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# Settlement of the Spanish fiction series abroad (2005-2017). The case of the North American adaptation of *Los misterios de Laura* from the perspective of its creators

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## Abstract

**Introduction.** The main objective of this paper is to reflect about the success of Spanish TV adaptation abroad. This paper collects the Spanish television series that have been adapted in other markets in the time of consolidation of this phenomenon (2005-2017), and there is an analysis of the production values of the RTVE Spanish series *Los Misterios de Laura* (La 1, 2009-2014), adapted in USA by NBC under the title *The Mysteries of Laura* (NBC, 2014- 2016). **Methodology.** For the empirical part of this research, we have analyzed the production of Spanish TV adaptations, and an in depth interview to the Spanish writers of *Los Misterios de Laura*' creators was conducted, as well as the analysis of chapters and the bible of the program. **Conclusions and discussion.** This paper highlights the development phase of the idea, where the concept, style and the design of characters are key issues in the adaptation process of a Spanish television series abroad.

## Keywords

TV series; TV adaptation; TV formats; exportation; Spanish television; TV production.

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## 1. Introduction

The XXI century is a time characterized by large migratory movements in the cultural field that have influenced audiovisual productions around the world. A breach of frontiers mainly promoted by the technological impact which primary consequences have been the cultural and informative fusion of contents (Ortiz, 2015), the globalization of audiovisual tastes (Puebla et al, 2013) and the standardization of the productive processes (Sedeño, 2011) that facilitates the performance in other markets. Television series do not remain alien to this global reality of the cultural industries and their purchase-sales process is constant in different markets for their international diffusion. Currently, series are purchased in the big television markets and most come from USA, Latin America and Europe (Guerrero, 2010). The migratory flow of television fiction inside and outside their countries is constant and both ways, even including the establishment of new professional profiles within the industry such as the consultants or flyer producers (García Avis and Diego: 2018).

Inside this industrial context, one of the current trends in contemporary television fiction is the great amount of transcultural remakes produced in national markets coming from foreign markets. We will base on the concept that García Avis makes about the “transcultural remake in television” because it is the one adjusting to our case of study. This definition refers to remakes based in a fiction format originally produced in a different territory, but always inside the same media (television in this case). And in the fact that the storyline must adjust to the sociocultural, industrial and market characteristics that govern in the new environment in order to captivate the new local audiences. Regarding the term “transcultural” the author aims to highlight the most cultural component of the process since said phenomenon goes beyond the physical or linguistic frontiers since it involves narrative transformations related with cultural patterns of a specific society (García Avis, 2017). The fundamental axis of the specificity of this kind of remake is the “glocalization” dynamic that characterizes all adaptation processes of television formats:

When a fiction series reproduces the specificity of its cultural context in a realistic manner, it highlights its most universal dimension. Or, in other words, the authenticity of the local is what allows to discern the universal nature of the story. And this is what enables, in conclusion, that a fiction series could be adapted in very different sociocultural contexts (García Avis, 2017, p. 107)

In short, the purpose of a fiction format relocation and its subsequent approach to the local audiences is that the adaptation seems like a series produced locally or native-like from the corresponding country (García Avis, 2017).

Regarding remakes of a television series, one of the most prolific and leading European markets is the British market (Griffin, 2008), together with Nordic countries, which production values focused in the *nordic noir* (Waade and Jensen, 2013; Waade and Jensen, 2016) have attracted American adaptations of series like *The Killing* (AMC, 2011-2013; Netflix, 2014) and *The Bridge* (FX, 2013-2014) (Askanius, 2017). The Nordic productions have achieved their own production style around mournful characters and landscapes through criminal stories that had a great success in global markets (Hill, 2017; Hill, 2016a; Hill 2016b). In Spain, data demonstrate that the Spanish industry is in one of the best moments of its history and of settlement of its television fictions abroad (FAPAE, 2013; Gómez 2014). According to the report *The Wit Guide to Scripted Formats 2014*, Spain is part of the four countries that provide fiction formats worldwide. Spain has been mainly a receptor of foreign fiction

historically, although from the 90's this trend starts to revert. At the end of the 90s *Médico de familia*, one of the most successful series of the decade, set the course to other countries in the form of adaptation. The 'dramedia' produced by Globomedia and broadcasted by Telecinco, was sold in Italy and Portugal. Besides the success obtained in these two countries, the series had considerable international sales of its own to different countries of Europe such as Finland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria (Herrero and Diego, 2009). It was the start of an exportation trend that consolidated in the last years.

Canovaca (2017) states that a successful product in its country of origin is a guarantee to adapt it to another new economic, social and cultural reality. However, the success is not ensured, and the adaptation also involves production time and the possibility of failures just as it happened with the adaptation of *Life on Mars* (BBC, 2006-2007) in other markets (Bonaut and Ojer, 2012). Despite the expansion of this phenomenon globally, the academic literature that enlightens about the keys for the adaptation of audiovisual productions in international contexts is still scarce, from the perspective of their creation. This paper aims to offer a systematic view to the development stage of an original idea as propitious seed to achieve a kind of stories that are competitive at global level.

