: 115), in contrast with the fragmentation of everyday news reports. Besides, when any kind of event is transmitted live, it communicates the idea that it is *real, important* and must be accessed *now* by all members of a society (Lunt, 2004; Couldry, 2004). Moreover, in his reformulation of media events, Dayan (2008) still assigns this aspect a crucial role, when identifying the real-time omnipresence in media and the feeling of a common viewing for the audience as some of their key features. In fact, when the live aspect is set aside, what is described seems to be more the intense coverage of one specific story, like the ‘news waves’ or ‘media hypes’ explored by Vasterman (2005) and Wien and Elmelund-Præstekær (2009), rather than a media event.

Secondly, when observing exclusively the live broadcast of particular situations, the assumed polyphony of media events becomes problematic. Returning to the example of the Olympic Games, although in the course of the closing ceremony of Athens 2004, media from around the world did provide various accounts of the introduction of Beijing as the host city of the next Games, the most controversial issues, such as criticisms towards the Chinese Communist Party and the disputes surrounding the election of China as the organiser, were not mentioned (Kennett and De Moragas, 2008). Similarly, in spite of the hundreds of hours dedicated to Beijing 2008 in Spain, references to topics like the conflict in Tibet and the censorship against accredited journalists were practically non-existent during the real-time coverage (Fernández Peña et al, 2010).

Therefore, it would be of interest to examine whether or not in this apparent multiplicity of voices, there is actually space for disruptive narratives *during* the media event. Dayan and Katz had already noticed that, due to the awe they inspire in journalists, these situations tend to be exempt of criticisms, (1992), and Liebes (1998) argues that, if in the case of ‘integrative’

media events journalists serve the purposes of the establishment, they are aligned with the interests of the anti-establishment during 'disruptive' media events.

From a different theoretical perspective, Schudson (2006) offers an interesting approach. In his work on the coverage of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, he demonstrates that in the aftermath of the attacks there were few critical points of view towards the government in American media. Using the concepts developed by Hallin (1986), he argues that, while in normal social circumstances in media there is a predominant 'sphere of legitimate controversy' in which debate is welcomed, this is exceptionally replaced by a 'sphere of consensus', where disagreeing views are put on hold in favour of a higher shared interest. According to Schudson, after the terrorist attacks, American journalists appeared to be 'prisoners of the sphere of consensus' (2006: 157). Following this angle, and based on the apparent increasing adoption of the format of media events by journalists in everyday news, Dayan has warned of the danger it would pose for a democratic society, should this sphere of consensus persist beyond exceptional moments such as crisis, identity changes or wars (Dayan, 2008; Chin, 2010). However, if this sphere of consensus is at work during media events, it might contradict the evidence that they are polyphonic spaces. At the same time, it may also raise questions about the possibility that the proposed meaning of a media event could actually be confronted –*during* its moment of 'maximum visibility' (Fiske, 1994)- by counter-narratives, as some authors assume (Hunt, 1999; Price, 2008). Therefore, it remains to be asked: Are media events sites of hegemonic and cohesive discourses? Or, on the contrary, are they open to a multiplicity of voices and disruptive narratives?

## **Statement of the conceptual framework**

The controversy discussed here regarding hegemonic and cohesive, or polyphonic discourses is the starting point for this study. While similar issues have been explored before, the approach taken by some scholars has distanced itself from the work of Dayan and Katz (1992) and has focussed on events which are not necessarily transmitted live on television (for instance, Eskjaer, 2007; Trandafoiu, 2008; Volkmer, 2008; Krotz, 2010; a notable exception can be found in Kennett and De Moragas, 2008). Consequently, this research proposes a return to that early perspective, but taking into consideration the theoretical and empirical observations made to the original framework of media events. With that aim, it focusses on one specific case which was broadcasted live to the whole world: the rescue of the Chilean miners in October 2010, declared by some journalists to be one of the most important media events ever (Brooks, 2010; CBSNews, 2011).

Due to the diverse approaches proposed to understand media events, there are many angles under which this case might have been explored. For instance, it could have been seen as one of the *conquests* according to Dayan and Katz (1992), where a group of heroes –the miners - fight against all the odds to survive. Additionally, it could have been read as a ‘mediated ritual’ (Cottle, 2006) or an example of the ‘centering performances of mediated communication’ described by Hepp and Couldry (2010:12). However, I have chosen the theoretical reformulation proposed by Dayan (2008) to frame this study. The reason being, that while this perspective still attributes relevance to the live aspect of these occurrences, it overcomes some constraints of the original framework, such as the exclusive focus on ‘integrative’ events and the attention on national societies.

The four features proposed by Dayan (2008) seem to be present in the case studied: *emphasis*, due to its omnipresence in local and global media; *performativity*, because of the interest of the Chilean government in controlling the communicative aspects, as will be discussed later; *loyalty*, which refers to the acceptance or rejection of the proposed meaning of the event; and the apparent *shared viewing experience* for the 1 billion people who watched the rescue in real-time (Bachman, 2010; Brooks, 2010; Franklin, 2011).

Two of them will be relevant for this study: *performativity* and *loyalty*. The first one recognises the lack of neutrality in media events and sees them as gestures designed to create a reality. In other words, behind them there are specific interests related to power issues (Hepp and Couldry, 2010). The second one examines whether the meaning of the event proposed by the organisers has been endorsed by the media or, on the contrary, has been

'hijacked' or contested with subversive or contradicting tales of the same story (Dayan, 2008; Price, 2008). Although Dayan is not explicit in this point, it can be suggested that both are expressed through the messages or narratives composed by the organisers or media (Hunt, 1999; Price, 2008).

