



■ **Special Issue**
Valencians and
The Ballot Box:
Political Parties
During the 2019 Elections

■ **Contributions** Enguix Oliver, S., Marín Pérez, B., Pavía, J.M., Aybar, C., Peris Blanes, A., López García, G., Cano Orón, L., Fenoll, V., Sánchez Castillo, S., Marcos García, S., Viounnikoff-Benet, N., Casero Ripollés, A., López Olano, C., Sánchez Castillo, S., Carratalá, A., Palau Sampio, D., Roig, R., Martín Cubas, J., Rochina Garzón, P., Clemente González, F., Rekawek, J., González Rueda, A. J. and Ariño Villarroya, A. and Barrio, A.

■ **Special Issue**
Tweeting, Posting, Blogging: Feminist features
in the battle against sexist violence and for
peace and equality

■ **Contributions** García de León, M.A., Magallón Portolés, C., González Ramos, A. M., Revelles-Benavente, B., Gisbert-Gracia, V., García Català, M.T., Datiri, B., Hanash Martínez, M. and Llorca Abad, G.



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Debats was launched in 1982 as the journal of the Institution of Alfonso The Magnanimous (IAM) and shortly afterwards, of the Valencia Institute of Research and Investigation (IVEL). Its mission, then as now, is to foster and update the great debates on social sciences in the Valencian region, and to facilitate participation by leading experts in the field. The Debats journal is now a bi-annual publication. Its objective is to: (1) bring together current intellectual reflections on culture (both in its broadest sense of cultural practices and in the narrower sense of the Arts); (2) examine the links between culture and power, identity, geographies, and social change. The Journal covers matters that are relevant to Valencian society and its wider setting. That said, the aim is to make Debats a key scholarly publication in both Europe and further afield. Debats' starts from the perspective of the social sciences but it also aims to forge links with contemporary analysis and debates in the humanities, communication studies, and cultural studies fields. It calls for methodological pluralism while fostering innovation through the adoption of new research techniques and ways of communicating scholarly findings to a broader public. In a nutshell, the Journal is an invaluable tool for analysing emerging problems in the cultural field and in contemporary society. In playing this role, it takes a broad, multi-disciplinary view and combines social impact with scientific rigour in scholarly publications and debates at the international level.

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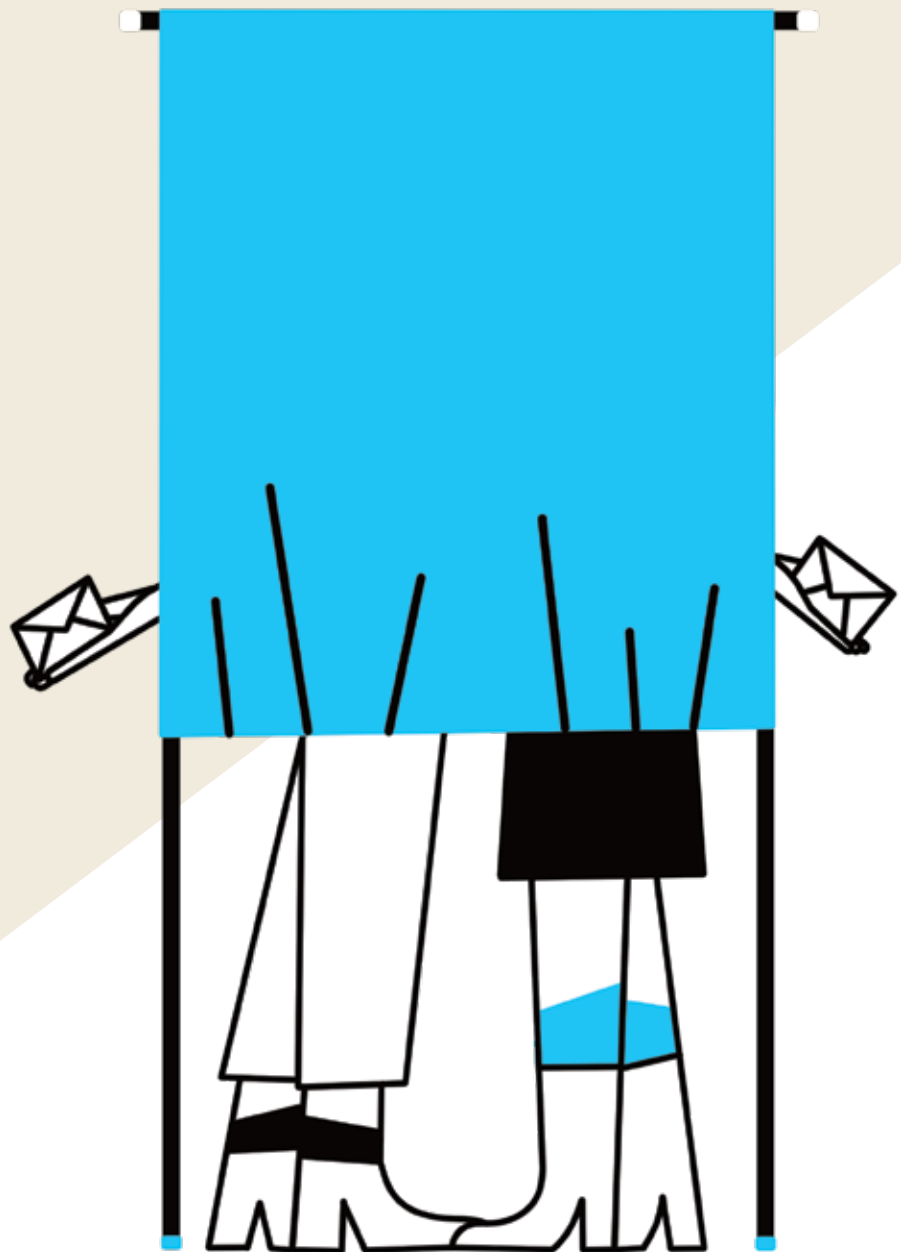
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Special Issue

Valencians and The Ballot Box: Political Parties During the 2019 Elections



Presentation of the Monographic Issue. Valencians and The Ballot Box: Political Parties During the 2019 Elections

Coordinated by

Guillermo López García

UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

INTRODUCTION: HIDDEN CAMPAIGNS AND RESULTS YIELDING SIMILAR OUTCOMES IN THE 2019 ELECTIONS

Both the regional and local elections during the 2015-2019 legislature brought change in The Valencian Country (the so-called Valencian Autonomous Community). The Partido Popular had had a long spell in power (governing the Valencian Regional Government — the *Generalitat Valenciana* — for twenty years, and even longer in cities such as Valencia). The 2015 regional and municipal elections in The Valencian Country brought this hegemony to an end, with Left-Wing parties winning convincingly. The combination of the Left-Wing parties — PSPV, Compromís, Podemos, Esquerra Unida — took 54 % of votes and 55 of the 99 seats. This provided an absolute majority even though the EUPV fell below the threshold needed to gain a seat in the Valencian Regional Parliament (*las Cortes Valencianas*). Accordingly, although the votes cast for EUPV made up 4% of the total, the party was left without political representation. In addition, the Left won back the mayorships of the three Provincial Capitals and also took control of the main population centres and of the Valencian Municipal Board (*Diputación de Valencia*, with powers akin to a Metropolitan Authority).