## 2. Objectives and methodology

In this television context full of series adaptations that more and more have more projection outside the countries of origin, we believe a detailed evaluation of the most relevant cases is needed to propose some approaches and bases that are common to that whole production process of series adaptations. Thus, this paper's general objective is to contribute in granting the relevance the idea development or design deserve (Development) in the television productions we consider key to conveniently adapt a series to another television context different from the original, since the index of failed projects is very high.

More specifically, we set forth the following specific objectives:

- a) Offering a collection of national television series broadcasted in the commercial most relevant free-to-air chains of the last decade that have adapted in foreign television markets. These data reinforce the idea that the television market experiences a Golden time regarding the exportation of fiction formats.
- b) Study in detail one of the most paradigmatic cases of the last years, *Los Misterios de Laura*, because it is a series produced by *La 1* and *Boomerang TV* and adapted in the United State market traditionally of difficult access for our television products.

To meet the first objective, we gathered in a table, in order to clarify data, the open-to-air television series produced in Spain that have adapted abroad. The list is not exhaustive, but it does include the most relevant ones of the period of time studied. For this, we tracked specialized journals, press and data bases such as IMDB. In order to show data in a simpler and clear manner we designed a template in the form of a table where there are specified the most relevant elements of every production both in their country of origin as well as the country where it is adapted. These are: title, years of broadcast, producer and chain of the original series and country, channel, title of the series and year of release of the adapted series. The objective was to rebuild a production the production sheet of every series.

To meet the second objective of the paper the key lied in performing a fieldwork to access specific data of the creation and adaptation process of *Los misterios de Laura*. Therefore, we contacted with

two scriptwriters and creators of the series, Carlos Vila and Javier Holgado, to obtain information that wouldn't be possible to get from other sources. We prepared a personal interview of mixed or semi structured nature with a series of questions prepared beforehand combined with spontaneous questions in compliance with the theme of some respondent's comments. Boomerang TV scriptwriters answered a total of 31 questions for more than an hour where the goal was to gather all the data of the production process of the American adaptation to know in detail what parts of the process are vital when it comes to approach an adaptation of these characteristics. The point of view of creators, sometimes scarcely studied in the field of television fiction, seems to us that enlightens a lot about the series' most intrinsic issues, especially in the most creative matters.

Another relevant source for the analysis has been the study of the bible series, creative and production document of document in the whole television series, written by the two scriptwriters mentioned. There, we could study how characters were build, as well as the exposition of all mystery cases, one per chapter, to observe over what creative baseline the American team worked with, in order to adapt content. It is worth mentioning that these two professionals already had a lot of previous experience when it comes to creating fiction formats for Boomerang TV. Some of their previous productions, also as creators of the idea, were *Un lugar en el mundo* (Antena 3, 2003), *Motivos personales* (2005, Tele 5), *Génesis, en la mente del asesino* (2006, Cuatro), *Círculo Rojo* (2007, Antena 3) or *Acusados* (2009, Tele 5). From all these, the most outstanding case is *Los misterios de Laura* due to being able to enter into such a complex market as the North American and in a chain, NBC, with such tradition regarding the history of series production.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Historical pathway of the adaptation of Spanish TV series abroad (2005-2015)

In the Table 1 below we present a reference of most of Spanish television series that have been adapted and released abroad in the last 10 years, a total of 17 registered in this study, in order to offer an evaluation of the current status in its entirety. One of the first evaluations of this table is that the adaptation process of Spanish television series in foreign markets was led by series broadcasted by private chains, mainly Antena 3 and Telecinco. As producers involved, Globomedia is the leader since 7 out of the 17 adaptations registered are theirs. On the other hand, 4 cases come from public chains: *Polseres Vermelles* (TV3, 2011-2013), of the Catalan autonomic television, together with *Los Misterios de Laura* (La 1, 2009-2014) and *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (La 1, 2001-) and *El Ministerio del Tiempo* (La 1, 2015-2017). Curiously there is a case, *Oxígeno*, of a Spanish format that was not released in our country, but adapted to the United States market though, *Start Crossed* (CW, 2014).

*Polseres Vermelles* (TV3, 2012-2013) of TV3 deserves a special mention because it was the first Spanish fiction series to be adapted in the United States. The series is based in the novel of the scriptwriter Albert Espinosa *El Mundo Amarillo*, where he talks about his experience with cancer. Many of his experiences in the hospital are reflected in the fiction and it reached Steven Spielberg's ears (Lagoa, 2016). Pau Freixas, director and executive producer of *Polseres Vermelles* explained in *El Cultural* that Marta Kauffman, producer of *Friends* (NBC, 1994-2004), saw the series in some of the festivals where it was projected, requested more chapters and brought them to Steven Spielberg. He was interested and decided to perform the series in the United States. Thus, negotiations started and an agreement was made for the production and distribution of the series, a pilot was done, Marta Kauffman exit the project and Margaret Nagle (*Boardwalk Empire*, HBO, 2010-2014) was in charge of the executive production. The premiere of the series in Fox was on September 17, 2014 under the