The two other features will not be explored in detail. While the *emphasis* –that is to say, the omnipresence of the event in media- will be given as context information, the analysis of whether or not audiences endorsed it as a *shared viewing experience* is beyond the scope of this research. As some authors have observed, it is impossible to predict how the narratives of a media event are received by the audience (Hunt, 1999; Kyriakidou, 2008). Accordingly, an analysis of this point would have required a different theoretical and methodological angle.

### **Objectives of the research**

In spite of the interest shown by several scholars towards media events, the debates outlined earlier demonstrate that a limited number of studies has recently focused on the live broadcasting of these situations. Additionally, there have been calls to study media events beyond the borders of nation-states, assuming a more global perspective (Hepp and Couldry, 2010). Therefore, this paper attempts to contribute in those lines, focussing on the story of the rescue of the Chilean miners.

To this aim, the questions this research seeks to explore are the following:

- Which narratives can be identified in local and global television during the live broadcast of the rescue of the Chilean miners? Do they differ or present similarities?
- Are these narratives hegemonic or do they, on the contrary, leave space for disruptive and contradictory voices?

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### Research strategy

In order to examine the proposed research questions about the narratives and possible disruptions within the coverage of the rescue of the Chilean miners, the methodology chosen is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Although there has not been a unifying theoretical and empirical approach towards CDA (Weiss and Wodak, 2003), in general terms, it has been defined as a type of Discourse Analysis which focusses on the way in which inequalities, domination and abuses of power are expressed or resisted in texts (Van Dijk, 2001). In spite of their differences, the various perspectives of CDA have generally been influenced by the work of Habermas and Foucault, taking from the former his concepts for a general social theory and from the latter, the ideas about the manner in which discourses reinforce or challenge power in society (MacDonald, 1995; Rose, 2001; Weiss and Wodak, 2003). This research will be grounded principally on the approach proposed by Fairclough, who has examined the way in which CDA can be used to analyse media discourses (1995).

In his view, CDA does not study discourses exclusively from a linguistic perspective, but, on the contrary, examines the relationship between language and wider aspects of society (Fairclough, 2007). Discourses –understood not only as written or spoken language, but also as visual images, non-verbal communication and other semiotic actions- *shape* and *are shaped* by institutions and social structures. Accordingly, they have social consequences, not because they may allegedly prompt a particular effect on audiences, but as a result of their contribution to legitimising or modifying the social status quo, through the representation of things, social positions or unbalanced power relations (Fairclough, 1995; Weiss and Wodak, 2003; Fairclough, 2007). These ties between discourse and power are not necessarily obvious and they may lie beneath apparent common-sense or usual practices –like the assumption that, for instance, a journalist may challenge a politician during an interview or a patient should accept the diagnosis given by a doctor-, but behind them, there are ideological implications concerning identity, rights and knowledge (Fairclough, 1995).

The framework developed by Fairclough (1995) proposes the analysis of three dimensions of a communicative event: the *text*, which can be written, oral or visual; the *discourse practice*, which deals with the production and consumption of the text and its ‘intertextuality’ or relation with other discourses; and the *sociocultural practice*, which is the social context in which the text is embedded. This research will focus mainly on the text, along with the possible connections between different narratives of the same event and, to some extent, the

social or cultural context. An examination of the processes of production and consumption is beyond the scope of this study; however this is not because the manner in which audiences interpret texts is considered unimportant, but rather that I have decided to emphasise some features over others due to the limited scope of this research and Fairclough's observation (2007) that these dimensions can be analysed separately as elements which contribute to the process of forming meaning.

Therefore, this study does not intend to unveil the 'reality' behind a particular occurrence, an assumption already questioned by Fiske when arguing that media events are not discourses 'about an event' but 'discursive events' (1994: 4). Additionally, it does not try to explore the effects that these discourses may or may not have on specific audiences, a task which would require a completely different methodological approach, such as ethnographies, surveys or focus groups (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996; Schroder, 2003). Instead, it proposes using CDA as a methodological framework to analyse the texts and images of the live broadcast of the rescue of the Chilean miners in order to identify not only the narratives proposed by the organiser and the media, but also the ideologies and power relations challenged or supported during the coverage of this particular event.

Nonetheless, based on the previous arguments, it could be suggested that semiotics might also have been an appropriate methodology. After all, that was the approach chosen by Dayan and Katz in their original study (1992) and, like CDA, it pays attention to the manner in which social differences –like power struggles- are constructed or resisted through signs and texts (Rose, 2001). However, this methodology has some constraints. For instance, it fails to acknowledge the social context in which particular discourses –or narratives- are embedded; additionally, some researchers tend to consider the semiotic *interpretation* of an image as its *real meaning*; and finally, because of its focus on one specific image, the representativity and replicability of its conclusions are sometimes problematic (Rose, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 2001). In consequence, while a semiotic approach may have been useful to study one particular audiovisual clip, it would not have been pertinent to examine potential relations in several of them.

Another possible alternative was content analysis, which, in fact, has been the preferred methodology for other authors exploring similar questions (see, for instance, Krotz, 2010). Among its strengths are its apparent objectivity, consistence, replicability and capacity for quantitative generalisations (Bell, 2001). However, apart from requiring clear categories of variables for analysis, it has a tendency to fragment images, fails to consider them from a more emotional perspective –their 'mood'–, and does not acknowledge what is absent from

them, which is precisely one of the strengths found in Discourse Analysis in general (Rose, 2001). Moreover, the focus of this research on one live event considerably limits the amount of material available, making difficult the application of the methodological procedures required to arrive at the quantitative generalisations of a content analysis (Bell, 2001).