This was the point of departure. In the new legislature, the regional government avoided making any big mistakes or starting major schemes given that the Regional Government's coffers were empty. The government's finances had been shaky for over a decade given the huge public debts that had been racked up despite the Autonomous Community's meagre revenues. Relations between the Left-Wing parties forming

the coalition emerging from the 2015 elections proved stabler than the pundits had predicted. This suggested that the 2019 elections would bring very little change in the political landscape. Most of the pre-election surveys forecast another absolute majority for the incumbent Left-Wing government and in most of the circumscriptions won by the Left in 2015.

However, the basis for these forecasts was partially invalidated by the decision to advance the electoral calendar. The move was made by the President of the Valencian Regional Government, Ximo Puig, who took advantage of the calling of a General Election in Spain to hold the Regional Election at the same time. This was the first time in The Valencian Country's history since the restoration of democracy that the regional elections were not held on the same day as the municipal ones (even though there was only a month between them). Puig presented his decision as a way of stressing Valencia's regional autonomy, and of highlighting the importance of Valencia's institutions. Yet his real purpose was to boost the number of votes cast for the Socialists. Holding the regional elections on the same day as Spain's General Election was seen as a means to that end.

The campaign agenda for the regional elections was strongly influenced by the general elections. Moreover the campaign featured national leaders from the main parties standing in The Valencian Country. This led to purely Valencian subjects and debates being thrust into the background. When it came to voting intentions, there were clear differences among the parties. There was strong dual voting in each of the elections in the case of Compromís, with voting intention being much stronger in the Regional Election than in the General Election. The same was true of Unidas Podemos but in this case it was the other way round, the party commanding much greater support in the General Election than in the Regional one. These effects were less pronounced in the cases of PSPV and Vox. If we take both elections overall, the results of the General Election were more favourable to the Right, which matched the Left in gaining 48% of the votes cast. By contrast, in the regional elections, the Right's share dropped 2% (that is to say 46%, compared with the Left's 48%). The Left's 2% edge gave the *Botànic* coalition a slender majority this time round but it had lost four seats on the way (the Left's seats fell from 55 to 51) and it had also lost its majority in the number of votes cast (54% in 2015 compared to 48% in 2019).

As planned, municipal elections were held throughout Spain in May 2019, coinciding with the elections to The European Parliament. On this occasion, given the nature of the local elections and voters' general lack of interest in the EU elections (for which turn-out is lower than in other elections), the campaign was less influenced by Spanish issues than usual and more by local ones. With regard to the election results, these consolidated the trend begun in 2015, with votes being concentrated in the parties that had held the mayorships in most municipalities, and evidently in those with the biggest populations. This meant that the Left would continue controlling the biggest municipalities, apart from the City of Alicante, which was snatched back by Partido Popular (PP) in 2018 after a motion of no-confidence, in which a Podemos Councillor changed sides to support the PP's candidate for Mayor, Luis Barcala. The power shift

in Alicante and the change in the majority party in the Castellón Metropolitan Board (*Diputación de Castellón*) — which would now be led by PSPV — were the two main changes compared with the 2015 elections.

This long succession of election campaigns (tantamount to one long campaign interspersed with rounds of voting) was strongly bound up with other elections held throughout Spain. This fascinating political battleground is the subject of this monographic issue. In it, we stress the main threads in the regional and municipal elections, the policies — which we have just sketched out — and the role of the media (given that Valencia's media eco-system had undergone big changes since 2015 in at least two major respects).

The first aspect was the return of a public broadcasting network — *À Punt*. While the re-launch of a regional public TV and radio broadcasting network was a recurrent subject of debate in the 2015 election campaign, four years later the restored network was a big factor in the structuring of the 2019 campaign and its media echo. In addition, by 2019 social networks and their use to channel all kinds of information and viewpoints was increasingly polarising politics. Furthermore, this time round the political landscape featured Far-Right parties, such as Vox, which now had parliamentary representation. This campaign also had its fair share of 'fake news' based on false premises or propaganda distortions as a way of garnering votes. All of these threads in the two election campaigns will be analysed in depth in the nine papers making up this monographic issue.





A Look at Valencia's Elections of the 28th of April and the 26th of May 2019

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the main features of the Valencian media coverage of the elections held in Spain in the Spring of 2019 (General, Regional, Municipal, and European elections). We shine a spotlight on the key themes covered by the main newspapers, radio and TV stations, and on the campaign strategies parties used to define ideological blocs on the left and right.

Keywords: election campaigns, Valencian Autonomous Community, elections, candidates, debates, mass media, press.

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INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

On the 28th of April, Pedro Sánchez (Spain's President) decided to bring forward the date of the Spanish General Election to the 26th of May 2019. The President of Valencia's Regional Government, Ximo Puig, subsequently decided to hold the regional elections on the say day (26th of May). This upset the election campaigns planned by the political parties

both in Spain and in the Valencian Autonomous Community [autonomous region]. This paper analyses how the electoral campaigns changed as a result, based on the following initial hypotheses:

H1: The confluence of the General Election and the Regional Election clearly influenced the news agendas of Valencia's media (press,

digital press, radio and television). The media had to change their planned reporting criteria to ensure proper coverage in a wholly new political scenario.

H2: Another important impact of holding both elections on the same day was the spill-over from the General Election campaign to the regional one. This spill-over could be seen in both what one might term *political narratives* and the weight given to the media. The upshot was that coverage of the Regional Election got pushed into the background by media coverage of the General Election (Berganza, 2008). Furthermore, Ximo Puig's attempts to get *The Valencian Agenda* covered by the national media failed — a political error because this had been a key reason for him choosing to make the date of the Regional Election coincide with that of the national one.

H3: Henceforth in the Valencian elections, the confluence of the Regional Election with the General Election (despite opposition by *Compromís*) meant that the general Left-Right party discourse held sway throughout.

In testing these hypotheses, this paper presents key aspects of the campaign coverage for the General and Regional elections between the 12th and the 26th of April, focusing particularly on an event we consider of fundamental importance, namely Ximo Puig's announcement on the 4th of March 2020 that the date of the Regional Election would be brought forward. We also analyse the subsequent electoral campaigns that ran between the 10th and 24th of May for the Municipal and European elections.