name of *The Red Band Society*. Freixas talks about modifications in relation to the original series. It is worth mentioning that the tone is completely different, because they considered that the American public did not digest the emotive drama properly (Yuste, 2015). This has been a project with problems from the start, because at first it was destined to the chain ABC and, when noticing it did not fit, the Steven Spielberg's producer developed it for FOX. However, the hospital drama of Amblin TV and ABC Studios did not have much success. The fact is that what was about to be the new teenager phenomenon, the heir of *Glee* (FOX, 2009-2015), did not achieve the audience results expected (*La Vanguardia*, 2016), but instead a rather low number compared to the chain's (5.7 million viewers) reaching a mean of 2.9 million viewers (López, 2016). FOX announced on November 2014 that the series was about to be cancelled (*Deadline*, 2016).

**Table 1: Spanish television series that have been adapted abroad (2005-2017)**

Original title	Original broadcast	Original producer	Original channel	Adaptation country	Adaptation channel	Adaptation title	Adaptation premiere
<i>Los misterios de Laura</i>	2009-2014	Boomerang TV	La 1	United States	NBC	<i>Mysteries of Laura</i>	2014
				Italy	Channel 5	<i>I misteri di Laura</i>	2015-
				Russia	Channel 1	<i>Mama-detektiv</i>	2012-
				Russia	Channel One	<i>Mum Detective</i>	2014
				Holland	SBS6	<i>Richercheur Ria</i>	2014
<i>Polseres vermelles</i>	2011-2013	Castelao producciones/ Televisió de Catalunya	TV3	United States	ABC Studios (Producer)/ FOX (Broadcast)	<i>Red Band Society</i>	2014
				Italy	RAI1. In charge of the producer Big Bang Media, Palomar (Il commissario Montalbano) and RaiFiction.	<i>Braccialetti Rossi</i>	2014
				Russia and Ukraine	Channel One y STB	<i>Mum Detective</i>	2015
				Chile	TVN	<i>Pulseras rojas</i>	2014
				Peru	América TV	<i>Pulseras rojas</i>	2015
				Germany	Vox	<i>Club der Roten Bänder</i>	2015

<i>Oxígeno</i>	Not produced	Isla Producciones	Not produced	United States	CBS/ CW	<i>Start Crossed</i>	2014
<i>El barco</i>	2010-2013	Globomedia	Antena 3	Russia	CTC	<i>Skatet</i>	2014
				United States	CW and Warner Bros.	<i>The Magellan</i>	Waiting for broadcast
<i>El internado</i>	2007-2010	Globomedia	Antena 3	Russia	CTC	<i>Escuela privada</i>	2011
				France	M6	<i>L Internat</i>	2009
<i>Los Serrano</i>	2003-2008	Globomedia	Telecinco	Portugal	TVI	<i>Os Serrano</i>	2005-2006
				Italy	Canale 5	<i>I cessaroni</i>	2006-2014
				Serbia	Prva Srpska Televizija	<i>Sindelici</i>	2013
				Greece	Mega Channel	<i>Felices Juntos</i>	2007-2009
				Czech Republic	Česká televize	<i>Horakóvi</i>	2006-2007
				Turkey	ATV	<i>Ilk Askim</i>	2006
<i>Los protegidos</i>	2010-2012	Boomerang TV	Antena 3	Turkey	FOX	<i>Sana Bir Sir Vereceğim – Voy a decirte un secreto</i>	2013
<i>Gran reserva</i>	2010-2013	Boomerang TV	Antena 3	Turkey	Fox	<i>Reserva de familia</i>	2013
				Mexico	TV Azteca	<i>Caminos de Guanajuato</i>	2015-
				Chile	TVN	<i>Reserva de familia</i>	2012-
<i>Hay alguien ahí</i>	2009-2010	Plural Entertainment	Cuatro	Russia	TV3	<i>Hay alguien ahí</i>	2011
<i>Física o Química</i>	2008-2011	Ida y Vuelta	Antena 3	United States	Telemundo	<i>Relaciones Peligrosas</i>	2012
				Russia	CTC	<i>Física o química</i>	2011-2012
<i>Aída</i>	2005-2014	Globomedia	Telecinco	Poland	TPV	<i>Aída</i>	2013
				Chile	TVN	<i>Aída</i>	2008-2008
				Ecuador	Teleamazonas	<i>Aída</i>	2012
				Poland	TVP2	<i>Aída</i>	2012