In spite of the arguments given in favour of CDA, it should be noted that is not free of constraints. As mentioned earlier, this type of analysis does not serve to determine in which way audiences engage with the narratives of a media event; in addition to this, the relationships between images and their socio-cultural context are sometimes unclear and the intertextuality between discourses can be ambiguous (Rose, 2001). Furthermore, some scholars have argued that researchers who use CDA are not only unclear about their selection of data, but also tend to be biased and try to find visual materials which endorse their preconceived ideas (Haig, 2004). These observations undoubtedly hold implications for this research. The process of data selection must be explicit, in order to establish a defined scope for intertextuality, as well as to avoid, to whatever extent is possible, any type of bias, although it should be observed that there are practically no researchers without ideological duties (Haig, 2004). Finally, it is always worth bearing in mind Hall's consideration that in the analysis of images there are no right or wrong interpretations, just different, valid perspectives (referenced by Rose, 2001).

## **Methods and procedures**

### *Selection of data and research tools*

Based on the reasons discussed above, the selection of data for this research has consisted of audiovisual clips from the live coverage of the rescue of the Chilean miners on local and global television. With that aim in mind, two stations that transmitted this event were chosen for the analysis: Chilean National Television (TVN) and BBC World News. TVN is one the main broadcasters in Chile, a state-owned but commercially funded television station available across the whole country (Televisión Nacional de Chile, n.d.). TVN was chosen by the Chilean government as the official broadcaster of the rescue of the miners and, during the operation, topped the audience ratings of its country (Publímetro, 2010; La Tercera, 2010). BBC World News is one of the leading global television news stations, seen in more than 200 countries and territories, by 71 million people weekly (BBC, 2010). BBC spent more than £100,000 to send a crew of 26 people to cover the story (Robinson and Carrington, 2010) and in the UK alone, the rescue of the miners was the third most viewed event ever, with an audience of 6.9 million people (Bakhurst, 2010).

Ideally, the analysis should have examined the more than 22-hour live coverage, however constraints of time and space have made this alternative impossible. Therefore, a smaller sample was chosen, based mainly on the availability of material and also on Rose's observation that in a methodology like the one chosen, what matters most is the quality of the material rather than its quantity (2001). On their respective websites, both TVN and BBC offer a selection of short clips which correspond to the live footage originally transmitted on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> October 2010, with a duration that varies between 2 and 12 minutes. From these, I focussed on the ones which feature the actual moment in which the miners were rescued (more than 60 in total), in order to examine possible patterns which could highlight the narratives of each station.

The analysis of possible hegemonic or subversive readings of a media event necessarily requires the identification of a base narrative (Price, 2008). As will be explained in detail in the following section, the government produced an official broadcast signal for the rescue. Given that this official transmission was embedded *within* the actual coverage of TVN and BBC, in order to try to explore it in a *pure* state, a short video produced by the Secretary of Communications of the Chilean government has also been studied, along with some interviews given by President Sebastián Piñera after the operation was completed.

Following Fairclough's suggestions (1995), what was analysed were the images, sounds and language as well as their 'texture'. This was done in order to interpret possible issues related with power and ideologies, paying particular attention to who was allowed to speak during the coverage, what was shown and not shown, and how the miners, the authorities and the families were represented.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Background**

The chain of events leading to the rescue of the Chilean miners begins on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2010. On that day, the San José copper mine, located in the north of Chile, collapsed leaving 33 workers trapped 688 metres underground below tonnes of rock (Franklin, 2011). During seventeen days, the men survived in complete isolation with almost no food or water, until they were able to attach a note onto a drill that reached them: 'We are all well in the shelter - the 33 of us' (Franklin, 2011). Days before, in a risky political decision, the Chilean government decided to take the rescue into its own hands -even though the mine was owned by a private company-, knowing that from then on, the authorities would be made responsible for the failure or success of the operation (Toro and Canales, 2010a).

Although news from the accident immediately appeared on Chilean television (CNNChile, 2010), the story took off on a global dimension only when the men were found alive (Stanford, 2010; Franklin, 2011). From that moment on, *Campamento Esperanza* –Camp Hope, the improvised town born in the surroundings of the mine - began to receive an increasing number of journalists from all over the world, reaching a total of 1,500 professionals representing 250 media organisations (Bachman, 2010). The rescue operation was finally carried out on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> October 2010 and lasted more than 22 hours (Franklin, 2011). Echoing what happens in events like the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup, the authorities produced an official live television broadcast; in consequence, most of the stations which followed the story ended up using the same images, adding to them their own narration and some complementary shots.

### **Findings**

#### *'Performing' the rescue: the base narrative*

As mentioned earlier, one of the main characteristics of media events is their *performativity*, that is to say, their gestural dimension that aims to create a particular reality (Dayan, 2008). The identification of this intended gesture -or narrative- inevitably poses the question of who controls or *owns* the event (Price, 2008). For instance, in the case of the Olympic Games it has been debated whether the *owners* are the International Olympic Committee, the organising country, the sponsors or the main broadcasters (Price, 2008). Nonetheless, in the case studied here, there seems to be little doubt that the Chilean government is the owner.

Not only for having the main responsibility behind the operation, but also due to the communicative controls imposed on the media.

From the very beginning, the authorities kept a strict supervision over all the videos released when the workers were still trapped underground, editing out images of the men ill or crying, and choosing which miner would be the main speaker (Franklin, 2011). A similar control was exercised during the rescue, placing several restrictions on the accredited media, and adopting measures such as blocking the view of cameras and photographers with a giant Chilean flag, in order to prevent alternative shots (Franklin, 2011). Conversely, for the official broadcast, eight cameras were installed in the restricted areas (including one inside the mine) and a crew of 45 people worked under the guidelines of the Secretary of Communications (Emol, 2010), who gave the instruction not to show close-ups of the miners if their health was deteriorated (Toro and Canales, 2010b). Officially, the main reason behind this control was to prevent the alleged chaos produced by the large number of journalists trying to cover the story at the same time (Facultad de Comunicaciones UC, 2011). In any case, these measures fit with Price's observation (2008) that the owners try to protect media events from unwanted *uses*, through methods such as physical security, contractual rights or intellectual property.

