The fictional and transmedia representation of the urban space in the historical thriller: *La Peste*

La representación ficcional y transmedia del espacio urbano en el *thriller* histórico: *La Peste*

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ABSTRACT: La Peste series (Movistar Plus+) represented a pre-pandemic benchmark in transmedia and hybrid (online and offline) fictional storytelling. This research delves into the keys for the construction of suspense through the development of interactive actions that place the public in a leading position in the story through the dialogue between geographical, fictional and expanded space. Therefore, we will examine the resignification of the city through the image built up by the participation of the viewer –in the series– and the user –in the transmedia actions–. We address both the study of the fictional and augmented space, taking into account the territory occupied by the different strata that made up the city in the sixteenth century, and the processes of expansion of the contents through interactive cartographies, *movie maps*, and Alternative Reality Games (ARG). As a result, we observe an expansion of the series through the metaphor of the map in an expedition that flits between past and present; fiction and reality; geographical space and cyberspace; the traditional medium –television series– and multiplatform formats, which produces at the same time a novel approach to the urban space of Seville from an experiential perspective.

Keywords: alternative reality game (ARG); expanded reality; experiential fiction; historical thriller; interactive cartography; *movie map*; Movistar+; postdigital; transmedia; urban space.

RESUMEN: La serie *La Peste* (Movistar Plus+) supuso un referente prepandémico en el planteamiento de relatos ficcionales basados en estrategias transmedia de carácter híbrido (online y offline). La presente investigación ahonda en las claves para la construcción del suspense a través del desarrollo de acciones interactivas que sitúan al público en una posición protagónica en la historia mediante el diálogo entre el espacio geográfico, ficcional y expandido. Por tanto, examinaremos la resignificación de la ciudad a través de la imagen construida por la participación del espectador –en la serie– y del usuario –en las acciones transmedia–. Se aborda tanto el estudio del espacio ficcional y aumentado, teniendo en cuenta el territorio que conformaba la ciudad en el siglo XVI, como los procesos de ampliación de los contenidos a través de cartografías interactivas, *movie maps* y juegos de realidad alternativa (ARG). Como resultado, observamos una expansión de la serie mediante la metáfora del mapa en una expedición entre el pasado y el presente; la ficción y la realidad; el espacio geográfico y el ciberespacio; el medio tradicional –serie televisiva– y los formatos multiplataforma, produciéndose al mismo tiempo una nueva aproximación al espacio urbano sevillano desde un enfoque experiencial.

Palabras clave: juego de realidad alternativa (ARG); realidad expandida; ficción experiencial; *thriller* histórico; cartografía interactiva; *movie map*; Movistar Plus+; postdigital; transmedia; espacio urbano.

1. Introduction

The relationship between audiovisual productions and the role of the space is essential to understand the potential of hybrid environments in the new post-digital narrative strategies –between the analog and the digital (Pepperell, 2000; Bolognini, 2008)–, however, it continues to be an emerging topic in the Spanish-speaking academic tradition. Cinema, despite being a great support for the creation of the collective imagination about places, has not been practically used by geographers to create links with the space (Gámir Orueta y Manuel Valdés, 2007; Gámir Orueta, 2012), with the exception of the Anglo-Saxon area, where we find outstanding referents in the field of cultural geography, such as Aitken and Zonn (1994), Cresswell and Dixon (2002) or Clarke (2005). In the Hispanic-American sphere, we find works that relate fictional series to some specific aspect of space (Martos Ortiz, 2012; Charlois, 2018; Chicharro Merayo, 2011; García-Sahagún and Arquero Blanco, 2019; Bellone, 2019), and also research that addresses transmedia actions in series (Tur-Viñes and Rodríguez Ferrándiz, 2014; Cortés-Gómez, Martínez-Borda and De la Fuente Prieto, 2016; Scolari and Establés, 2017; Villén Higueras and Ruiz del Olmo; 2020). However, studies on space in both scenarios are still scarce: the space shown in the series –fictional– and its relationship with the one that appears in the transmedia formula, understood as the fusion between the lived territory and the mediated (Gámir Orueta, 2012) –expanded–, and the geographical.

For this reason, in this text we will analyze the urban space of the city of Seville through its presence in the series *La Peste* (Corral and Félez, 2018-2019) –a historical thriller directed by Alberto Rodríguez made up of two self-concluding seasons (Movistar, 2022)– and in the transmedia strategy carried out for its promotion. Specifically, it is intended to examine the role of space in the generation of suspense, therefore, we will consider a common link to the fictional and expanded space: the user's participation through the appearance of clues that enrich the knowledge or information they have about the fictional universe of *La Peste*. This phenomenon can be seen in the series when the leading character advances in the discovery of the different clues that lead him to solve the mystery and, in the transmedia strategy, through the discoveries made by the user to decipher the enigma. For this purpose, the urban space of Seville is explored, both in the series and in the multiplatform actions, having a leading role in the whole process. This geographical, fictional, and expanded tour has an impact on how the audience as viewer -the series– and user –transmedia strategies– conceives the city, concluding in a resignification of it through the information and the experience provided. To examine this epistemological shift, we will be aided by "environmental images," the result of a two-way process between the observer and his or her environment, whereby the image of a given reality may vary considerably from one observer to another (Lynch, 2018, p. 16). Experience and participation may, as we shall see, affect this prior conception of urban space.

The choice of the *La Peste* series for this study is motivated by two relevant facts: the prominence of Seville in the narrative and the fact that it is the largest alternative reality game created in Spain so far (El Cañonazo Transmedia, 2020). Thanks to the documentation provided by Movistar Plus+ and those responsible for the action of El Cañonazo Transmedia -the agency that carried out the transmedia strategies of both series' two seasons-, we know that the objectives of the project revolved around three axes: audience participation, engagement, and notoriety. The fundamental objectives of the research are summarized in the following points:

1. Find out how suspense is built through space, both in the series and in the promotional transmedia strategies. To this end, an analysis of the fictional and geographical space in relation with the expanded space will be carried out.