<i>Cuéntame cómo pasó</i>	2001 -	Ganga Producciones	La 1	Chile	Canal 13	<i>Los 80</i>	2008-2014
				Portugal	RTP	<i>Contame como foi</i>	2007-2011
				Ecuador	Ecuavisa	<i>Parece que fue ayer</i>	2013
				Italy	Rai 1	<i>Raccontami</i>	2006-2008
<i>Los hombres de Paco</i>	2005-2010	Globomedia	Antena 3	Italy	Canal 5	<i>Tutti per Bruno</i>	2010
				Rumania	ProTV	<i>Vine Politia</i>	2008
<i>Luna, el misterio de Calenda</i>	2012-2013	Globomedia	Antena 3	Russia	Amedia para la cadena CTC Network	<i>Starokamensk</i>	Waiting for broadcast
<i>Cuenta atrás</i>	2007-2008	Globomedia	Cuatro	Germany	RTL	<i>Countdown</i>	2010
<i>El ministerio del tiempo</i>	2015-	Onza Partners Cliffhanger	TVE 1	Portugal	RTP	<i>Ministério do Tempo</i>	2017-
<i>Gran hotel</i>	2011-2013	Bambú	Antena 3	Mexico	Televisa	<i>Hotel de los secretos</i>	2016
				Italy	Rai	<i>Grand Hotel</i>	2016
				Egypt	CBC	<i>Grand Hotel</i>	2017-

Source: Authors' own creation

The series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (La 1, 2001-) has been adapted with great success in Italy, where it even had a *spin off*, and in Portugal as well. Besides, producers of several countries such as Turkey, Greece, Argentina and Mexico have also acquired adaptation rights. The title of the Italian adaptation is *Raccontami* where the Alcántara become the Ferrucci. The narrator in *off* is, like Carlitos in the original, Carlo, the little brother. On its part, the Portuguese version titled *Cont-me como foi* is closest to the Spanish one, because the López family lives the difficult years of the dictatorship of Oliveira Salazar and the first years of democracy (Hurtado, 2015). Besides, the series could acquire the title in English of *Remember When*, because in a notice published on June 2015 the British Producer New Media Vision announced the purchase of the rights of the series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* for its possible adaptation in the United States. Thus, the executive producer Miguel Angel Bernardeau (*El Herald*, 2015) stated:

"We always believed in the international possibilities of the format *Cuéntame cómo pasó*. When Todd (Todd Lituchy, founder and advisor of New Media, and executive producer of the American version of *Los misterios de Laura*, *The Mysteries of Laura*) contacted us with the idea of an adaptation for the United States, we knew it was the adequate one -after its success in adapting *Los misterios de Laura* for NBC-."

Regarding the private television series, by the hand of *7 Vidas* there arrived in 2005 another subsequent success: *Aída* (Tele 5, 2005-2014), which was the first *spin-off* of a Spanish series and tells the story of Aída García (Carmen Machi), who started in *7 vidas* as Paco's assistant (Javier Cámara) and Sole (Amparo Baró), of his family and of all neighbors residing in the fictitious neighborhood of Madrid, *Esperanza Sur*. Besides, the latter had such a leading role and relevance that allowed to continue with the production of the series even after the departure of Aida in 2008. From a total of 327 chapters, 166 of its episodes were seen the most in the national *prime time* and reached an average audience of 3.954.000 viewers and 21.1% of the screen share (Marcos, 2015). At the same time, it has become the first format sold in South America to TVN of Chile and has traveled also to Greece, Turkey and Ukraine. The last country in adapting the series was Poland. The production was also exported to many countries of Latin America and the United States. In Europe, the viewers of Sky in Italy and BTV in Bulgaria could also follow *Aída*'s adventures.

On its part, *Los hombres de Paco* (Antena 3, 2005-2010) was broadcasted in about 30 countries. The original version could have been seen in 12 countries of Eastern Europe and several countries of Middle East and Africa were interested about it: channel 2M TV of Morocco will broadcast the fourth season dubbed in Arab. Other countries be ton adapting it like Italy, Rumania, Poland and Greece. In Italy it, was broadcasted in Channel 5 under the name *Tutti per Bruno*, which premiere was on January 8, 2'10 and was followed by 5.112.000 viewers, becoming the second most seen fiction in prime time with a 20.7% of screen share. Likewise, *Cuenta atrás* (Cuatro, 2007-2008) also has its replica, in this case in the German RTL and under the title *Countdown*. The release was on January 15, 2010 and its first broadcast was absolute leader among viewers between 14 to 49 years old with a 19.6 % of share (*El País*, 2010). *El Internado* (Antena 3, 2007-2010) and *El Barco* (Antena 3 2011-2013) have turned Latin America and Eastern Europe into their main international markets and have been sold by Imagina International Sales (Medina, 2008: 126). The Spanish fiction was adapted in France for the private chain M6 and in Russia for the private channel CTC Networkers where it keeps producing and broadcasting with very good audience results. Sold to more than 50 countries, *El internado* was also broadcasted successfully in Eastern Europe in its entirety through pay-TV chains AXN Channel Sci-Fi, in Ukraine by the channel K1, in Latin America through the payment channels DIRECT TV and in the Spanish speaking United States in the free-to-open V-ME (Globomedia, 2015). In the case of the fiction starred by Mario Casas and Blanca Suárez we have seen it in channels of different entity in more than forty countries. The first adaptation made of *El Barco* was broadcasted in Russia, former Soviet Republics and Baltic countries of Letonia, Lithuania and Estonia in the chain CTC. It followed the steps of *El internado* by also obtaining the TEFI Award to the Best Production of the Russian Television Academy and with remarkable audience indexes above the mean of the chain's share. Fiction sails through Russian waters by the hand of Oleg Assadulin and Mark Gorobest who for 26 chapters they tell the adventures of a group of young people on board of *Estrella Polar*. Likewise, on February 2015 it was known that, after its Russian adaptation, the series created and produced in Spain by Globomedia for Antena 3 initiated its first steps in the United States by the hand of CW and Warner Bros. Studios. Jennifer Johnson, executive producer and scriptwriter of series such as *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010), *The Following* (Fox, 2013-2015), *Alcatraz* (Fox, 2012), *Chase* (NBC, 2010-2011) or *Cold Case* (CBS, 2003-2010), is in charge of writing the script of the pilot where Daniel Écija, its original producer, will also be Executive Producer.