With the controller of the event identified, it is necessary to determine the base narrative. While the government has denied any type of manipulation or political exploitation and insist that they simply wanted to show what was really happening (Cooperativa, 2010), images in television –and particularly in media events- are never neutral or simply informative (Dayan, 2008). In fact, there may be cases in which the way a particular story is represented favours one point of view over all others (Iedema, 2001). Consequently, some observers have proposed that the Chilean authorities intended to expose in media the success of the operation as a means to portray the miners as heroes and showcase the country and its administration as an example of efficiency to the rest of the world (Toro and Canales, 2010b; Franklin, 2011).

The visual construction of the rescue seems to endorse this argument. The repetitive nature of the operation makes the transmission somewhat formulaic: a few shots of the rescue capsule coming back to the surface; images of the one relative allowed to wait for each miner; the arrival of the man and his first reactions; and a brief reunion, first with the relative, and then with the Chilean President or another authority. The miners are always happy, and they usually spend more time with the President than with any other person. Furthermore, it is only when they speak to him that the spectators can clearly hear the conversation. Besides,

several close-ups focus on the face of the President, suggesting some degree of intimacy with the Head of State (Iedema, 2001). On the contrary, when the miners meet their relatives, they rarely speak –and when they do, they are barely audible–, the members of their families are portrayed in groups, often standing in darker areas. Thus, it can be argued that the official broadcast aims to visually reinforce the dominant power relations of the country.



Fig. 1 - A miner quickly kisses his wife and then talks to the President

(Source: Gobierno de Chile)

In addition, there is a constant display of national symbols, in the form of Chilean flags of different sizes inside and outside the mine, as well as on the clothes of the miners, on the machines used for the rescue. Accompanying this emphasis on nationhood, there is an explicit intention of creating a bond with the rest of the world, a feature which can commonly be found in media events (Dayan and Katz, 1992). A couple of interviews given by the President after the rescue evidence this point, which also communicates the idea of a united country:

President: I hope that from now on, when people around the world hear the word Chile, they will not remember the coup d'état or the dictatorship; they will remember what we have done all the Chileans together, because all the Chileans are united, committed with this rescue effort and that is an example for the whole world.

(Wilcox, 2010)

President: I think that today Chile is more united and is stronger than it was before . . . because of the example given to the whole world by the miners and their families . . . I am sure that Chile today is more respected and people know better about this small country, very far away from the rest of the world.

(The Telegraph, 2010)

Consequently, despite the authorities' claim of the neutrality of the official broadcasting and their insistence that their only commitment was 'with the truth' (Cooperativa, 2010), a

dominant narrative arguably arises from the patterns discussed. Apparently, the success of this unprecedented rescue operation serves to showcase the image of a united country, with efficient, committed authorities; a nation which is leaving behind painful moments of its recent history, and whose example is worthy of the admiration of all mankind. Nonetheless, it remains to be seen if this account was endorsed or contested by the local and global media.



Fig. 2 - Two examples of Chilean flags displayed, one inside the mine, another one in a balloon

(Source: Gobierno de Chile)

### *'Go, Minerheart!': Celebrating a united nation on TVN*

While the government used the equipment and crew of the Chilean National Television (TVN), each station, including TVN, added their own narration, and occasionally complementary shots, to the official images. In media events, commentators play a crucial role, because they provide the first narrations and interpretations of what is happening, through the contents as well as through the emotions they express (Kennett and De Moragas, 2008).

On TVN, what seems to prime is a celebratory mood, with the journalists permanently adopting a cheerful tone. Around the rescue operation, an atmosphere of happiness is portrayed, with constant descriptions of the applause and ovations that every miner receives once they reach the surface. Even images of apparent sadness are interpreted within this idea:

Reporter: A little boy cries... of happiness.

(Rescue of Florencio Ávalos, 0:50)

Given that TVN uses the images of the official broadcast, most of the shots are focused on the miners and the authorities. The surroundings –that is, Camp Hope- are rarely shown in

detail, except in panoramic views or images of groups or happy families. This visual pattern is broken on some occasions, when an additional camera –which does not belong to the official broadcast- displays close-ups of relatives, a few interviews with them or pictures of the cities of Copiapó or Santiago. This camera, nonetheless, is relegated to a secondary role and never takes full control of the screen. Accordingly, from a visual dimension, the narrative still focuses on the rescue operation as it is portrayed by the government.



Fig. 3 - Examples of the additional camera used by TVN

(Source: TVN)

While the images are mainly focused on the San José mine, the reporters of TVN not only describe what is happening in the area surrounding the mine, but they also characterise the whole country, as a people who are united around this single event. Following Dayan's observation (2008), it is possible to say that the spectators are not seen as having a mere passive role, but have themselves become part of the media event:

Reporter: Applause everywhere, cheering, [people are singing] the national anthem, people are screaming *C-H-I...*

(Rescue of Florencio Ávalos, 0:35)

Reporter: This is the moment when the country is about to explode.

(Rescue of Luis Urzúa, 0:09)

Reporter 2: The sirens can be heard not only in the San José mine; there are horns and bells all over Chile, an immense happiness.

(Rescue of Luis Urzúa, 1:02)

This feeling of unity can be found at a more individual level as well. When Franklin Lobos is rescued, the audience is told that during his underground captivity, he has patched the relationship with his, until then, estranged daughter; likewise, the hug between Luis Urzúa and the President is interpreted as the encounter of 'the boss of the country' and 'the boss of

the 33'; and interestingly, when Carlos Mamani, the only non-Chilean of the group, reaches the surface, Bolivia is announced to be 'our brother country' and President Piñera's gesture of carrying the Bolivian flag is read as an act of 'fraternity and integrity'. Moreover, the already present display of nationhood is strengthened when the traditional Chilean cheer '¡Viva Chile, mierda!' (something like, 'Long live Chile, damn it!') is displayed on the screen and repeated on several occasions by the journalists.