To ensure that the Valencian media's news coverage was properly represented, we drew on information on the campaigns published in both the printed and digital versions of *Levante-EMV* (LEV), *Las Provincias* (PROV), *El Periódico Mediterráneo* (MED), and *Diario Información* (INF) newspapers, as well as

in the digital newspapers *Valencia Plaza* (VPZA) and *Diari La Veu* (VEU). With regard to audiovisual media, we took into account the coverage of: (1) Atresmedia; (2) TVE; (3) TVE-Comunidad Valenciana; (4) À Punt TV; (5) Cadena SER (the radio network with the most listeners in The Valencian Country). When it comes to audiovisual media, we chose to study nine radio and TV election debates, bearing in mind that their rebroadcast by social networks through streaming had a multiplier effect in terms of reaching potential voters. The social media channelled a fair chunk of the political discourse from public institutions, private entities, and citizens themselves (Campos, Valera Ordaz, and López García, 2015). Television continues to play a big role in shaping public opinion through news and current affairs programmes (Casero Ripollés and Marzal, 2011a). The debates, whether broadcast by radio or television, attract audiences precisely because they include the cut-and-thrust of politics, representing various viewpoints. That is why they are seen as a tool that lets the electorate weigh up political opinions, compare the candidates in terms of their ideas, backgrounds, and public image (Marín, 2003).

Likewise, an analysis was made of the news treatment adopted by these media. Here, we focused on two key aspects: (1) the subjects that were over-represented and the news priorities in each of the periods studied; (2) the leaders in the parties' election strategies. These two aspects make up what one might call a *Valencian look* at the chosen campaigns.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

On the 15th of February 2019, the President of the Spanish Government, Pedro Sánchez, announced his decision to dissolve the Spanish Parliament (*las Cortes Generales*) and call a General Election for the 28th of April. Sánchez stated that he had taken the decision after finding it impossible to pass the State Budget [*Presupuestos Generales del Estado* — PGE]. The budget

Table 1 Analysed election debates

Audio-visual media	General Election	Regional Election	Municipal Elections	European Election
Atresmedia	23 rd April			
TVE	22 nd April			
TVE -C. Valenciana		17 th April		
À Punt TV	24 th April			
Cadena SER	15 th April		10 th May Valencia, Alacant and Castelló	13 th May

Source: The Authors.

Bill had been blocked by the votes of Centre-Right parties and by Catalan pro-independence parties. A couple of weeks later on the 4th of March, the President of The Valencian Country, Ximo Puig, took an unexpected decision, namely to bring the Regional, Municipal, and European elections — originally scheduled for the 26th of May — and hold them on the same date as Spain's General Election, to wit, the 28th of April. Puig's statement linked his decision to the exercise of Valencian self-government:

Spain's approval of Valencia's reformed Statute of Autonomy and the securing of government investment in the region are welcome recent developments. Now with the elections in the offering, it is incumbent on me as President of The Valencian Country, to round off this episode in our history (...), which is one that recognises our historic tradition of local autonomy and thus opens up a new stage in our region's self-governance. This is why I summoned the Plenary Council and, in accordance with my prerogatives under The Statute of Autonomy and the Government Act, I proposed the dissolution of Parliament and the holding of the Regional Election for the 28th of April 2019.

This was the first time in the history of The Valencian Country that the President had used this prerogative to dissolve the Valencian Regional Parliament before the scheduled date for the next

election. The prerogative itself was enshrined in the 2006 reformed Valencian Statute of Autonomy. Ximo Puig's decision was strongly criticised by *Compromís*, a party in his coalition government. *Compromís* immediately opened a debate in the Valencia media on the need to tackle the so-called *Valencia Agenda* — that is to say, the problems faced by Valencia's citizens in dealing with a General Election and a Regional Election at the same time. *Compromís'* fear — which was highlighted in the Valencian media — was that the 'State Agenda' would end up crowding out the issues that most affected Valencians' daily lives.

THE VALENCIAN AGENDA

In journalistic terms, the so-called *Valencian Agenda* (sometimes also referred to as *The Valencian Problem*) refers to those issues that have been and still are of main interest to Valencian political parties. They cover some of the deficiencies found in this region. The biggest issues formed part of the political discourse during the regional legislature spanning from 2015 to 2019. They were as follows: (1) chronic lack of investment by the Spanish State in the region's infrastructure; (2) the need to pardon the *historic debt* stemming from State underfunding. The 'historic debt' has been estimated at anywhere between €12,000 million and €18,000

million in various rigorously-conducted studies (Fernández, 1998; Barea Tejeiro, Lamo de Espinosa, Schwartz Girón, Tamames Gómez and Velarde Fuertes, 2013).

When Ximo Puig decided to bring forward the Regional Election, he argued that this was an opportunity to highlight the *Valencian Agenda* during the Spanish General Election campaign, stating: “Holding the Regional Election on the 28th of April will help we Valencians carve out our own political space”.

“The President of the Valencian Regional Government says his decision recognises the Valencian Autonomous Community as a historic, self-governing entity” (A. Cervellera; PROV, 05/03/19).

The Valencian President believed that holding both the national and regional elections on the same day (the 26th of May) would make it easier for the region to make its mark on the Spanish media. This paper reveals that the opposite was true. What actually happened was that the national agenda thrust both the regional, municipal, and European elections into the shade, with the major problems afflicting The Valencian Country getting scant attention in the mass media.

In fact, The Valencian Country was only mentioned twice in the election debates featuring Spain’s presidential candidates. In the first debate, broadcast by TVE (22nd of April; 8.8 million viewers), no mention was made of the region at all. Right at the end of a second debate, which was broadcast by Atresmedia (23rd April, 9.4 million viewers), Pablo Iglesias mentioned that “The regional problem not only covers Catalonia, it also applies to the funding of the Valencian Autonomous Community”. His words were taken up by Pedro Sánchez shortly afterwards and who took the opportunity to note that “The Regional Election is being held at the same time as Valencia’s Regional Election”.

This double mention did not stop *The Valencian Problem* being swept under the carpet in both the

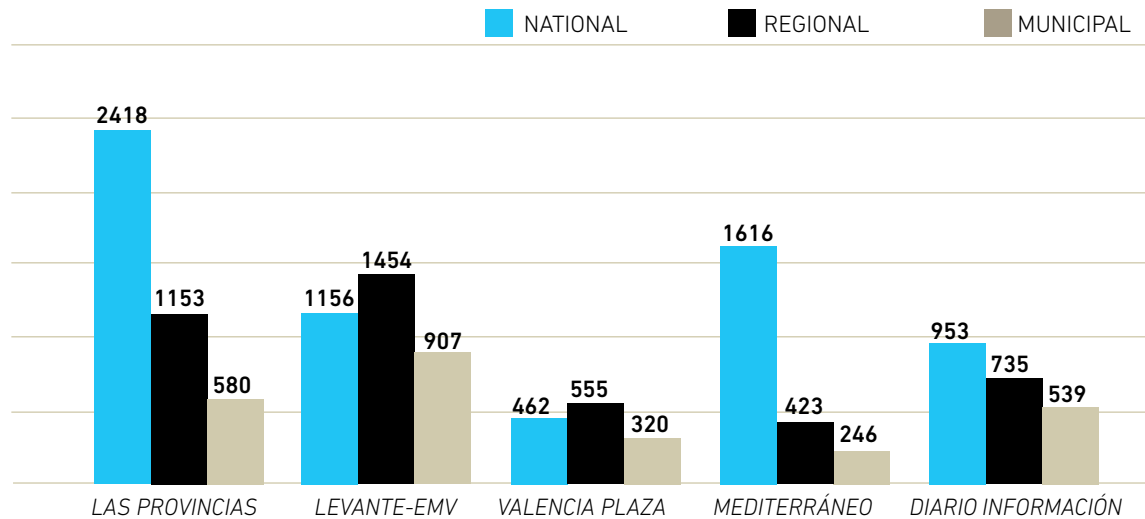
Regional Election and in the Spanish General Election. Joan Baldoví, a Compromís’ candidate, criticised Valencia’s absence from TVE’s and Atresmedia’s election debates with presidential candidates. He also scathingly noted during a debate he took part in on À Punt TV (24th of April) that, “only 10 minutes was spent talking about The Valencian Country. These debates on Valencian public television should focus on the problems we face in this region”.