2. Examine the redefinition of the Sevillian space after the filming, media coverage and transmedia actions of *La Peste*. For this, the data on the impact of the series on the city will be collected and the degree to which the participation of the viewer/user in the transmedia actions has contributed to the reformulation of the environmental image of Seville will be evaluated.

3. Analyze the role of the public in transmedia strategies based on hybrid actions, where a dialogue is established between the geographical, fictional, and expanded space. This will allow us to delve into the different modes of interaction in the post-digital era, both from the fictional environment and from the urban territory and the expanded space through the integration of connectivity and new technologies.

2. Reference framework

2.1. Thriller, city, and historical representation: the case of Seville

The audiovisual representation of the urban territory plays an essential role in the configuration of imaginaries around it, by exceeding the materiality of reality (Lapsley, 2005) and producing a totally different portrait of the same city (Sorlin, 2001). Considering Spanish film productions, this distinction is evident when we think of the outlying, marginalized Madrid suburbs portrayed in *Faster, Faster* (*Deprisa, Deprisa*, Carlos Saura, 1981) as opposed to the cosmopolitan and underground Madrid of *Pepi, Luci Bom and Other Girls Like Mom* (*Pepi, Luci Bom y otras chicas del montón*, Pedro Almodóvar, 1980).

In the case of the thriller, this relationship is especially important because of the centrality of the city as the scene of a contradictory modernity that exposes the rationalized control of public space to the potential intrusion of a danger that destabilizes the order (Rubin, 1999). The audiovisual representation of the city is also determined by two other elements typical of thrillers: mystery and suspense. The suspense precedes the accomplishment of the facts and places the viewer before a sense of tension that points to two logically opposed outcomes, in which one of the alternative outcomes is morally correct, while the other is morally incorrect and socially rejected (Carroll, 2001). Consequently, suspense and mystery contribute to creating an image of the city that insists on the uncertainty and that awakens the encounter with the unknown.

The case chosen for this article, Seville, has also been a protagonist within the thriller genre, in several works. Despite approaching the city from a different slant, its streets and squares play a major role in the construction of the narrative. In *Unit 7* (*Grupo 7*, Alberto Rodríguez, 2012), the city prior to the 1992 Universal Exposition and the important task of making it a safe city for the event to pass off successfully, serves as a backdrop. In *Bye* (*Adiós*, Paco Cabezas, 2019), the conflictive neighborhood on the outskirts of Seville known as *Las 3000 Viviendas* (The 3000 Dwellings), and its high levels of criminality and marginalization, is the setting for the investigation carried out by some parents who, due to a car accident, have lost their daughter. In *Nobody knows Anybody* (*Nadie conoce a nadie*, Mateo Gil, 1999), Holy Week

in Seville serves as the setting for the events that lead the main character to participate in an involuntary role-playing game, in which the cartographic representation of the clues and the labels of specific places, the model of the city and the map of the protagonist, draw a route of their locations that facilitate both the tourist to visit this place and also the configuration of a mental image (Tovar Vicente and Bogas Ríos, 2019, p. 13).

In the film and transmedia universe of *La Peste*, the representation of Seville goes beyond the purely geographic to delve into temporality by offering a hybridization between the thriller and the historical genre. This characteristic, typical of the postmodern stories that have emerged since the eighties and nineties, also responds to the creative experimentation of generic formulas that have taken place since the emergence of the genre (Altman, 2000). Therefore, the concerns of the thriller coexist with the search for an adequate visual reconstruction of the places or characters to achieve the credibility of the viewer from the dynamics of the recreation that proposes an immersion in the fiction of the reality that it presents. Thus, *La Peste* shows an apparently real and documented image of an imaginary city that is supported by the cinematographic immersion (Žižek, 2005, p. 19). In the narrative itself, it can be seen how, despite being set in the final years of the 16th century and anachronistically locating the plague epidemic of 1647, the plot focuses on drawing a city whose twists and alleys favor mystery and suspense.

This historical thriller is presented as an ideal case study for exploring three aspects. First, the audiovisual representation of its past allows it to become a heterotopia or non-place that excludes contemporary perception (González Calle and Monteserín Abella, 2021) and turns it into a strange place. In fact, the preeminence of recreation in the historical genre and the non-recognition of buildings and streets that were part of this city connect with the primacy of suspense in the construction of the thriller. Finally, the context of the plague epidemic also combines perfectly with the configuration of the city as an unsafe territory. The expansion of the city of Seville beyond its walls, and the persistent reference to the opening and closing of the city gates to contain the infection favors the portrayal of a suffocating atmosphere with danger always lurking in the form of disease or a crime that some inhabitant may commit on the protagonists. Through this double game, Seville becomes an added character thanks to the visual privilege that cinema grants to the territory (Gámir Orueta and Manuel Valdés, 2007). Thus, the achievement of clues through filmic and transmedia narration insists on the urban protagonism, expanding the purely televisual limits.

2.2. The city as a game board: transmedia cartographies and ARG

In the process of describing geographic space as an object of mass consumption, it is worth mentioning the updating of the "new genre of geographic culture" (Gámir Orueta and Manuel Valdés, 2007), which began with the incorporation of the photographic and cinematographic media at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Today, the interest of geographers in the representation of territorial elements in the collective imaginary has been revitalized through the incorporation of interconnectivity and digital convergence (Bolter and Grusin, 1998; Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins et al., 2013). As Scolari points out, "If a few years ago we all talked about multimedia and interactivity, now the keywords are convergence and transmedia" (2013, p. 16). By transmedia, we understand those stories that expand through multiple media and communication platforms in integrated productions in which the content generated by the users is the protagonist (Fernández-Castrillo & Cirio, 2022; Scolari, 2022) and in which the plot is established from " (…) a network of characters, events, places, times and means" (Scolari, 2013, p. 36).