Fig. 4 – 'Viva Chile mierda' appears on screen

(Source: TVN)

In addition to this atmosphere of euphoria, there are continuous remarks about the historicity of the occasion. The adjective 'historic' constantly surfaces during the live transmission and the commentators emphasise the unprecedented nature of the operation, telling the audience, for instance, about the low chances of survival the men originally had – such as during the rescue of Florencio Ávalos- or simply stating that these are moments of enormous importance. Likewise, this historicity is read as a source of joy for the whole country and admiration from the rest of the world:

Reporter 2: Congratulations to the rescue team and to everyone who participated in this historic and heroic occasion, of which we are all proud.

(Rescue of Luis Urzúa, 0:48)

Reporter 1: We are witnessing a very moving moment, a historical moment of international, planetary dimensions; this is a moment at which Chile must feel proud.

(Rescue of Luis Urzúa, 2:03)

At the same time, the heroism of the men is repeatedly stressed. In fact, during the course of the broadcast, the commentators gradually begin referring to them fondly as 'Corazón de Minero' ('Minerheart'). Although the exact meaning of this expression is not clear, in other contexts it has been used to describe people who are strong, noble, sincere and capable of

facing the harshest adversities (see, for instance, the poem in Maestranza Diesel, 2010). Furthermore, the endurance, sense of humour and even the manners of the miners are praised:

Reporter: This man is a gentleman. He keeps his good manners even at these moments.

(Rescue of Mario Sepúlveda, 2:23)

Because of this feeling of unity, fraternity and celebration, during most of the broadcast the aforementioned 'sphere of consensus' seems to prevail (Hallin, 1986). Only at a few brief moments is this euphoric atmosphere interrupted. When Mario Gómez, for instance, reaches the surface, one of the commentators adopts a more dramatic tone and affirms that 'this is a symbol of the strength, but also of the suffering of our country'. Later on, another explains how, just a few days before the tragedy, Gómez had warned the management at the San José mine about the potential danger of an accident of this sort. Another mention of the owners of the mine is made at the end of the rescue:

Reporter: 70 days of overtime pay is what [the men] expect from the owners of the mine; this is another issue we will be analysing in the following days, the level of responsibility behind this accident that the courts are already investigating.

(Rescue of Luis Urzúa, 9:33)

It is perhaps revealing that this observation is made once all the men are safe, hence, when the media event is over. In fact, this type of commentary is not predominant during the rescue. Furthermore, if media events are about the construction of a collective 'we' (Dayan, 2008), the coverage of TVN seems to follow this line. Chile is represented as a united country –to which even the reporters express their belonging- that has successfully confronted an extremely difficult and unprecedented situation, gaining the admiration of the entire world. The miners are portrayed as heroes; the authorities are seen as the key actors behind this historic achievement. In consequence, it can be suggested that the narrative of TVN is *loyal* to the one proposed by the organiser of the event.

*'And here they are, united': the emotional narrative of the BBC*

The narrative told by the BBC seems to share some of the features already discussed in the case of TVN. Both of them agree on the historicity of the event, which is permanently emphasised by the commentators. For instance, when José Henríquez is rescued, they highlight the complexity of the operation and how an effort like this has never been accomplished before; a similar observation is made when Franklin Lobos and Florencio Ávalos reach the surface, and when Luis Urzúa is saved, they affirm that 'this is the most exciting human drama you can imagine'. Furthermore, they remark that certain elements should be a source of pride for Chile, such as the capsule especially conceived for the occasion:

Reporter: Look at Fénix II. It's a bit battered, the paint is cheap, but it's worth its weight in gold. The Chilean Navy must be immensely proud of this. They designed this capsule.

(Rescue of Raúl Bustos, 0:36)

Another common characteristic is the portrayal of the miners as heroes, although the emphasis is on different aspects. While Mario Gómez is praised for being a local legend in his native town Copiapó, most of the admiration is grounded on the bodies of the 33. In several occasions –such as with Juan Illanes, José Ojeda or Carlos Mamani- the commentators express their surprise and delight at their impressive physical condition, praising the diet the men received while still trapped underground, and perhaps implying that they *should* have been in a much worse state.

Like TVN, BBC also follows the story using the images of the official broadcast. Only very rarely –much less frequently than TVN- they include images of a complementary camera. In addition, the BBC reporters are continuously speaking and hardly ever allow the images to speak for themselves. Probably, this may have to do with linguistic reasons, because they not only have to narrate or interpret what is seen on screen, but also translate it. Their attitude towards the pictures, however, is mainly descriptive and while the tone is generally cheerful, only on a few occasions –like during the rescue of the first and the last miner- it reaches the same heights of excitement expressed by TVN. Interestingly, although the commentators repeatedly praise the rescue, their remarks do not seem to have the same degree of involvement and participation evidenced in the Chilean television broadcast. In fact, they adopt a position of mere observers, which is made particularly explicit when saying that they are admiring *scenes* and *pictures*:

Reporter: Oh, fantastic pictures from here, from this mine.

(Rescue of Juan Illanes, 1:14)

Reporter: Here we go, Jimmy Sánchez now. My goodness, what scenes here tonight.

(Rescue of Jimmy Sánchez, 0:05)

Reporter: Fantastic pictures here from the top of this mine shaft.

(Rescue of Carlos Mamani, 1:25)

Reporter: These extraordinarily close-up images, of the emotions that these people are going through, and always you have these beaming smiles.