The same bias can be seen when one analyses the protagonism of political leaders in the media coverage. Thus, consulting the FACTIVA Press database reveals that in the consecutive election campaigns for the 26th of April and the 28th of May, national leaders hogged the limelight in the newspapers in our study (the only newspaper not included in the FACTIVA database is *Diari La Veu*). The graph below shows the number the following politicians were mentioned in the period from the 12th of April to the 25th of May:

- The five presidential candidates in the Spanish General Election (P. Sánchez, P. Casado, A. Rivera, P. Iglesias, and S. Abascal).
- The six presidential candidates in the Valencia’s Regional Election (X. Puig, M. Oltra, I. Bonig, R. Martínez Dalmau, T. Cantó, and J. M. Llanos).
- The 18 mayoral candidates for Valencia Municipal Elections (S. Gómez/PSPV-PSOE, J. Ribó/Compromís, M. J. Catalá/PP, F. Giner/Cs, M. Oliver/UP-EU and J. Gosávez/Vox), Alacant (F. Sanguino/PSPV-PSOE, L. Barcala/PP, N. Bellido/Compromís, X. López/UP-EU, M. C. Sánchez/Cs and M. Ortolá/Vox) and Castelló (A. Marco/PSPV-PSOE, I. J. Garcia/Compromís, B. Carrasco/PP, A. Marín/Cs, F. Navarro/UP-EU, and L. Ferrer/Vox).

As one can see, only *Levante-EMV* and *Valencia Plaza* gave greater coverage to the region’s political leaders than to the national leaders in the period under discussion.

Figure 1 Candidate mentions in national, regional, and municipal elections. Number of mentions of: the 18 mayoral candidates; 6 presidential candidates in the Regional Election; 5 presidential candidates in Spain's General Elections (in the period spanning 12th April to 25th of May)



Sources: FACTIVA. The Authors.

THE MAIN NEWS AXES DURING THE CAMPAIGNS

In this study, we chose a set of themes that were widely covered in Valencia's media, whether in news sections or opinion articles, and that also traced the main narrative in the aforementioned election campaigns.

Early elections

The newspapers reflected reactions to bringing the elections forward and noted the effects of this decision for each party and in particular, for the cohesion of the *Botànic* government. Some of the headlines (translated) are given below:

"Puig ignores the objections of *Compromís* and calls early elections" (*Las Provincias*, 04/03/19).

"Puig calls early elections despite opposition from *Compromís*" (Amparo Soria. *Levante-EMV*, 04/03/19).

"Oltra criticises Puig's call for early elections, saying it is unjustified" (*El Periódico Mediterráneo*, 04/03/19).

"Puig breaks *The Botanic Accord*¹ and throws in his lot with Sánchez" (*Valencia Plaza*, 05/03/19).

"Podemos: "We are ready for elections on the 28th of April" (*Diario Información*, 04/03/19).

"Ciudadanos: "Puig and Oltra take turns at playing *The Scarlet Pimpernel*" (B.L. *Diario Información*, 05/03/19).

With regard to the standpoint taken by the newspapers, *Las Provincias* changed its tack in its editorial of the 5th of March, stating the following regarding Puig's justification, and highlighting *The Valencian Problem*:

¹ Translator's Note: So called because it was signed in Valencia's Botanic Gardens.

This is not highlighting issues; it is just a tactical gambit. There is no justification for early elections in The Valencian Country other than pursuing the self-interest of the Socialists.

Funding

The subject of the under-funding of The Valencian Country was constantly raised in the four years preceding the coalition government that arose from ‘The *Botànic* Accord’. Yet the issue was also raised during the campaigns for both the General Election and the Regional Election. All the parties demanded more Central Government funds for the Valencian Autonomous Community and blamed one another for the latter’s parlous finances. Apart from under-funding, two other issues making up ‘The Valencian Problem’ also reared their heads: (1) the region’s crippling public debt; (2) lack of Central Government investment in the region.

Here there was both “enemy and friendly fire” during the debates, with PP and PSPV-PSOE blaming each other for the chronic under-funding stretching back decades. Furthermore, they were also criticised by their allies (PP getting sniped at by Unides Podem; PSPV-PSOE getting it from Compromís). Cs, a future ally of the Popular Party, also took pot shots at the latter in a political arena that seemed more like a free-fire zone.

Some of the statements made by the Left-Wing bloc:

The region is under-funded and over-indebted. We spend less and we are beginning to chalk up a deficit — it is easy for the Partido Popular (PP) to carp. That party governed for seven years and did not lift a finger. Pedro Sánchez has presented budgets that would have meant €1400 million for The Valencian Country and the triple alliance of the PP, Ciudadanos, and the pro-independence parties voted them down. [Ximo Puig (PSPV-PSOE); TVE 17/04/19].

It is PP and the PSOE governing with absolute majorities that are to blame for not having changed the regional funding model. The FLA [Regional Liquidity Fund in which regions ask Central Government to raise loans on their behalf,

being forbidden to raise money on the markets themselves] solves nothing; it is like going to Madrid to beg alms. What we need is for the debt to be wiped clean. It makes no sense that *per capita* State investment in Alacante is only half that in the rest of Spain. We have been abandoned by Spain. It takes just as long to travel from Alcoi to Xàtiva by train as it did in the 19th Century. [Rubén M. Dalmau (Unides Podem); TVE, 17/04/19].

The PP has blocked a reform of Valencia’s Statute of Autonomy that would include a floor sum for the amount invested by Spanish Central Government. [Héctor Illueca (Unides Podem) and Joan Baldoví (Compromís); À Punt, 24/05/19].

PSOE’s attitude is disappointing. The party has not done anything to boost Valencia’s funding in the ten months it has been in power. [Joan Baldoví (Compromís); Cadena SER, 15/04/19].