The increasing creative use of new information and communication technologies in the audiovisual representation of territory poses new epistemological challenges when it comes to establishing the differences and meeting points between real and fictional space. Based on the idea that filmic images are not faithful reproductions of geographical space, *La Peste* marks a milestone in terms of both the rupture of spatial continuity and the territorial representation

of Seville. The innovative nature of this series is aligned with the interest of Originals Movistar Plus+ to explore the experiential character in the expansion of the diegetic universe of its series through the proposal of a series of transmedia actions in real augmented spaces. According to Miriam Lagoa[1], head of the Original Production Transmedia Department at Movistar Plus+ during the series shooting, this is a promotion and loyalty strategy for its productions that also contributes to the positioning of the platform itself and, in the case at hand, that of the city being filmed (Cortés-Gómez, 2016; Sequera, 2013).

Starting from the post-digital condition (Negroponte, 1998; Andrews, 2002; Taffel, 2015; Fernández-Castrillo, 2009 and 2021), there is a tendency to smooth the transition between online and offline reality present in the dynamics of hypersocialization marked by a great fluidity regarding the connection with the physical and digital environment. In this sense, the role of the user is essential in activating both spheres in a spatio-temporal continuum in which old and new media are interconnected to enrich the fictional experience. Therefore, we are not looking at a passive audience, but rather a collaborative one as an essential part of the transmedia strategy approach (Bruns, 2008 and 2010).

Within the framework of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009; Burgess and Green, 2009), the need arises to delve into the experiential (Hills, 2017) as a distinctive element of transmediation today and the backbone of the expansion of the narrative universe of *La Peste* through an original use of space. Indeed, as has been pointed out, the urban environment occupies a leading role both in the series and in the extra material, based fundamentally on gamification and the generation of content by the audience, turning Seville into the largest game board in Spain (Molina, 2019). In geographical terms, this type of actions follows in the wake of chorographic descriptions or the incorporation of maps in travel stories as cartographic extensions that contribute to enrich the discourse by means of an approximation as plausible as possible to the territory in which the story takes place.

Focusing on the case study at hand, in the design of the transmedia strategy of the first season, the prominence of cartography as a vehicle of temporal (16th-century vs. 21st-century Seville) and metafictional (fictional representation vs. historical and present reality) union stands out. While in the second season we witness an extension of the two-dimensional format of the map through multiple resources such as the incorporation of a virtual reality (VR) installation or an alternative reality game (ARG) to collect clues and solve the questions raised by this historical thriller. We are in the presence of the exemplification of the evolution of the "mediatized space" (Gámir Orueta, 2012), transmitted not only from an audiovisual perspective but also from a multisensory one, towards one lived not from the memory but from the direct intervention in the present reality. In this sense, from El Cañonazo Transmedia, those responsible for the creative project recall that the main challenge consisted of returning to the past from a contemporary perspective and narrative:

> Of course, traveling back almost 500 years in time was a long journey. And, for any journey, what is needed is a map. This is how it happened. At first, it was the map (...) A contemporary street map to know the Seville of the 16th century and its reflection in the 21st century, to know where to visit the fictional characters and the real historical characters that populated the Spain of the time (Esteban and Alcázar, 2018).

The fictional space is dominated by the representation of the Seville of The Renaissance in which an impeccable work of historical setting stands out through an important game of geographical recreation and composition of virtual scenarios to reproduce the spatial context of the time. In the interview given by Alcázar, the creative director recalled that the biggest challenge consisted of going beyond the traditional television consumption experience:

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[1] Miriam Lagoa and Luis Alcázar's statements have been extracted from the in-depth interviews conducted by the authors of this research in October 2021.

In season two, we translated the thriller genre in a way that television couldn't, allowing the viewer to become a character and engage in that detective investigation through the format of alternative reality games. Mentally, you had to go back to the 16th century, even playing from the 21st century, but that involvement was allowed while respecting the personality of the users who had to collect information in real locations on the streets of Seville. The culmination was the participation in the VR in which the paradox was that you were physically in one of the locations of *La Peste* and virtually in two other locations of the series.

Therefore, in line with the premises of the thriller genre, the experiential strategy of *La Peste* achieves a greater impact on the emotional state by sublimating the main story through the engagement of the audience as an active agent by proposing a series of physical and geographical actions to maximize the fictional experience.

2.2.1. The footprint of *La Peste* in the Sevillian community

The actions had a corresponding impact on the city, both in economic and tourism terms. The production company, Atipica Films, made a production schedule for the first season in which it estimated the series' investment in the city to be of €5,050,000. The success of the second season's actions was a milestone in the Spanish transmedia panorama: in the first 26 days, 78,000 users registered on the website (larutadelapeste.com), which had 663,000 hits, 124,000 logins, and an average duration of four minutes. The estimated final reach was 21 million visits and seven million users. The registrations almost tripled the figures for the sector's benchmark transmedia action. But there were also actions carried out within the city itself. Twenty-five challenges were set up and had to be overcome in Seville, that is to say, in the urban geographic space. The *Ruta de la tapa* (*Tapas Route*) was also held, with the participation of 21 hostelry establishments throughout the city. In fact, *La Casa de Gula* (*The House of Gluttony*), a permanent restaurant created with the décor of the fiction which has become an icon of the series in the center of Seville (El Cañonazo Transmedia, 2020).

At the same time, it also had a cultural and educational repercussion, in the line of spreading knowledge about the city in the 16th century and learning about how a practically local shoot is made: by an Andalusian production company and with a director born in Seville. The "*La Sevilla de La Garduña*" exhibition attracted 18,000 visitors. The Pablo de Olavide University, the University of Seville, the City Council, and Telefónica signed a collaboration agreement concerning the filming of the second season to provide internships for students in different fields (City Council of Seville, 2018). According to Antonio Muñoz, delegate of the Seville City Council's Urban Habitat, Culture, and Tourism department:

The benefits that this series, filmed entirely in Andalusia and almost always in natural spaces, is bringing to Seville and the international projection of the city that it will have through its airing are incalculable. So far, 500 professionals have worked on the series, and it has used 2,000 extras and will leave many other things that we will try to monetize beyond the second season (Molina, 2019).