(Rescue of José Henríquez, 1:28)

Due to the nature of BBC as a global media company, it is hardly surprising that they do not adopt the same nationalistic tone of TVN. In fact, in the case of the former, most of the narrative seems to pay attention to the emotions lived by the miners and their families. Sometimes, this approach apparently appeals to a certain universalism:

Reporter: [There are] always emotional hugs, kisses, tears.

(Rescue of Carlos Barrios, 0:30)

Reporter: Big smile, big hug for his daughter, his partner, his mother. A cluster of reunion and affection.

(Rescue of Claudio Acuña, 0:50)

Reporter: Oh, what can beat a mother and child reunion?

(Rescue of Daniel Herrera, 1:30)

This emotional perspective is adopted towards the authorities as well. In fact, in the case of the Chilean President, he is much more personalised in comparison with the Chilean television. He is praised for the way he handled the crisis, there are references to his feelings and to the popularity he has gained due to the rescue, and also, it is remarked that, in contrast with the miners, he is a billionaire born into a wealthy family. The establishment of this difference, however, is not seen as evidence of a conflict of classes, but rather as another element that emphasises the sense of unity which pervades on the occasion. This point is made explicit during the rescue of the last miner, Luis Urzúa. Although TVN had hinted this relation to some extent, BBC makes it much more evident:

Reporter: The boss below ground hugging the boss above ground. They come from totally different backgrounds. One is a millionaire, born to great wealth and the other is a simple miner, not making bad money, but certainly not wealthy. They come from two totally different ends of the spectrum, and here they are, united.

(Rescue of Luis Urzúa, 1:40)



Fig. 5 – The families and the President as portrayed by BBC

(Source: BBC News)

The shots of this scene mainly focus on Urzúa and the President, offering a few general images of the operation but several close-ups of the faces of both men, in what may give the impression that the miner and the authority are represented at the same level. But as Jewitt and Oyama (2001) point out, the constructive nature of visual symbolic relations implies that they can portray as equals people who are actually in uneven power relations. Moreover, a closer analysis shows that most of the time the shots are actually following the facial expressions of the President. Conversely, in a particularly revealing moment, the complementary BBC camera depicts the celebration of the families with a distant and barely visible panoramic shot, a huge contrast with the close-up centred on the face of the Head of State.

Furthermore, the coverage does not seem to give place to disruptive voices. For instance, when at the end of the rescue, miner Luis Urzúa talks to the President, one of the first statements he makes is, 'I hope this will never happen again'. The reporters of BBC, however, do not translate that phrase; rather they comment on the eyes of Sebastián Piñera - interpreting them as filled with emotion-, the admiration he expresses towards the courage and loyalty of the miners and his invitation to sing the Chilean national anthem. The focus is, again, on the authority. Consequently, although the narrative of BBC does not follow exactly the same patterns of TVN and has some distinctive features, it still remains *loyal* to the base narrative or, at least, does not represent a significant challenge to it.

## Discussion

Which narratives can be identified in local and global television during the live broadcast of the rescue of the Chilean miners? Are they hegemonic and cohesive or, on the contrary, do they give place to disruptive and contradictory voices? These are the questions which have guided this study and which this section has attempted to explore.

Even though TVN and BBC are telling basically the same story and sharing some characteristics in their coverage –such as highlighting the unprecedented nature of the occasion and representing the miners as heroes-, the analysis shows that they differ in their interpretations and emphasis, presenting different accounts. While the narratives constructed are not pure, in general terms, TVN adopted a much more nationalistic tone, with its reporters celebrating not only the success of *Operación San Lorenzo*, but also expressing their pride for the accomplishment of the rescue and representing the whole country as feeling part of the rejoicing. BBC, on the other hand, assumed a slightly more distant and descriptive position, in which the commentators were observers mostly focused on human emotions, detached of any links with a specific nation-state and, consequently, with a more universal appeal. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the attention paid to the emotions could be related to a limited cultural knowledge of the local situation as well, echoing what sometimes happens when a media event is interpreted in different ways by global television (Kennett and De Moragas, 2008).

The fact that the coverage on both stations shows differences seems to confirm one of the criticisms made to the original framework of Dayan and Katz (1992), about how the diversity of representations of the same media event increases when looking at it from a global perspective (Hepp and Couldry, 2010). Furthermore, it may support the argument that media events, instead of having an articulate identity, possess a thematic core around which different depictions -and meanings- arise (Hepp and Couldry, 2010; Hoover, 2010). Accordingly, it has been implied that in this abundance of narratives there is space for reinterpretations or ‘hijackings’ of the event (Dayan, 2008; Price, 2008). However, the broadcasting of the rescue of the Chilean miners suggests that the assumed polyphonic character of these events may hide a more complex phenomenon: the outlined suspicion that this apparent multiplicity of voices is somewhat limited *during* the event, given that, at least in the case analysed, the space for disruptive or subversive accounts is, at best, scarce.

To illustrate this point, it is interesting to take into account what was not said by the commentators. As discussed earlier, in spite of some remarks made by TVN, the coverage was

largely uncontroversial on both stations. Issues like the responsibility of the owners of the mine in the accident, the poor security conditions of the excavation site, or the fierce control of communications imposed by the government, were all barely mentioned by the narrators, albeit some of these issues were published by the media in preceding weeks and also after the rescue (see, for instance, O'Shaughnessy, 2010; Macqueen, 2011). Consequently, it would seem that a diversity of readings of a media event does not secure *per se* the possibility of disruptive voices, counter-narratives or challenges to the power structures in a society, as it appears to be assumed by some authors (Price, 2008; Hepp and Couldry, 2010; Hoover, 2010). Furthermore, this observation echoes the findings of other studies mentioned earlier, which demonstrate how, despite the controversies which surrounded the preparations of Beijing 2008, the live broadcast of the Games remained largely apolitical in global media (Kennett and De Moragas, 2008; Fernández Peña et al, 2010).