Statements from the Right-Wing bloc:

Ours is Spain’s most under-funded Autonomous Community. It is you, Mr. Puig that are to blame for this, you and your party but all you do is point the finger at others. [Toni Cantó (Cs); TVE, 17/04/19].

We have a system that was passed in 2009 by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero to steal votes from Esquerra Republicana (ERC). [Isabel Bonig (PP); TVE, 17/04/19].

The blame for The Valencia Region’s under-funding lies with the PP and the PSOE, which have governed over the last 40 years by stitching up deals with PdCat and the PNV and dishing out the money to other regions but not to ours. [Marta Martín (Cs); À Punt 24/05/19].

The rise of the Far-Right

Another of the main discourses in the General Election campaign was the idea (harped on by Left-Wing parties as a threat) that the Far Right might form part of the next Spanish Government, and in regional and local tiers of government. Since the elections in Andalusia on the 2nd of December 2018, media fears of Vox gaining political access to institutions had come

true. Given what had happened in Andalusia, there was a growing belief that the Far Right would gain representation in all tiers of government: national, regional, and local. An analysis of the media coverage of Vox, carried out by *El País*, *La Vanguardia*, *ABC*, *El Mundo*, *El Español*, *eldiario.es*, *Infolibre*, and *El Confidencial* newspapers revealed that the Vox political rally held in Vistalegre (Madrid) on the 7th of October 2018 led media coverage of the party to rocket almost nine-fold (888%) (Enguix and Gallardo, 2020).

The media attention showered on Vox after the Andalusian elections was thus “over the top” (Gallardo, 2018), given the party’s relatively modest presence in institutions at the time. However, in political analysts’ view, this overplayed ‘threat’ from Vox spurred Left-Wing parties to do their utmost to stop the Far Right party from achieving its goals.

This aspect was widely covered by Valencian media, with special attention being paid to the impact the Far Right might have on Valencia’s Regional Parliament and on local councils. Indeed, most of the speeches by both Left-Wing regional and local candidates argued that the Far Right both threatened The Valencian Country and the rest of Spain. A few examples of the newspaper headlines are given below:

“Abascal raises his ‘Civil War’ tone and asks Catholics to cast their votes against the Popular Front” (*Diario Información*, 21/04/2019).

“The PSOE advances while Cs and Vox snatch votes from PP” (*Las Provincias*, 22/04/2019).

“The battle to lead the Right will shape the final stages of the campaign in The Valencian Country. The PP brings in the old guard to stem the loss of votes to Vox and Ciudadanos” (*Levante-EMV*, 22/04/2019).

The following issue was also covered in the television and radio debates:

Alliances that would be unthinkable in the rest of Europe [Susana Ros (PSPV-PSOE); À Punt, 24/04/19].

PP and Ciudadanos should be ashamed of themselves in speaking about The Spanish Constitution on the one hand but being willing to work with Vox on the other... given the social rights guaranteed by that Constitution [Héctor Illueca (Unidas Podemos); Cadena SER, 15/04/19].

Post-election pacts

The debate on post-election pacts was another of the thematic axes in these election campaigns. Indeed, the subject was given a section on its own in various debates and interviews with candidates of those parties in with a chance of taking a leading role. This spawned all kinds of journalism in the Spanish and Valencian media. Journalists demanded clarification from parties on both Left and Right regarding the pacts planned. On the one hand, the Left-Wing parties took the Andalusian case as their benchmark, envisaging pacts among all the Right-Wing parties (which is what came about and was commented upon in the foregoing session). On the other hand, Right-Wing leaders tried to toughen their stance by making unflattering comparisons between Vox and Unidas Podemos, branding the latter as a Far-Left party. This was a general trend that was also seen in the debates covering the regional and local elections. María Muñoz (Cs), speaking on Cadena SER, stated (15/04/2019):

Our pact will stipulate that they respect The Spanish Constitution, the concept of the nation, cutting taxes, and supporting families. We will not ally with nationalists, pro-independence/secessionist parties, Far-Left, anti-Capitalists like Podemos — which want to split Spain up ... We want an Andalusian-style pact. We are not going to ally with Dr. Sánchez or with Mr. Puig.

The General Election was also marked by the PSOE’s ambivalence when it came to allying with either Unidas Podemos or Cs as a strategy for winning over Centre-Right voters or Centre-Left voters. Even so, a pact with Cs seemed unlikely given the latter party’s strong antipathy towards the PSOE, opening up the option of a PP-Cs led government with Vox’s help.

Some statements from the Left-Wing bloc are given below:

We are seeking a Left-Wing government. Pedro Sánchez said that we are not planning to govern with Cs. [Susana Ros (PSPV-PSOE); À Punt, 24/04/19].

Cs will ally with PP and Vox but which party will ally with PSOE? We want a progressive government with those who guarantee economic self-sufficiency for The Valencian Country and that write off its huge public debt [Joan Baldoví (Compromís); Cadena SER, 15/04/19].

Statements by the Right-Wing bloc:

There will be no alliance between PSOE and Cs because *sanchismo* [the policies of Pedro Sánchez] will sell the country out to Podemos' populism and to nationalism, the latter being a force seeking to split Spain asunder [Marta Martín (Cs); À Punt, 24/04/19].

We defend the unity of Spain and of the Constitution — unlike PSOE, which will ally with the pro-independence and pro-ETA parties (...) We do not trust Cs because it has already allied with the PSOE on several occasions. If they want to, they can have a pact with the PP but they should have thought about that before drawing up joint lists of candidates for the Senate. [Belén Hoyo (PP); Cadena SER, 15/04/19].

In The Valencian Country's campaign for the Regional Election, the alliance strategies of both the Right-Wing parties and the Left-Wing parties were clearly discernible. It was obvious that PSPV-PSOE and Cs would not sign a pact after the elections. Yet it was also clear that Cs was at odds with PP, with the former bitterly criticising the latter for its corruption when it was in government. In this respect, this was in keeping with the arguments made by the parties at the national level.

With regard to the Right-Wing bloc, statements included:

The Andalusian pact sets a good example [Isabel Bonig (PP); TVE, 17/04/19].

I want all those who have robbed us to pay back what they stole ... (referring to the PP) ...and want to see an end to cronyism (referring to PSPV-PSOE and to Compromís). [Toni Cantó (Cs); TVE, 17/04/19].

Some of the arguments put forward by the Left-Wing bloc were:

Your party, Mrs. Bonig, has made up evidence to blacken our names by abusing the powers of the State [Rubén M. Dalmau (Unides Podem); TVE, 17/04/19].

There can be no democratic renewal with Cs. It allied with PSOE in Andalusia even when the unemployment benefits fraud was in full swing, and has cut a deal with PP in Madrid. [Rubén M. Dalmau (Unides Podem); TVE, 17/04/19]

Gender violence

This was a key subject in the election campaign and was linked to the rise of the Far Right. Here, messages by Right-Wing leaders were all grist to the mill. They included inflammatory statements by Pablo Casado on abortion, and by Santiago Abascal denying the existence of gender violence. Ciudadanos risked being tarred with the same brush, given that in January 2019, it had refused to vote for a pact to combat gender violence. Furthermore, both the national and Valencian media were highly sensitive to the issue. The flames were further fanned by specific incidents, such as the statements made by the PP's Catalan candidate for Congress, Cayetana Álvarez de Toledo, during a TV debate.