In addition, the influence of the series reaches other locations where the filming took place. In Carmona, which recreates part of its locations, the impact of the two seasons of the series was €600,000, according to the Carmona Film Office, the office under the local City Council Delegation (Mallado, 2019).

3. Methodology

Our study analyzes the updating of the historical thriller from the implementation of hybrid communication strategies in which the integration of geographical, fictional and expanded space generates new narrative possibilities from transmedia and audiovisual perspectives.

In this sense, the city is depicted as an open space, full of clues to clear up the unknowns and solve the mystery that hangs over its streets.

The documentary management of the research sources consisted of:

Conducting in-depth interviews with the professionals in charge of the transmedia strategy of *La Peste*: Miriam Lagoa Vidal (now, Marketing and Transmedia, Buendía Estudios; then, Communication Department, Movistar TV) and Luis Alcázar (Creative Director, El Cañonazo).

Use of primary sources: unpublished documents provided by the professionals (production dossiers, locations, videos for internal use, etc.).

Compilation of secondary sources: professional, institutional, and academic documentation.

As a starting point, we took the management of information to be an unknown, both in the series and in the transmedia strategy. We assumed that there is uncertainty –from the approaches of De Wied, 2015 and Smut, 2008– in the ascertainment of leads or clues. Specifically, to analyze suspense in the search for information, we relied on the frustration or involvement of the subject when it comes to checking whether or not a clue advances the investigation since this generates emotion and, therefore, engagement (Arrojo & Martín, 2019). To this end, we then went on to analyze the moments in the series where the protagonist finds a clue or lead, as well as the transmedia actions based on the correlation of clues and the expansion of the diegetic context both through real and augmented space. Those are the moments in which the participation -and, therefore, the involvement- of the viewer-user is greater, so we will be interested in analyzing the presence of space in those moments.

The study of the fictional space was based on the analysis of eighty-two scenes from both the first and second seasons, whose common thread is –Mateo Núñez (Pablo Molinero)–, who acts as detective and leading character in the search for clues to solve the mystery. For this, the approaches of Henri Lefebvre (1974) –physical space (nature), mental (logic and formal abstractions) and social (space of human interaction)–, Yi Fu Tuan (1974, 1977) –spaces perceived through his sensitive relationship with the human being in sensory experiences– and Kevin Lynch (2018) –environmental image of spaces– have been considered to clarify which variables would be most relevant for our study. Thus, two phases of analysis have been established: one focused on physical characteristics that considers properties of the geographic space but also filmic ones (geographic and chronotopic variables), and another that addresses a more perceptive aspect that gives rise to the configured environmental image for the dialogues and panoramic views of the city in the series.

In the case of geographical variables, the limits of the space in the scene have been analyzed –interior, exterior, and mixed–. The first refers to indoor settings, such as residences and public places, the second focus on scenes whose action takes place outdoors, such as streets, beaches or forests, and the third combines both cases. Likewise, the relationship between diegetic and geographic space has been examined to establish the coincidence –real– or not –recreation–. In the case of the chronotopic space, the scenes have been analyzed based on the time of day –day or night–, the context based on the class society of the time –religious, common or noble– and the relevance of the space in the story – protagonist (it is important in the narration or actions of the characters), contextual (it accompanies the action aesthetically, but does not influence it) or irrelevant (it has no weight in the action or in the images)–. Likewise, in a second phase we have proceeded to collect, within the analyzed scenes, the verbal references of the characters to the city of Seville, as well as their visual presence on the screen, to build the environmental image of the series. Thus, "the image of a given reality can vary considerably from one observer to another" (Lynch, 2018, p. 16). The fiction associated with Lynch's meaning of the environmental manages to transform the sense of the urban space to relate it to the universe of *La Peste*.

Finally, in the spatial analysis of the transmedia strategy, we relied on the "topos" narrative (Klastrup and Tosca, 2004) as a central element in the configuration of the collective geographical imaginary through the recreation of the habitat in which the plot takes place. In the study of the role of Seville in the multiplatform expansion of the contents of *La Peste*, we give continuity to the territorial perspective by maintaining the categorization between the different places according to their position within the hierarchy of strata. In addition, we explore the dimensions that configure the creation of the expanded space, understood as the fusion between that space that is lived and that which is mediatized (Gámir, 2012), and its extension in the post-digital era because of the convergence between different spatial typologies based on an innovative methodology designed for this research according to the following categorization:

Augmented Space: a combination of physical and virtual elements by augmented reality technological devices (for ex. QR codes).

Virtual space: a simulated environment with real appearance based on the use of virtual reality (for ex. Smartglasses as Oculus Rift).

Cybernetic space or cyberspace: a dimension shared by users using electronic devices and digital networks.

Fictional space: a predominant physical context throughout the story.

Geographic space: a real or recreated scenario in which the narrative action takes place in the present.

Historical space: a place where the events in the past take place.

The analysis of transmedia content will focus precisely on the study of the expanded space, as an extension of fictional space through the geographical context and through the dissemination of various places of reception and participation both in the online (multiplatform) and offline (geographic) context. Therefore, it will be convenient to focus on that intermediate territory located between the fictional, physical, and increased space due to its importance not only in the reformulation of the collective geographical imaginary of the Seville capital but also for its impact on updating *movie maps* from a new perspective of *movie tourism*.

The user participation in the fictional narration and in the transmedia actions allows to achieve a personal and unique experience reinforced by the very nature of the thriller genre, which involves the viewer through the role of mystery.

4. Analysis of the Results

4.1. Analysis of the fictional and geographical space in *La Peste*

In the study of the series *La Peste* we observed some differences between both seasons. While in the first season several murders guide the story, in the second season it is the criminal plot that is the focus of attention. In fact, the analysis of the chosen scenes has revolved around two fundamental axes: one chronotopic and the other geographical, by attending to the intrinsic space-time relationship in fiction. In this sense, the series situates us in Seville at the end of the 16th century, characterized as one of the most flourishing urban enclaves of the Crown of Castile. However, as is the case with other titles of the genre, the nihilistic discourse of the city affects the decadence of a modernity lacking in values and where insecurity reigns (Herrera Gil, 2019). In fact, the protagonism of a city that suffocates, encloses, elevates, and marginalizes its inhabitants, whose urban plan favors the expansion of the plague (Season 1) or the concealment of the criminal group known as La Garduña (Season 2), is insisted on.