This sales trend of Spanish series formats continues in expansion with other titles such as the ones produced by Bambú. In the case of *Gran Hotel* (2011-2013, Antena 3), besides the already released adaptations shown in the table, the sale's agreements of the format to Argentina (Telefé), to China and

USA (ABC) are being negotiated with an adaptation produced by the actress Eva Longoria and that will have a Miami Beach hotel as background. In *Velvet's* case (2013-2016), although the productions were sold to many countries, among them Italy and France, during 2016 the series was considered by the North American chain ABC for a possible adaptation (Fórmula TV, 2016). And the sequel was indeed produced, performed by the same producer, for Movistar with the title *Velvet Colección* with some different production values such as the 50 minutes duration of chapters, suppression of certain protagonists and the location of the story in Barcelona (La Vanguardia, 2017).

Finally, the case of *El Ministerio del tiempo* deserves a special mention, which after conversations of producers with NBC for a possible adaptation, the Spanish producer companies interposed a demand for plagiarism. NBC produced *Timeless* (2016-) with more than reasonable resemblance in the format's development. Although finally the lawsuit foreseen for the beginning of 2018 will not occur thanks to a stay between both parties (*El País*, 2017). *O Ministério do Tempo* is the Portuguese version of this series produced by the public chain of this country RTP. It was released on January 29, 2017 and was broadcasted for a season.

These data show the great health of our fiction importations. Spain is a key territory in the world audiovisual, because it is positioned as the fourth world exporter of original formats, according to the international study «The Wit Guide to Scripted Formats 2014», after United Kingdom, Canada and Argentina. On the other hand, Spanish producer companies, based on Fapae data (Federation of Associations of Audiovisual Producers of Spain), had an income in 2015 of almost 50 million Euros for the sales of series, programs and documentaries, the highest number since 2012 (Fapae, 2015). Traditionally, our barrier was to access to the market of the king of fiction series, the North American, because the European, Latin American and even the Asian became usual in these last decades (Carretero, 2014).

### **3.2. Analysis of the American adaptation of *Los misterios de Laura* (La 1, 2009-2014): creators' vision**

Then, we will focus in the paradigmatic case of this series to highlight, according to authors' vision, what creative aspects of the idea's development stage were the most essential for its American adaptation. The objective was to find what was special about this series so that it could be adapted in such a competitive market as the North American market.

It is convenient to remember that the United States television has a large tradition in the production of detective series as successful as *Ironside* (NBC, 1967-1975), *Colombo* (NBC, 1968-2003), *Remington Steele* (NBC, 1982-1987), *Se ha escrito un crimen* (CBS, 1984-1996) or *Los misterios del padre Dowling* (NBC, 1987-1991) among many others that comprise the long literary tradition in this genre. Since the 20 until today several authors have reflected about the art of creating detective or police stories offering a series of literary advice based, in most cases, in their own experience as writers in this genre. There outstand Van Dine (1928) with their 20 unavoidable rules, the Decalogue of Ronald A. Knox (1928), Umberto Eco (1985), Chesterton with their numerous texts about the art of writing police novel gathered and translated into Spanish by Miguel Temprano García (2011) or more recently John Curran (2009, 2011 and 2013) who has written many books about the great number of notes registered in the writer's Agatha Christie's notebook she used to write her stories. These authors, among many others, have been of great influence for copious television scriptwriters that faced the challenge of writing this kind of stories that Van Dine compared back in the 20s as a sort of intellectual game which main goal was to discover the enigma of the case by knowing who the killer is. Its main

storyline is called *Whodunit*, contraction of *Who has done it?* (Balogh, 2016). All chapters of *Los Misterios de Laura* are perfectly adjusted to these kind of self-conclusive storylines where the detective gathers clues, at the same time as the viewer, to deduce who the killer is.