"Vox winds up the campaign with a small rally in which criticism is levelled at Feminism." (*Levante-EMV*, 26/04/2019)

"Vox muddies the waters in Twitter with a message that calls for a crusade against Feminism, homosexuality, and the Press." (*El Periódico Mediterráneo*, 28/04/2019)

"PP and Cs give Vox data on staff working in the gender violence field." (*El Periódico Mediterráneo*, 04/05/2019)

"Self-government and Feminism against Spain and The Bible." (*Levante-EMV*, 17/05/2019)

During the pre-campaign period, the Left-Wing parties capitalised on echoes of International Women's Day demonstrations (8th of May) to stress their rejection of gender violence. They employed this theme to good effect in both the national and regional elections. It was an issue on which Right-Wing parties in general and Vox in particular came off worst. This was also held true during the campaign itself, as the following statements show:

I agree with the President that we are all against gender violence but I feel this should not be turned into a political football. Only one party has not signed the pact on gender violence and that is Podemos. That shows that we need to reach these kinds of cross-party agreements on such issues. [Toni Cantó (Cs); TVE, 7/04/19].

Here, there is only one person who has said that women's denunciations of gender violence are false and that man is you, Mr. Cantó. We all know what happened with this pact. We thought it should have gone much further. [Rubén M. Dalmau (Unides Podem); TVE 7/04/19]

Gender violence is the most abhorrent expression of male chauvinism ... we have put help in committing murder on a par with terrorism. [Mónica Oltra (Compromís); TVE, 7/04/19].

I must say that I have my doubts about the anti-progressive coalition (PP and Cs). There is another member of that Right-Wing bloc (Vox) that has said there is no such thing as gender violence. Vox also comes out with outrageous statements on gender equality. I want to know whether this coalition also wants to return to the bad old days (...) I hope they will not turn the clock back when it comes to either gender violence or gender equality. That is because such

equality is the underpinning of democracy itself. [Ximo Puig (PSPV-PSOE); TVE, 7/04/19].

We shall not flinch when it comes to defending equality and freedom. We do not like the pact against gender violence but we put the public interest before that of the party. [Isabel Bonig (PP); TVE, 7/04/19].

The Catalan conflict

The election campaigns were under way while Spain's Supreme Court was trying Catalonia's political leaders in the so-called *Catalan process* (which culminated in a Unilateral Declaration of Independence). Although the issue's impact was less than in the preceding months (when it influenced the Andalusian elections), it was still strongly featured in the national news. Nevertheless, the Valencian media paid scant attention to either the trial or the events arising from it. Yet the subject did appear in the arguments put forward by parties during the various election debates on both radio and TV. The Catalan Conflict incensed and mobilised The Valencian Country's anti-Catalanist Right Wing. This anti-Catalanism was something that had traditionally distinguished the region's Right-Wing parties from its Left-Wing ones.

Some of the statements made by the Right-Wing bloc are given below:

Pedro Sánchez has sold out Spain by making permanent concessions to Catalan and pro-ETA independence parties. [Belén Hoyo (PP); À Punt, 24/04/19]

We prefer to be Valencians first than second-class Catalans, unlike you. [Belén Hoyo (PP) to Joan Baldoví (Compromís); À Punt, 24/04/19]

Mr. Puig, I am shocked to hear you say that we are the ones adding fuel to the flames... when trouble blew up, we were the ones that went to Alsasua [a town in Navarre]. These stoking up strife are others, including some of Dr. Sánchez's partners. [Toni Cantó (Cs); TVE, 17/04/19].

Left-Wing party statements included:

Stoking regional confrontation in Spain makes no sense but that is precisely what the Right-Wing does. The solution to these squabbles is The Rule of Law, commonsense, and dialogue. [Ximo Puig (PSPV-PSOE); TVE, 17/04/19]

Self-government provides welfare and opportunities... The model of a decentralised State is what works best. [Reply by Joan Baldoví (Compromís) to Ximo Puig (PSPV-PSOE); À Punt, 24/04/19]

We have to advance towards a Federal State that truly acknowledges the multi-national nature of Spain. There are forces at work that are tearing Spain apart but they are not the ones you say, Mrs. Bonig and Mr. Cantó. You seek conflict and trouble where none exist. [Rubén M. Dalmau (Unides Podem); TVE, 17/04/19]

One should also add that the issue is linked to the possible pardon of imprisoned Catalan politicians. This was another stick the Right-Wing used to beat the Left-Wing with during the election campaign.

The language issue, and Health

The language issue and Health are two subjects that crop up in every election period. The 2019 elections proved no exception to the rule. Education, and with the language conflict in The Valencian Country (which has two official languages: Valencian and Castilian) proved to be one of the star themes in the Regional Election. The Partido Popular (PP) proposed each school choose the language in which it teaches, and that at one in five schools, 80% of the subjects be taught in English. Cs also proposed schools freely choose in which language they taught, with the party promising that if it won, free English and sport would be laid on for children in July.

The difference between when the *sanchista* [Sánchez-led] coalition was in power and when the PP governed is that we took a non-partisan approach. Education and Health are

two fields where one can clearly see a world of difference.”[Isabel Bonig (PP); TVE, 17/04/19].

English? But only 6% of those graduating spoke fair English! (when the PP was the party in office in Valencia’s Regional Government). [Mónica Oltra (Compromís); TVE, 17/04/19].

The PP says that there are still school huts when it was precisely that party which stuffed children into them in the first place. Now Mr. Cantó says that he wants to govern with those who threw up all these huts. Let’s focus on the facts... we have done a great deal and our mission is to finish the job. [Rubén Dalmau (Unides Podem); TVE, 17/04/19].