Table 1. Chronotopic variables extracted from the fictional analysis

Time of day			Relevance of the space to the story			Context		
Day	Night	Not indicated	Irrelevant	Central	Contextual	Religious	Common	Noble
64.63%	32.93%	2.44%	26.83%	29.27%	43.90%	13.41%	78.05%	8.54%

Source: table compiled in-house

Table 2. Geographic variables extracted from the fictional analysis

Boundaries of the space in the scene			Relationship to the current space	
Interior	Exterior	Mixed	Real	Recreation
59.76%	28.05%	15.85%	9.75%	90.24%

Source: table compiled in-house

First of all, the use of light and the play of interiors/exteriors was one of the characteristics analyzed. On the one hand, the presence of interiors is greater by more than half (59.76%) than scenes shot in exteriors (28.05%), with some cases where in the same scene there are mixed boundaries (interiors and exteriors) (15.85%). In fact, all the spaces that appear in exteriors correspond to the shots where the activity of the common stratum is staged. On the other hand, the scenes are mostly daytime (64.63%), breaking with the predominant tendency of thrillers to associate the night with criminality and whose time frame favors the carrying out of crimes and exposes the fragility of the individual before his encounter with other strangers (Rundell, 2014). In *La Peste*, the day serves both for the discovery of the corpses (Season 1, Image 1) or for the pursuit of the *La Garduña* band through the narrow and labyrinthine streets by Mateo (Season 2).

Figure 1. Mateo discovering the first corpse in the poor suburb

Source: Episode 1x2 of La peste (Corral and Félez, 2017-2018)

Secondly, the use of atmospheric light and the regularity or irregularity of the streets have made it possible to recreate a danger that stems from the separating borders between neighborhoods in 16th-century Seville. Even though there is not such a marked social segregation, in the narration three spaces associated with three estates can be distinguished: noble, religious, and common stratum. Thus, a considerable majority of the scenes are in those associated with the common stratum, both the poor strata (up to twenty scenes have been counted in the poor suburb outside the city walls) and the mercantile groups, money changers or wealthy bourgeoisie –where the Royal Mint or the factory of Teresa's family are located. Despite the religious permeation in all aspects of life of the city, the scenes developed in places belonging to this class are reduced to specific spaces such as the prison of the Inquisition, the *Hospital de las Cinco Llagas* (Hospital of the Five Wounds), or some scenes in the cathedral or in different churches such as the *Capilla de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles* (Chapel of Our Lady of the Angels). Finally,

the noble stratum is the least numerous of all –six scenes were located– and it is mainly situated around the Hall of the Twenty-four of the *Cabildo* (City Council).

Thirdly, the recreation and replacement of real locations have been fundamental in the geographic configuration. In fact, only seven of the scenes analyzed deal with real locations, the only ones filmed in Seville being the City Hall, the *Reales Atarazanas* (the Royal Shipyards) and the river area filmed in *Isla Mágica* (Magic Island) –curiously, this last location recreates the Sevillian space–. Therefore, although the Seville area is central to the story, in the scenes analyzed in which suspense is the main theme, it was mainly made up of locations in Carmona, Utrera, and, to a lesser extent, Coria del Río and Alcalá de Guadaira.

This recreated Seville builds a thriller that rides between the intramural and extramural city, whose murders and mysteries are spread between the interior, Castle of Saint George and the suburbs. This last neighborhood will also serve as the starting point for the murders (with the first corpse being found in this fictional location) and for the origin of the plague, which insists on the fragility of the protagonists and the fantasy of the protective wall.

4.2. Analysis of the expanded space in *La Peste*

In the transmedia universe created for the fictional expansion and promotion of *La Peste*, the urban space takes a fundamental role. The plot of this historical thriller expands through the metaphor of the map as an expedition between the past and the present; fiction and reality; geographical space and cyberspace; the traditional medium -television series-; and the new multiplatform formats. The possibility for the audience to plot their own media journey arises from the influence of the collaborative dynamics present in the current participatory culture (Fernández-Castrillo, 2014). Therefore, the new model of interaction with the viewer-user stands out, a key piece for the activation of additional information to that provided in the six 50-minute episodes of the television format in both seasons. As a result of the analysis carried out, we can establish that the transmedia contents of this production differ from each other according to their three fundamental functions:

Investigative: Expansion of the data provided from the series (both diegetic and historical).

Immersive: Physical and emotional link with the expanded information.

Interactive: Direct action and generation of new contents.

The strategy designed by El Cañonazo Transmedia for the first season focuses on enhancing the spatial-temporal immersion in the plot. The approach of this adventure is based on the creation of a reference website with more than 350 minutes of extra audiovisual content distributed in different formats: geolocalized multimedia routes, interactive webdocs, fiction podcasts, cooking shows, a weblog on YouTube, a collaborative website and web reports.

In the second season, on the other hand, the transmedia actions invite the audience to interact with the plot itself through the online and offline space by means of leads and clues, thus becoming part of the fiction as another character, to solve the mysteries posed by the thriller. In this case, the degree of dependence of the transmedia strategy on the television production is much greater, since the contents generated for the first season have a certain degree of autonomy. In addition to the YouTuber channel, there is an exhibition, several routes (including one with smartglasses and gastronomic experiences), an alternative reality game and a virtual reality installation. This series of immersive and interactive actions transcend mere audiovisual stimulation by creating multi-sensory experiences (AR and VR) based on pre-existing spaces.