### 3.2.1. *Los misterios de Laura* (La 1, 2009-2014): particularities of the Spanish case

Created by the scriptwriters Carlos Vila and Javier Holgado and produced by Boomerang TV, *Los Misterios de Laura* has been one of the most successful fictions of TVE. According to the initial approach of the Spanish series, in its early steps in the idea development process, the protagonist was going to be a retired cop that went every morning to a kiosk to solve the cases that appeared in the newspapers, but in the end it was decided to have a mother overwhelmed by her job (police inspector) and her family (two twin sons and former husband). A clumsy woman in her personal life, but with an extraordinary intuition to discover the most mysterious cases.

From the perspective of its scriptwriters, the series has four strengths that would explain its success to an extent in the sales of the series to other countries, including the USA. Firstly, the universal and current concept sustaining it: the working mother. A detective woman is also mother and tries to combine both things. Likewise, its scriptwriters and creators emphasize the series' tone when blending mystery with humor. A "soft, smile-like" due to Laura's clumsy and blunder nature. Scriptwriters comment that Laura makes easy for them to have very funny situations because she is a detective and low socioeconomic class housewife that always investigates higher class characters, therefore she is immersed in a world where everything is impressive for her (Moya and Illana, 2012).

They also mention as third favoring aspect the idea that allows the viewer to play from home as if it were Cluedo game, and help Laura solve the mystery. This production, as we already mentioned before, contains the spirit of series such as *Se ha escrito un crimen* or *Colombo* where the detective, thanks to her or his intuition is able to disassemble the most perfect alibi. The structure of chapters varies from one script to another, but always grounding on these references:

"There are time we have chosen the classic scheme of Agatha Christie where there is a murder and four suspects that Laura interrogates and, in the end, she gathers everyone to reveal them who is the killer and, sometimes, we have chosen Colombo's scheme where the viewer watches from the start who the killer is, but not how the crime what committed nor why." (Moya and Illana, 2012, 10)

The third strength they highlight is the casting selection. Only 8 are the fixed actors and the rest are of episodic nature that give life to every case's suspects. Usually 5 or 6 per chapter causing a great variety of collaborating actors such as Lydia Bosch, Carlos Hipólito, Ramón Barea or Marta Hazas, among others. (Moya and Illana, 2012). The fixed actors casting of the series is comprised by María Pujalte (*Periodistas, Siete Vidas*) as Laura Lebre; Fernando Guillén-Cuervo as Jacobo, Laura's former husband; Oriol Tarrasón as Martín; César Camino as Vicente Cuevas; and Laura Pamplona as Lydia.

Regarding its price, the first season reached a total of 7.493.286€, 576.406€ per chapter (Toledo, 2012). Among some of the relevant production data it is worth mentioning that the only sequences filmed on set are the ones that occur at Laura's house and the police station, while approximately 70% of locations are filmed outside the set (Moya and Illana, 2012). Reyes Baltanás, executive producer, affirms that every chapter has a different personality, and this is partly thanks to the bet of the series for outdoors settings. From a total of nine days of filming per episode, seven are outdoors and two in the set. The locator's figure, in this case Leonardo Martínez, is responsible for looking the different

outdoor settings depending on the script. Finally, executive production, management and art direction choose the best places for filming and adapt indoor with outdoor locations of the series (Moya and Illana, 2012: 8).

Despite the good results, *Los Misterios de Laura* bid farewell in Spain with its third season that broadcasted on January 2014 and ended in April with a lower audience compared to its previous seasons (12.1%). Chapter 13 of the second season had a share of 20.8%, even though the third season ended with a mean of 12.1%. While the first and the second one registered 16% and 16.6%. Besides, it is still conquering international televisions and it is becoming one of the Spanish series with more adaptations. Likewise, Boomerang TV's production also has its Portuguese and Russian version, which was the first to make a version of Laura's adventures, by the hand of Starmedia Film with the title of *Mamá detective*. Inga Oboldina gets into the skin of Larisa, Lebel inspector and the premiere will be on Channel 1. Italy also has its own version. It was released on Tuesday, October 27 in the time slot of maximum audience under the title *I Misteri di Laura* in Canale 5, main chain of the Mediaset Italy group. As *Formula TV* informed recently, the casting is led by Carlotta Natoli in the paper of Laura Moretti and moves Laura's cases to Turin under the management of Alberto Ferrari. In Holland they performed the project SBS and Bing. It is titled *Rechercheur Ria* (Detective Ria). There, her name is not Laura, but Ria and it is interpreted by Ellen Pieters. Moreover, the series was sold to Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru or Dominican Republic, and there are ongoing negotiations with other countries as well.