You have spoken about indoctrination, Mr. Puig. I am going to speak about linguistic impositions on the lines of Catalonia’s ‘language immersion programme’. A network of 205 nursery schools has been set up in which not a single class in Spanish [Castilian] is taught during the week. [Toni Cantó (Cs); TVE, 17/04/19]

Public and Private Health provision and waiting lists were also seized upon by the two blocs in putting forward their election manifestos:

It all boils down to the underlying model. In the PP and Ciudadanos cases, they clearly want a privatised education and health system. At the height of the economic crisis, PP axed €10,000 million from Education and Health precisely when people most needed such services. [Rubén M. Dalmau (Unides Podem); TVE, 17/04/19]

It was you who faked the Health waiting lists. The first thing we did when we came to power was reveal the list of 10,420 patients that you had swept under the carpet, among so many other things. [Mónica Oltra (Compromís); TVE, 17/04/19]

If the waiting lists have grown longer, Mr. Puig and Mrs. Oltra, it is because among other things, the first thing Mrs. Montón did was to appoint a pal of hers in the PSC as Director of the La Fe hospital. [Toni Cantó (Cs); TVE, 17/04/19]

You had 8,500 patients more on the waiting list than the last PP government. [Isabel Bonig (PP); TVE, 17/04/19]

The Municipal Elections

The main cities in The Valencian Country also featured debates on both the regional public broadcasting network À Punt and in Cadena SER and other forums. These debates also revealed arguments polarising on Left-Right lines. In the political debates covering mayoral candidates for the City of Valencia, the Left-Wing bloc bet on repeating the pact during its previous term of office. It demanded the city's democratic renewal and promised to put an end to *corruption, waste, and soaring debt*. For instance:

Valencia has crawled out of the pit of corruption to reach the sunlit uplands of honesty... We have cut public debt by half. We have managed things well so that citizens can once again take pride in a city that enshrines honesty, justice, environmental sustainability, and plural values in all its dealings. [Joan Ribó (Compromís); Cadena SER, 10/05/19].

Cs and PP criticised the coalition for management weaknesses and the squabbles among its partners. The emergence of Vox and potential alliances with other Right-Wing parties was also reflected in the debate:

I am not going to ally with anyone who is willing to open the doors of City Hall to the Far Right (an allusion to Vox). (...) The Far Right is close to grabbing power and I will do my utmost to make sure it does not get into the City Council. [Sandra Gómez (PSPV-PSOE); Cadena SER, 10/05/19]

One of the main themes in the debates was the transport model used in cities to cut pollution. The proposal was to have fewer cars and more bicycles. This was a common theme that also appeared in the SER radio debate in Alacante. The city's Left-Wing bloc also sought a change in model to boost the use of public transport and bicycles, as well as the setting up of a Metropolitan Transport Authority. This debate highlighted the fierce battle between PP and Cs for Centre-Right voters.

You have swanned through the last four years in Alicante without doing anything worthwhile. [Luis Barcala (PP) reproaching Mari Carmen Sánchez." (Cs); Cadena SER, 10/05/19]

You need to think about it ... You have wasted the last four years. [Mari Carmen Sánchez (Cs); Cadena SER, 10/05/19]

The five candidates all agreed that the cleanliness of Alacante should be a priority in the next legislature. In Castelló, progressive forces showed interest in renewing The Grao Pact and focused on corruption. The PP candidate, Begoña Carrasco, criticised Marco for not living up to the idea that "his shoes were his official car" — something that Marco had said would be the case in the 2015 election. This stung the Mayor (Marco) into saying that Fabra having been "charged, found guilty, and who had served a sentence" was once again on the political scene.

They continue living in the past and with the idea that "things were better under General Franco". It has been a legislature full of big headlines and stories but short on deeds. [Begoña Carrasco (PP); Cadena SER, 10/05/19]

A wasted legislature. [Alejandro Marín-Buck (Cs); Cadena SER, 10/05/19]

The Grao Pact brought the PP's long spell in the city's government to an end. It was a period in which they treated the municipality like a Monopoly board so that their pals could make a killing by robbing The Community Chest. [Fernando Navarro (Unides Podem); Cadena SER, 10/05/19]

Another key theme was the General Infrastructure Plan, which the Left-Wing parties presented as a challenge because it would bring "a great deal of wealth and many jobs to the city":

It should be put into action as soon as possible — preparations have been made for the execution stage. [Ignasi García (Compromís); Cadena SER, 10/05/19]

What about the European Elections?

European issues got less coverage in Valencian newspapers than they deserved. Earlier studies on how such matters are covered in the Spanish Press revealed that European issues were seen through a national prism (Berganza, 2008; Boix and López, 2013, 2014; Gallardo and Enguix, 2015). This is hardly surprising in this case given that various elections were held on the same day. In the case of TV and radio, European matters also got less attention, even though they had their own special programmes. Agriculture, reform of the CAP, the defence of the citrus fruit sector, and the so-called ‘Mediterranean Corridor’ [a project for a European-gauge railway running along Spain’s Mediterranean coast from the South to the French border] were the main issues in The Valencian Country’s EU election campaign. These issues were by no means unique to the European Election; they also cropped up in the other election campaigns:

The Mediterranean Rail Corridor means a strong, direct commitment to giving The Valencian Country’s economy a big boost and will bring progress. [Susana Ros (PSPV-PSOE); À Punt, 24/04/19].

We are placing our bets on The Mediterranean Rail Corridor, which we plan to have operational in 2021. [José Luís Ábalos (PSOE); Cadena SER, 15/04/19].

Thanks to the Spanish Government and The Valencian Country, we have managed to get The Mediterranean Rail Corridor included within the pan-European transport network. [Inmaculada Rodríguez Piñero (PSOE); Cadena SER, 13/05/19].

The Mediterranean Rail Corridor” serves everyone and has advanced thanks to the investments made by PP governments. [Esteban González Pons (PP); Cadena SER, 13/05/19].

We need to ensure proper funding to finish the Mediterranean Rail Corridor, which will create wealth and jobs. Getting the money will let us link Altet with the City of Alicante. [Toni Cantó (Cs); TVE, 17/04/19].

We cannot renounce this Project because it is vital to connect our region with the rest of Europe and to fully articulate The Valencian Country’s economy. [Marta Martín (Cs); À Punt, 24/04/19].

Valencia’s orange-growers need help to compete with South African producers. That means tougher phyto-sanitary controls — something that requires negotiating directly with the EU to ensure the right measures are reflected in the Common Agricultural Policy. [Belén Hoyo (PP); À Punt, 24/04/19]

The battle between PP, Ciudadanos, and PSOE has often harmed The Valencian Country’s interests, the trade treaty with Canada being a case in point. That implies agreements with South Africa.... I pledge to continue defending the region’s interests. [Jordi Sebastià (Compromís per Europa); Cadena SER, 13/05/19]

Support for European farmers through the CAP, and in The Valencian Country through agricultural insurance policies. [Isabel Bonig (PP); TVE, 7/04/19].

ELECTION STRATEGIES COMMON TO THE PARTIES DURING THE CAMPAIGNS

In the General Election debates, various parties shared certain strategies and went on to attack and criticise parties in the opposing bloc or even in their own bloc. The PSOE was the party that was most fiercely attacked, which comes as little surprise given that it led in the opinion polls. The overall panorama can be summarised under the following five lines of strategy:

1. PP attacked all parties. For example, Belén Hoyo (PP), Cadena SER, 15/04/19:

It criticised Cs: “It does not know what it is doing and its ideas change every time the wind changes”.

It criticised PSOE: “It makes concessions to pro-independence and pro-ETA parties so that it can stay in power”.

It criticised Compromís: “It prefers to kow-tow to Catalonia”.

2. PSOE attacked PP and Cs. José Luis Ábalos (PSOE), Cadena SER, 15/04/19:

It criticised PP and Cs: “Because they allied with the pro-independence parties to vote down the Government’s budget”.