Through the analysis of the two seasons, we will see how the application of transmediality to the fictional universe of *La Peste* contributes to the expansion of its plot through an original historical-territorial cartography. The aim is not only to make the viewer follow the discursive

thread, but also to revitalize the thriller genre by generating unique experiences based on the creative use of urban and cybernetic space.

4.2.1. Spatial transmedia strategy in the first season of La Peste

Seville acquires a fundamental role in the development of the plot in the series and as a starting point for the transmedia experiences in both seasons. In the interview we conducted with Luis Alcázar, Creative Director of El Cañonazo Transmedia and in charge of the transmedia creative strategy of *La Peste*, he highlighted that:

> The series would not make sense if we did not talk about this city. The physical space acts as a trigger to raise a new narrative line, so Seville is treated as another character, while in the second season the intention was to lower the narrative to the street level, to be able to live it via different real spaces.

In the initial stage, the map of Seville serves as a container of information that complements and provides access to the first six episodes. It shows the Seville prior to the urban transformation plan (1767-1823) initiated by Pablo de Olavide, who promoted the first global cartography of the city, something that came surprisingly late considering its important function as the main Atlantic port to America (Ollero Lobato, 2015). Adopting the cartographic perspective as a starting point, we will dwell on the spatial analysis of the transmedia strategy:

Cyberspace and augmented space: both dimensions coexist in *La Ruta de La Peste* (*The Route of La Peste*), the website that hosts the transmedia content map, among which stands out *La Ruta Dorada de La Peste* (*The Golden Route of La Peste*), a multimedia guide to tour Seville both from cyberspace with extra multimedia content about the 16th century and through its 21st-century streets by means of a geolocation system and QR codes. In addition, under the hashtag #LaPesteSerie the actions on social networks consisting of the creation and dissemination of microcontent through dialogue with users are grouped.

Figure 2. *The Route of La Peste*
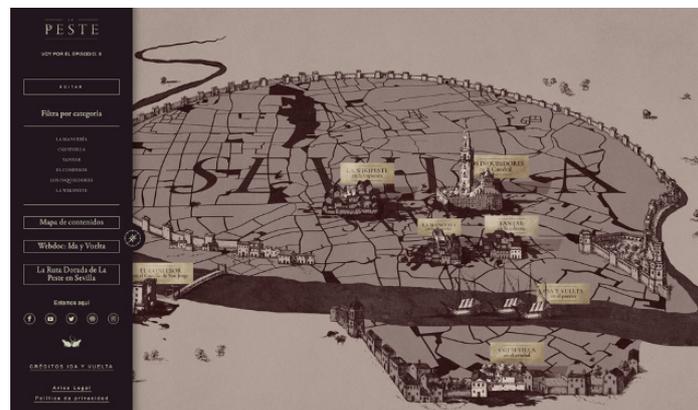
Source: Image from La Ruta de *La Peste* (n.d.)

Historical space: in *Ida y Vuelta* (*There and Back*) we find a six-episode webdoc with historical documents, testimonies of academics, experts, and technicians who worked on the series, while in *La Mancebía* (*The Brothel, or House of Ill Repute*) it is the character of Eugenia who brings us closer to the secret life of the Seville of the past from her YouTube channel. *El Yantar* (*Good Fayre*) is a cooking show in which the chef Daniel Toro talks with the actors of the series about anecdotes of the filming while he teaches us how to prepare recipes of the time. And the users themselves are in charge of researching and publishing data about the historical context of the series from *Wikipeste*, which includes a specific category about the locations.

Figure 3. *Wikipeste*
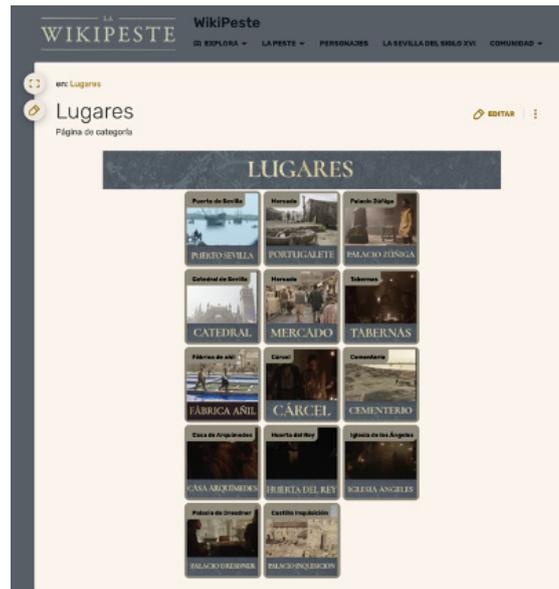
Geographic space: *CGI Seville* consists of six web reports in which curiosities are offered about the locations and recreations of the historical places during the filming process of the series of each episode. By way of example, the first episode explains how the Puerta de Sevilla was filmed in Carmona, which thanks to its historical heritage has served as a natural setting for many of the sequences of *La Peste*, and by means of a 3D digital recreation using period shots.

Figure 4. *La Peste. CGI Sevilla*, Episode I: The Port of Seville

Fictional space: *El Confesor* (*The Confessor*) is an audio fiction in which the scriptwriter Rafael Cobos will help to atone for the sins of his own characters. Each podcast is linked to the main plot and to the spaces central to the corresponding episode in the series. In the case of *Los Inquisidores* (*The Inquisitors*), audio commentaries by the creators of the series –Cobos and Alberto Rodriguez– guide listeners through the episodes, with special emphasis on the challenges involved in recreating Seville through sets and VFX using film plates, matte painting, digital figuration, and 3D projections.

The possibility of taking a trip to 16th-century Seville and then back to the 21st century is focused on exploring the extra contents of the series mainly from the conjugation of cybernetic

and historical-fictional space. Even though the direct presence of the geographical space was limited to three actions, and we only identified the presence of the increased space in *La Ruta Dorada de La Peste* (*The Golden Route of La Peste*) the tourist impact of the campaign was more than remarkable, obtaining the Spain Film & Tourism Award, 2019. As we will see below, we will have to wait for the second season to find examples of virtual space.