### **3.2.2. *The Mysteries of Laura* (NBC, 2014-): particularities of the American version**

Todd Lituchy, founder and advisor of New Media Vision, discovered the series's concept in MIPCOM of Cannes and it seemed quite interesting for him. Together with Warner Bros and Greg Berlanti's producer (creator of series such as *Everwood*, *Arrow* or *The Flash*), presented the original bible of the series and the trailer to different chains (ABC, CBS and NBC) in a process that lasted two years approximately. The three chains showed interest for the original concept of the series (mother-detective) but finally was NBC the one that bet definitively on the project. As Vila and Holgado explain, once the project for performing the pilot was selected, it was presented in NBC's upfronts in 2013:

“Once the pilot filming started, Debra Messing was chosen as main actress, which is a known and familiar face for NBC due to series such as *Smash* or *Will and Grace*. The rest of the casting was being searched and the pilot was filmed with a lot of outdoor settings, using decoration of the J.J. Abrams' series *Person of Interest* in Silvercup studios of Nueva York. The pilot was presented in the upfronts on May. Out of 50 projects presented to a chain, a pilot is produced in only 10 of them and from these, only 2 or 3 are chosen to become a series.” (Carlos Vila and Javier Holgado, creators and scriptwriters of *Los Misterios de Laura*, 2014).

During the two years mentioned the negotiations between the international sales department of Boomerang, Todd Lituchy and interested producer companies were rather complicated, because Americans wanted to have absolute control of the project. This meant purchasing the authors' right of the format in a complete manner preventing that it could be used in Spain again. But the Spanish producer did not yield to pressure and the privileged position of Americans.

Thus, on August 16, 2013 its broadcast in NBC was announced with the title *The Mysteries of Laura* and endorsed by a staff of professionals experts in series productions. Developed by Jeff Rake (*Boston Legal*, ABC, 2004-2008), who is also executive producer with Greg Berlanti (*The Flash*, CW, 2014- )

and Aaron Kaplan (*Terra Nova*, Fox, 2011). Besides the mentioned Todd Lituchy there also participates Joseph McGinty executive producer of (*Supernatural*, CW, 2005- ) and Sarah Schechter producer of (*Supergirl*, CBS, 2015- ) (Andreeva, 2013).

The series, with Debra Messing (*Will and Grace*) in the role of Laura Diamond was released on September 24, 2014 with 10.4 million viewers and reached a mean of 7.4 million viewers per episode in its first season (Gómez, 2014). The rest of the casting was constituted by the following actors: Josh Lucas (*Una mente maravillosa*) as Jake Diamond, the former husband; Laz Alonso (*Avatar*, *Deception*, *Fast & furious*), his partner Martin; and Janina Gavankar (*True blood*), as Meredith.

*Los Misterios de Laura*'s scriptwriters explain some of the keys of its adaptation's success. Americans did a 'remake' (understanding a 'remake' as true copy) of the first chapter. And from the second one they perform a freer adaptation of the series using the same tone and type of characters and respecting their personal relationships, but with different scripts. In their opinion, the success is focused in two specific aspects or production values. The first one is the adaptation work of the main character. The protagonism centered in a police inspector that is also a suffering mother in her personal life and the second one is the blend of humor ('sitcom' style comedy) and mystery together with the most classical police procedural genre.

Regarding the former, the key is in the contrast between the everyday life of that mother and the mystery surrounding her cases. Laura is a very universal character and very human that combines many registries. Americans have copied traits such as her clumsiness or the disordered nature from the original, but they have added others since the United States' public has other demands:

“Our Laura is more of a looser, the American Laura is flashier (...) Nobody took Colombo seriously and the same happens with Laura. It is normal that the scriptwriters have detached from the Spanish Laura because they have a different public to satisfy and therefore they have added many action elements in the storyline as well as more teaser-like humor moments from the protagonist. Jeff Rake, the *showrunner* and creator of the adaptation, explained us that they had to “Americanize” Laura to transform her into a more popcorn character.” (Carlos Vila and Javier Holgado, creators and scriptwriters of *Los misterios de Laura*, 2014).

However, the original concept “mother-police” outstands as one of the keys of the American production:

“Basically they purchased some characters, a style of series, a narrative, a storyline style. They always purchase styles of... because at the end the storylines of the police cases are not the same, but they always start with a crime, the same as in our chapters. They have a certain resemblance in the structure. But what is really innovative for them is that they didn't have, in their broad scope of police series, a detective mother that applied her domestic 'know-how' and skills to solve her cases.” (Carlos Vila and Javier Holgado, creators and scriptwriters of *Los misterios de Laura*, 2014).

Regarding the second innovative production value North American producers noticed, there was the aforementioned comedy and mystery blend the series distills. Humor is managed as in 'sitcom', a humor that not only aims to get a smile from the viewer:

“Currently the American television lacks of this kind of series which combine comedy and mystery. There are soft police series such as *Monk* or *Castle* but, they didn't have any series that appealed to the viewer's loud laughter at the same time the viewer follows a police

investigation. Decades ago, they achieved it with productions such as *Luz de luna*, but in these last years they didn't have anything similar though." (Carlos Vila and Javier Holgado, creators and scriptwriters of *Los misterios de Laura*, 2014).