In his reformulation of the concept of media events, Dayan argues that the Olympic Games resemble the format of a television reality show, in which, due to the legal and contractual impositions made by the organiser, 'variability is accepted but only within limits' (2008: 392). Furthermore, according to Panagiotopoulou (in Qing, 2010), the reason behind this absence of criticisms is based on the high cost of the broadcasting fees of the Games and the attraction they create in the audience. While a more categorical answer is beyond the scope of this study, these observations may provide some insight to explain why, in the case of the rescue of the Chilean miners, the coverage of TVN and BBC, although different, remained fairly *loyal* to the narrative proposed by the organiser. Perhaps, this may have to do with the fact that both stations –like practically every other television channel that transmitted the operation in real time- depended heavily on the images provided by the Chilean government. Interestingly, some journalists have accused the authorities of manipulating the images during specific moments of the live broadcast, to disguise, for instance, that an avalanche occurred inside the mine while they were still rescuing the workers (Franklin, 2011). The fact that this issue remained unnoticed by the broadcasters around the world could be interpreted as a successful achievement for the organiser in terms of the controls imposed during the event (Price, 2008).

Additionally, it might be suggested that, because of the extraordinary nature of the event, in the local and global media, a 'sphere of consensus' prevailed (Hallin, 1986; Schudson, 2006), in which the most contended issues regarding the accident and the rescue were suspended in favour of more important interests. Nonetheless, if media events, as argued, are *performative* constructions, that raises the question of who defines what that higher interest is. Is it the Chilean government? Or the media organisations? And while Dayan expresses concern about

the persistence of this 'sphere of consensus' *beyond* exceptional moments (Dayan, 2008; Chin, 2010), what is the cost of its predominance *during* the event? In this case, it seems that the price to pay is displacing the families to a secondary role, praising the authorities, forgetting the *causes* of this accident and overlooking the words of Luis Urzúa, the last miner, at the end of the rescue –'This should never happen again'.

## CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, two different forms of understanding media events have dominated the literature. One of them, represented by the original framework of Dayan and Katz (1992), proposes that these extraordinary situations have positive hegemonic effects and cohesive identities. The other one, which seems to predominate nowadays, supports the argument that media events are performative constructions, open to a multiplicity of voices and readings, which may challenge or reinforce social structures of power (Dayan, 2008; Price, 2008; McCurdy, 2009; Hepp and Couldry, 2010; Ribes, 2010). Using the rescue of the Chilean miners as a case study, the findings suggest that, although some of the criticisms and reformulations made to the original concept of media events may prove correct, the assumed polyphonic character can distract from the fact that this apparent diversity of voices does not guarantee the presence of disruptive or subversive narratives.

A first implication is related with the identity of media events. While the changes experimented in the current period of globalisation have evidenced a higher degree of variability in these occurrences, in comparison with the original proposition of Dayan and Katz (Hepp and Couldry, 2010), it may well be the case that media events –at least when considering their live aspect- are much more cohesive and restricted to what some scholars (such as Price, 2008; or Hepp and Couldry, 2010) have observed. Consequently, although Dayan may be right about the dubious single identity of media events (2008), it is not possible to assume that because of this they may necessarily be hijacked. In other words, a difference in narratives might not imply that media are less *loyal* to the message proposed by the organiser.

Secondly, albeit audiences can endorse these narratives in different manners, (Kyriakidou, 2008), it is relevant to keep in mind that the discursive and performative nature of media events is related to issues of power (Couldry, 2003; Cottle, 2006; Hepp and Couldry, 2010). Accordingly, what is highlighted and what is overlooked during the event may serve to promote one particular point of view over another (Iedema, 2001). While it is not possible to determine a straightforward relationship, it is interesting to observe that, after the rescue, the

popularity of Chilean President Sebastián Piñera temporarily rose (Rayner, 2010), and Chile's international image improved (Anholt, 2010). Nonetheless, almost a year later, nobody has been prosecuted for the causes that provoked the accident and 31 of the 33 Chilean miners have decided to sue the government and the owners of the mine (Macqueen, 2011).

Given the limited nature and scope of this research –a qualitative study, focussed on the coverage of one specific event by two media institutions-, any attempt of generalisation may be questionable. In order to reach a more categorical answer to the questions posed, future research should not only consider the perspective of audiences (Kyriakidou, 2008), but perhaps, a comparative examination with other media events and also in a wider array of local and global television stations. In any case, it can be relevant to observe that, while the estimated audience of 1 billion spectators (Bachman, 2010; Franklin, 2011) may illustrate that the rescue of the miners was a moment of 'maximum visibility' (Fiske, 1994), only a reduced number of individuals had direct access to the operation. Therefore, people from all over the world had to trust –or to distrust, one may add- the narratives constructed and shown on television (Roche, 2000).

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## APPENDIXES

### Chronology of the rescue (based on Franklin, 2011)

- **5<sup>th</sup> August 2010:** At lunchtime, the San José mine, in the north of Chile, collapses leaving 33 workers trapped 688 metres under tonnes of rock. The news spreads throughout the country. Chilean President Sebastián Piñera hears the story during an official visit to Ecuador and decides that the government will assume the responsibility of the rescue.
- **7<sup>th</sup> August:** Laurence Golborne, Mining Minister, arrives at the mine to organise the first stages of the rescue operation.
- **22<sup>nd</sup> August:** The miners attach a note to a drill which reaches them. The message reads: 'We are all well in the shelter - the 33 of us'.
- **23<sup>rd</sup> August:** The men receive for the first time liquid and rations of food from the surface. Before that, they had survived drinking polluted water and one spoon of tuna every 24 hours. Reporters from all over the world begin to arrive at the mine.
- **26<sup>th</sup> August:** The Chilean government releases a nine-minute video with images of the men inside the mine. The video is broadcasted the following day on television at prime time.
- **29<sup>th</sup> August:** Plan A begins: drilling towards the miners, the first attempt to rescue the men.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> September:** Plan B begins, which will prove to be the one that succeeds in reaching the 33 men.
- **11<sup>th</sup> September:** The government coordinates a third rescue effort, Plan C.
- **9<sup>th</sup> October:** The drill of Plan B reaches the men.
- **12<sup>th</sup> October:** In the evening, the rescue begins.
- **13<sup>th</sup> October:** Just after midnight, Florencio Ávalos becomes the first miner to reach the surface. During the following 22 hours, the other 32 miners are saved, bringing *Operación San Lorenzo* to an end.