Table 3. Spatial transmedia strategy in the first season of *La Peste*

Title	Format	Function	Environment	Space	Description
The Route of La Peste	Website	Interactive	Transversal	Cyberspace	Base platform for the transmedia strategy
The Golden Route of La Peste	Geolocalized multimedia guide	Immersive	Transversal	Geographic Augmented Cybernetic Historical Fictional	Fictional Multimedia guide to visit Seville online or physically and learn about its history through the series by means of a geolocation system and QR codes
CGI Sevilla	6x4′ YouTube Web report	Investigative	Common stratum (suburb outside the wall)	Geographic Historical Fictional	Web report, with interviews and making of, in which two presenters investigate how the VFX of the series have been made
The Brothel (The House of Ill Repute)	6x4′ Season 1 YouTube Weblog	Investigative	Transitional (brothel)	Cybernetic Historical Fictional	YouTuber channel of actress Cecilia Gómez on historical curiosities
Good Fayre	6x5′ YouTube Cooking show	Investigative	Transitional (tavern)	Cybernetic Historical Fictional	Chef Daniel del Toro shows recipes from the 16th century while he chats with the actors of the series about historical and filming anecdotes
There and Back	Webdoc multimedia interactive	Interactive	Common stratum (port)	Cybernetic Historical Fictional Geographic	Navigable interface to access historical documents and multimedia material about 16th century Seville
The Confessor	6x10′podcast series	Investigative	Religious (Castle of Saint George)	Cybernetic Historical Fictional	Expansion of diegetic content through the confessions of different characters
The Inquisitors	6x20′ podcast series	Investigative	Religious (Cathedral)	Cybernetic Historical Fictional	The series creators comment on each episode
Wikipeste	Collaborative web site	Interactive	Transitional (Printing House)	Cybernetic Historical Fictional	Wiki platform for collecting data from the fiction and historical context
#LaPesteSerie	Facebook Twitter Instagram	Investigative	Transversal	Cybernetic	Creation and dissemination of microcontent through dialogue with users

Source: table compiled in-house

4.2.2. Spatial transmedia strategy in the second season of *La Peste*

Miriam Lagoa points out that in the second season of *La Peste* the intention of Movistar Plus+ was to transcend the description of 16th-century Seville to invite the audience to physically experience the current city via multiple transmedia actions. Likewise, as Luis Alcázar points out, in the transmedia strategy we identify a greater connection with the investigative nature of the historical thriller and, therefore, an even more direct link with the diegetic universe proposed by the series. As a clear nod to the growing influence of fandom, the viewer-user acquires a more active role in the transmedia expansion of fictional content. On the one hand, giving continuity to some of the actions initiated in the previous season based on user-generated

content –*Wikipeste*– or on the YouTuber phenomenon –*La Mancebía* (*The Brothel*, or *House of Ill Repute*)–. And, on the other hand, becoming a direct collaborator of Valerio and Teresa's characters through their participation in an alternative reality game –*La Garduña existe* (*The La Garduña Band Exist*)–. In line with the more immersive character of the first season, viewers are also invited to immerse themselves in the Seville of the Golden Age through gastronomic and AR-VR routes, an exhibition, and a virtual experience. We will focus on the analysis of the spatial dimension of the main transmedia actions:

Cyberspace: *La Garduña existe* (*The La Garduña Band Exist*) is an alternate reality game in which the work of the viewer-user connects with that of the leading characters of the series by gathering clues to reveal the identity of the five members of the secret criminal society of La Garduña. It is the most relevant action in both seasons in terms of the revitalization of the historical thriller from the multiple spatial dimensions provided by the transmedia universe of *La Peste*. The first phase consists of an entirely online experience based on registering on the official web app of the series from where the indications are provided to successfully complete five missions through the navigation of *Wikipeste*, Instagram, Wallapop, Spotify and Twitter.

The second phase of the game is based on an on-site experience in the Andalusian capital to complete another twenty-five tests, as if they were unpublished sequences of the series, in which we will see that different spatial dimensions are present.

Virtual Space: *Barro y Oro* (*Clay and Gold*) is a multisensory installation of photogrammetry and VR based in the *Apeadero* (where those entering the building used to dismount from their horses) of the Seville City Hall in which the visitor travels back in time immersed in the smells, images and sounds in real locations of the Seville of the sixteenth century.

Augmented Space: the character of Mateo was the guide for the *Past View* tour in November 2019, a route with smartglasses (AR and VR) in which the various environments of the series were toured: Puerto de Indias (common stratum); Real Casa de la Moneda (Royal Mint) (noble); Mancebía (Brothel, or House of Ill Repute) (transitional); and Gradas de la Catedral (the Cathedral Steps, running alongside the cathedral on Alemanes street) (religious), among others.

Historical Space: the *La Sevilla de La Garduña* exhibition was held in the Sala Capitular Baja of the Seville City Hall, a space of spatio-temporal interconnection, as it appears in the series and exists both in the present and in the historical period in which the plot is set, being the first Renaissance building to be constructed in the city. Following the interplay between reality and fiction, the exhibition included both original objects from 16th-century Seville and props and furniture from *La Peste*.

Geographic Space: the *Ruta de la Tapa* (*The Taps Route*) was a gastronomic tour of twenty-two hostelry establishments in the center of Seville to enjoy tapas inspired by the series and *La Casa de la Gula* was the official tavern of *La Peste*, also with menus of 16th-century Sevillian dishes and original sets from the filming.

Fictional Space: the interplay between fiction-history and past-present was a constant in the narrative approach of the series and the transmedia strategy that culminated in the ARG award. On the one hand, players who were not Seville residents were eligible for a trip for two people with accommodation to carry out the physical tests and, on the other hand, smartphones were raffled for those players who reached each of the levels: informant, candidate, flatterer, leader, and foreman. Finally, whoever reached the rank of foreman with the highest score would be the winner of a trip for two to the New World (specifically to Cancún).