Regarding the approach of the police cases there was indeed a change compared to the Spanish one and it is related to chapter's duration. Here cases, developed in 60-65 minutes duration per chapter, were based on Agatha Christie's classical mystery novels and the detective series *Se ha escrito un crimen* (CBS, 1984-1996) and *Colombo* (NBC and ABC, 1968-2003). Its narrative strategy was to present a crime with a group of suspects and make the public play Cluedo. However, in the adaptation, American scriptwriters decided for the typical cases of the procedural police series instead:

"They have used the American procedural style like *Bones*, *House*, *Castle* or *El mentalista* where the case is not distinguished from one series to another. It is what their public is used to watch. We would have liked that the scriptwriters could have followed our pattern: suggest the atmosphere of mystery with the murder, introduce all suspects thoroughly and that the public plays guessing who the murder is. But in order for the audience to get interested and immersed into the game, it needs time to know characters. It is very complicated to write the mystery we make to adjust it to 40 minutes when 10 are already used to develop Laura's personal life and there are only 30 minutes left for the police case and as a consequence the storyline accelerates" (Carlos Vila and Javier Holgado, creators and scriptwriters of *Los misterios de Laura*, 2014).

The American scriptwriters outstand that the mixture of comedy and procedural series is the differential and unexpected feature of *The Mysteries of Laura*. The public that likes the series due to its family comedy content can be attracted by the procedural style and lovers of procedural style can solve the mystery with a smile on their faces (Kit, 2016).

The premiere of the adaptation of the series on NBC, in 2014, was successful in gathering more than 10 million viewers with its pilot episode and kept losing audience until reaching a mean of 7.45 million viewers in its first season. The second season broadcasted in February and March 2016 ended up with 6.5 million. This caused that the NBC decided to cancel its production on March 2016 after broadcasting 38 chapters (El español, 2016).

#### 4. Conclusions and discussion

The Spanish television fiction currently shows one of its most prolific times regarding exportations series that are adapted in other markets, something that demonstrates the level of competitiveness of national productions in international contexts. Together with leading markets such as the British or the Nordic market, Spanish series are conquering audiences as complicated as the American and part of that success lies in the potential of the narrative proposals from their development stage. After evaluating the adaptation cases mentioned, as well as the case of study specifically, we observe some production values that have determined that these fictions could be more exportable to be adapted, considering the series' sales and creations processes in foreign markets. It is necessary that narrative proposals occupy a niche in the market differentiating them from the rest of series. The search of a differential value from the creative perspective is essential to find a room inside and outside national frontiers.

Just as it is evidenced from the present empirical study, private chains have contributed to this process, Antena 3 and Tele 5, as well as independent producers such as Globomedia which has produced the titles that were adapted more abroad with series such as *Médico de familia* (Tele 5, 1995-1999), *Aída*

(Telecinco, 2005-2014), *Los Hombres de Paco* (Antena 3, 2005-2010), *El iInternado* (Antena 3, 2007-2010) or *El Barco* (Antena 3, 2010-2013). Public televisions, specifically TVE and the autonomic TV3, have also sold their titles to international markets to be adapted, such as the case of *Polseres Vermelles* (TV3, 2012-2013), *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (La 1, 2001-) or *Los misterios de Laura* (La 1, 2009-2014), which underwent a more thorough analysis from the perspective of the creators of this paper.

In this sense, we observe how the Spanish fiction has found a creative way based on the authenticity of local and that allowed it to shine internationally. Highlighting this understanding between local and global or universal elements of a television format as the differential trait of television fiction adaptations. This is why the “glocalization” process of series content is relevant.

The case of the study object analyzed, we highlight the relevance of the series’ development or design stage in the production process when there comes the time for the new scriptwriters to properly transfer contents from one country to another. This part of the process is of vital relevance and prevails over other stages, which are also essential such as pre-production, filming or post-production. In the case studied, the relevance of its concept is worth mentioning as well as the centrality of main character as key issues for choosing this series to be adapted to the United States. The creators highlight the protagonist’s character of mother-police and the comedy touch of the series as the most outstanding aspects of the adaptation. In short, they appeal to a concept of a universal character, easily identifiable, but at the same time exclusive and differential because it did not exist in the foreign market. Other important aspects are the genre’s tone and style, although in the American case they stuffed it with other elements of the most procedural genre in the treatment of police cases, with more action scenes in the storyline that add more spectacularity to the series. However, the inclusion of a comedy tone to the procedural style is the baseline in the American adaptation.

On the other hand, we must advocate the relevance, in the stage of idea development, of the adaptation effort of the script of the pilot chapter, since it is the narrative baseline that will focus the tone and style of the rest of episodes. Although, as we confirmed, the rest of episodes can be subject to variations that will depend on the new business needs of markets to be adapted. However, in a context of formats globalization, the search of universality in the essence of characters and storylines must be written in the bible. Regarding the starring genres of greater projection, comedy and ‘dramedia’ are the most popular ones in our country and, at the same time, more adapted in other markets. With this, we don’t want to say that only these genres have adaptation possibilities, but that they are precisely the ones that show a greater coverage and that work as breeding ground to generate a production style of their own, that is specific and recognizable in an international market, like the case of *nordic noir* of Nordic countries, positioning the industry of Spanish fiction production in an international context in a joint manner.

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### 5.4. Personal interview

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