**Analysed videos**TVN (Source: [www.tvn.cl](http://www.tvn.cl))

Number	Name (as it appears on the website)	Length
1	¡Florencio Ávalos es rescatado de la mina!	3:32
2	Derrochando energía sale Mario Sepúlveda	5:40
3	Llega Juan Illanes a la superficie	4:59
4	Sale boliviano Carlos Mamani	4:47
5	Rescatan a Jimmy Sánchez, el minero más joven	3:57
6	Osmán Araya llega a la superficie y es el sexto rescatado	4:03
7	Rescatan a José Ojeda, el hombre del primer mensaje	7:00
8	Claudio 'fumarola' Yáñez es el octavo rescatado	5:46
9	Mario Gómez es el noveno minero rescatado	6:21
10	Alex Vega es el décimo minero rescatado	5:07
11	Jorge Galleguillos es el undécimo minero rescatado	5:20
12	Fanático de Elvis es el duodécimo rescatado	4:54
13	Emotivo Rescate de Víctor Zamora	4:58
14	Rescatan al 'escritor' de los 33	3:29
15	Daniel Herrera es el número 16 en ser rescatado	5:09
16	Emotivo rescate de Omar Reygadas	7:04
17	Esteban Rojas es el número 18 en ser rescatado	4:11
18	Pablo Rojas es el 19 en salir y lo recibe su hijo	4:04
19	Darío Segovia es el minero 20 en salir	4:00
20	Yonni Barrios se convirtió en el rescatado número 21	5:14
21	Samuel Ávalos es el rescatado 22 en salir de la mina	5:03
22	Carlos Bugeño es el rescatado número 23	4:49
23	José Henríquez es el minero 24 en salir de la mina	3:50
24	Renán Ávalos es el número 25 en regresar de la mina	4:15
25	Claudio Acuña se convirtió en el rescatado 26	3:56
26	Futbolista Franklin Lobos es el rescatado 27	5:55
27	Richard Villarroel es el rescatado 28	7:47
28	Sale Juan Carlos Aguilar y faltan sólo 4 mineros	5:22
29	Raúl Bustos llega a la superficie y faltan tres	6:07
30	Rescatan a Pedro Cortez y faltan dos mineros	5:00
31	Rescatan a Ariel Ticona y sólo falta Luis Urzúa	12:17
32	Sale Luiz Urzúa y los 33 fueron rescatados	9:50

**BBC** (Source: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/))

Number	Name (as it appears on the website)	Length
1	First Chile miner rescued after 69 days underground	2:05
2	Second Chile miner's euphoria at surface	1:57
3	Third Chile miner, Juan Illanes, reunited with wife	2:00
4	Sixth Chile miner, Osman Araya, weeps at family reunion	1:47
5	Master driller Jose Oyeda Vidal is seventh rescued Chile miner	1:58
6	Rescue for youngest Chile miner, Jimmy Sanchez	1:58
7	Ninth rescued miner, Mario Gomez, emerges from Chile rescue shaft	2:26
8	Bolivian flags greet fourth trapped miner, Carlos Mamani	1:43
9	10th Chile miner reaches surface in rescue capsule	1:27
10	Eleventh Chile miner, Jorge Galleguillos, is brought to safety	1:35
11	12th Chile miner reaches surface as camera films rescue tunnel	2:06
12	Thirteenth miner, Carlos Barrios, emerges from rescue shaft	2:08
13	Fourteenth Chile miner Victor Zamora brought to safety	2:53
14	Sixteenth Chile miner Daniel Herrera's joy at reaching surface	2:12
15	Seventeenth Chile trapped miner emerges from rescue shaft	1:57
16	Mr Segovia is twentieth man rescued from San Jose mine	1:54
17	23rd Chile miner Carlos Bugueno's joy at rescue	2:13
18	Preacher miner reaches the surface in Chile	1:35
19	25th miner rescued from Chile's San Jose mine	2:15
20	26th Chile miner, Claudio Acuna, embraces family	1:52
21	Footballer becomes 27th miner rescued from Chile mine	2:33
22	Emotional reunion for 28th rescued miner in Chile	1:44
23	Reunion for 29th miner rescued in Chile	2:20
24	Water supply leader miner rescued in Chile	2:28
25	Last of 33 miners rescued in Chile	1:59

**Other videos\***

Number	Name	Length
1	Gobierno de Chile: Rescue of the 33 Chilean miners	4:15
2	'Miners rescue has united Chile', interview with President Sebastián Piñera on BBC News	2:20
3	'Sebastian Pinera: Chile united after miner rescue', interview with President Sebastián Piñera on The Telegraph video	1:45
4	Rescue of Luis Urzúa, BBC (long version)	7:41

\*Sources:

1. <http://www.gob.cl/rescate-mineros-san-jose/rescue-of-the-33-chilean-miners/>
2. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-11539083>
3. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/chile/8063289/Sebastian-Pinera-Chile-united-after-miner-rescue.html>
4. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRdy2gx8\\_Kc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRdy2gx8_Kc)

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