According to data provided by Movistar Plus+, the transmedia universe of the second season of *La Peste* almost tripled the players of the action that served as a reference –19 Kingdoms– (*Game of Thrones*, 2014) and obtained wide recognition from the sector (in 2020, among others, The

Drum Content Awards, The Communicator Awards, the Agripina Awards, and the Inspirational Awards). Unlike the first season, the new transmedia actions relied primarily on geographic space. The cybernetic space was maintained, giving some prominence to the augmented-virtual one and preserving the connection between the historical and fictional space. The premise of generating a gamified experience in a trip to the Seville of the Americas from an interconnected present, in which the fictional context finds multiple options for its spatial expansion, was thus fulfilled.

Table 4. Spatial transmedia strategy in the second season of *La Peste*

Title	Format	Function	Environment	Space	Description
The La Garduña Band Exist	Alternative reality game (ARG)	Investigative Interactive Immersive	Transversal	Cybernetic Augmented Geographic Fictional Historical	Webapp with information to complete five online missions and 25 geolocated physical tests
Past View	Physical and VR tour	Immersive Investigative	Transversal	Geographic Augmented Virtual Fictional Historical	Route through Seville with smartglasses with Mateo, main character of the series
Clay and Gold	VR experience	Immersive Investigative	Noble (City Hall)	Virtual Fictional Historical Geographic	Encounter with the main characters in real environments through photogrammetry and VR system
The Seville of the Garduña	Exhibition	Immersive Investigative	Noble (City Hall)	Geographic Historical Fictional	Exhibition with original 16th-century objects and prop recreations from the series
The House of Gluttony	Web site and culinary event	Immersive Investigative	Transitional (tavern)	Geographic Fictional Historical Cybernetic	Gastronomic experience in the official tavern of La Peste with sets from the series and a 16th-century-inspired menu
The Tapas Route	Culinary tour	Immersive Investigative	Transitional (tavern)	Geographic Fictional Historical	Gastronomic route around Seville to try tapas inspired by the series
The Brothel, or House of Ill Repute	Season 2 3x4´ YouTube weblog	Investigative	Transitional (brothel of house of ill repute)	Cybernetic Historical Fictional	Actress Cecilia Gómez's YouTuber channel on historical curiosities
Wikipeste	Collaborative website	Interactive Investigative	Transitional (Printing House)	Cybernetic Historical Fictional	Wiki platform with data from fiction and historical context
#LaGarduñaExiste	Instagram Wallapop Spotify Twitter	Investigative	Transversal	Cybernetic	Creation and dissemination of microcontent through dialogue with users

Source: table compiled in-house.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The central role of Seville in *La Peste* expands the relationships established between the cinematographic format and the territory towards a mediatized and participatory experience. As a result of the visualization of the series and the involvement in transmedia strategies, there is a resignification of the city of Seville from a constructive and emotional approach. The episodes and the promotional actions reflect the intrigues of power and the relationships between the strata of Seville in the "Century of the Colonies", showing the relevant historical role of this city

as the gateway to America. Cinematographically, the series builds the imaginary of the historical city through the suspense of the thriller. Imperilment, religiosity, the strict social stratification of the neighborhoods or the transgression of the walled boundaries are some of the elements that feed the series.

From a narrative perspective, the series offers a thriller that breaks with the characteristic nocturnality of the genre and builds suspense from the nooks and crannies, the secrecy, and the labyrinthine streets. The religious atmosphere serves not only as a historical and patrimonial reconstruction of the city of Seville, but also as ingredients that feed the uncertainty of what happens. On the one hand, its transversal nature covers all spaces, through icons, the illumination of religious motifs or processions accompanied by mystical chants. On the other hand, religiosity not only permeates legality and sacred places but also builds the threat of the enemy through the murders in the first season and the criminal plot in the second.

As has been observed in the analysis, the contextual relevance of the different neighborhoods that make up the discourse around the city of Seville contrasts with the prominence of Seville as a filmic setting, which is transferred to the transmedia space. In the television story, the locations used, mostly recreations of real places, help to build the fictional universe of *La Peste* from a starting point of mystery. Some of them have their correspondent in the augmented space, generating a double reading of the real place, both virtually and geographically. In transmedia, the originality lies in the interconnection between multiplatform contents from a territorial approach based on a continuous game between the various dimensions that make up the expanded space.

The transmedia strategy of the first season highlights the immersion of the viewer in the historical thriller through the use of the map as a leitmotiv in a constant transition between the media horizon –series-transmedia– and spatial –cybernetic-geographical and fictional-historical–. Regarding this last point, it is worth mentioning the effort of the creators and the team of the series to reveal the techniques used in the recreation of the enclaves of 16th-century Seville where the fictional action is set. The distinctive factor of the second season is the interaction of the user with the plot of the investigation through a greater presence of the geographical space and its conjugation with the cybernetic-augmented virtual one.

The success of this production is reflected in the audience data and the massive participation of viewer-users in the transmedia maneuvers (Migelez, 2018). The significant impact on tourism and the visibility of Seville were not accidental because, as Lagoa and Alcázar explained to us in the in-depth interviews, one of the main objectives in the design of the transmedia strategy was to change the historical perception of the city and its spaces. Likewise, the innovative character of the case under study lies in the synchronization of the contents through a leading presence of the geographical space, both in the traditional format of the television series and in the multiple transmedia actions, that just few weeks after the second season's premiere were truncated by the mobility restrictions in public spaces due to the pandemic. We are faced with a prototype of a transmedia movie map in which the intersection between the online and offline dimension allows movie tourism to be revitalized from an innovative approach, focused on the expansion of the plot from multiplatform strategies and, at the same time, offering a new territorial vision to both tourists and residents of Seville and its surroundings.

The immersive, investigative, and interactive function of the actions of expanding the plot through the territory favor a total involvement of the user, transforming their conception of the city from a unique experience based on the "here and now". Therefore, *La Peste* contributes to the updating of the concept of "mediatized space" in the post-digital era, favoring an original expansion of the fictional and geographical territory.

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