3. Cs attacked all the parties. María Muñoz (Cs), Cadena SER, 15/04/19:

It criticised PP: “for its corruption and for destroying The Valencia Country’s good name.”

It criticised PSOE: “The public debt grew under the Tripartite Government as did hospital waiting lists, the number of children in school huts, and the delays in the payment of social benefits covering dependent persons. The PSOE also stopped parents choosing which language their children should be taught in.”

It criticised PSOE: “For its appalling financial management in Madrid” (referring to the national government).

4. Unidas Podemos attacked all the other parties except Compromís. Héctor Illueca (Unidas Podemos), Cadena. Ser, 15/04/19:

It criticised PSOE: “The other day we heard Mr. Ábalos talking about renewing the pact with Cs, which includes the so-called *Austrian knapsack* — an employment reform whose purpose is ‘hire and fire’ rules for Spanish workers. What we see is Mr. Puig begging for an agreement with Cs when his party refused any truck with the PSOE”.

5. Compromís attacked all the other parties except Unidas Podemos. Joan Baldoví (Compromís), Cadena SER, 15/04/19:

It criticised PP and PSOE: “An agreement was signed to allow the entry of South African oranges without any thought of the consequences this would have for The Valencian Country. Compromís was the only party to defend our orange-growers”.

The Regional Election was also used strategically in the debates both by the Left-Wing and Right-Wing blocs, albeit with differences in the discursive lines taken, which largely mirrored those set out in the above section:

1. The PP attacked the Tripartite Coalition but not Cs. For example, Isabel Bonig (PP), TVE, 17/04/19:

It criticised PSOE: “I am surprised you speak about jobs because you there is €650 million of works that you have not executed. That is why nobody believes you”.

It criticised the Tripartite Coalition and Cs: “The Maternity Bill shows our commitment to achieving a better Work-Family Balance but this *sanchista* coalition put paid to it, aided and abetted by Podemos’, and with Cs’ abstention. Why deny help to the most vulnerable women through this act of parliamentary sabotage? Why be so partisan by only giving financial aid to organisations of the same political persuasion?”

2. Cs attacked the Tripartite Coalition but also the PP, albeit less because it saw the latter as a potential partner. Sample statements by Toni Cantó (Ciudadanos), TVE, 17/04/19:

It criticised PSPV-PSOE, Compromís and Unides Podem: “Given that it doesn’t create jobs, it appoints a Cultural Minister instead who preaches that Capitalism is the enemy of Mankind. It also appoints a Commerce Director who puts off potential investors in the Mediterranean arc — the self-same investors demonised by Podemos”.

It criticised PP: “Mrs. Bonig, welcome to freedom of choice within a multi-lingual setting. Forget your linguistic impositions because you began all this, Mrs. Catalá”.

3. PSOE did not criticise Compromís or Unides Podem. Ximo Puig (PSPV-PSOE), TVE, 17/04/19:

It criticised PP: “When Mrs. Bonig was in office, the unemployment rate stood at 23%, now it is

just 13%. Today, there are 6,000 more teachers and 400,000 children get free school textbooks”.

4. Compromís attacked the Right-Wing parties and ticked off PSOE for the way they had funded The Valencian Country in the past. Examples of Mónica Oltra’s statements (Compromís), TVE, 17/04/19:

It criticised the PP: “When Right-Wing parties speak of fiscal reform, it is time to hold on to one’s wallet. When they speak of lowering wealth taxes, they are talking of just 22,000 well-heeled souls out of the region’s 5 million citizens.

It criticised Cs: “You do not have the slightest idea of what a school costs, Mr. Cantó. You say you will finish the schools with just an extra €44 million. The fact is the plans already come to €500 million. You have no idea how much a school costs to build because if you did, you would realise these figures make no sense at all”.

5. Unides Podem attacked all the other parties but only criticised Compromís over school huts. Sample statements by Rubén M. Dalmau (Unides Podem), TVE, 17/04/19:

It criticised Cs: “Mr. Cantó, you do not know that the Mediterranean project is planned for one of Europe’s most densely settled areas and is jam-packed with infrastructure. The whole scheme reeks of making a quick buck and is likely to kill off small businesses, which make up 99% of the Valencian economy.”

It criticised PP: “The Tourism Tax, Mrs. Bonig, will come here, just as it has in other European

cities such as Amsterdam and Berlin. When it does, it will help make our tourism industry more environmentally sustainable”.

It criticised PSPV-PSOE: “We had to have an election campaign so that you, Mr. Puig, could tell us the Denia Hospital should be taken back into the public fold. Well, the news comes four years too late”.

It criticised Compromís: “The fact is there were 8000 children in school huts when you came to power. Even now, there are still 4000 children studying in such conditions. You have had 4 years to sort the problem out. Just as bad, Valencian citizens have to wait months before they can get a hospital appointment with a specialist.”

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the coverage of the 2019 election campaigns in the Valencian Press confirms that despite the initial impact of Ximo Puig’s 4th of May announcement that the Regional Election would be held on the same date as Spain’s General Election, no trace of ‘The Valencian Agenda’ was to be found in Spain’s national Press. In fact, the move backfired because the traditional national coverage was all the stronger in all the elections. When it comes to the discursive axes of the campaigns, these were largely marked by a split between Left-Wing and Right-Wing blocs in what amounted to a slightly more open version of the battle seen under the old two-party system.

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Voting Transitions in the 2019 Valencian Autonomous Community's Elections*

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ABSTRACT

The political fragmentation following the 2008 Financial Crisis and its economic, social, political and institutional fall-out have led to a growing left-right polarisation of politics and a weakening of the middle ground. The effective number of parliamentary parties is at an all-time high both in the Spanish Parliament (*Congreso*) and in the Valencian Autonomous Parliament (*Corts*). Voters are spoilt for choice and switch party more often. This paper uses transfer matrices to analyse the shifting voting patterns in the European, General, Regional, and Local elections held during 2019 in The Valencian Country. The most salient result is the ever-shifting pattern at each end of the political spectrum. On the right wing, there is the steady advance of Vox. On the left wing, *UP* and *Compromís* draw from virtually the same pool of fickle voters, with *UP* picking up most votes in national elections and *Compromís* winning hands-down in regional and local elections.

Keywords: vote transitions, ecological inference, Spanish elections.

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INTRODUCTION

The Great Recession of 2008, apart from causing great local and global economic changes, had a deep political impact. The rise of Populist parties in Europe (Martín *et al.*, 2019; Couperus and Tortola, 2019), Trump's arrival at The White House (Skonieczny, 2018), the victory of the 'Leave' option in the 2016 Brexit referendum (Becker *et al.*, 2017) and Bolsonaro's presidency in Brazil (Hunter and Power, 2019) are just some of the most visible signs of this impact.

Spain was also affected by these new political winds. The Spanish system of political parties has undergone major changes, which began with the emergence of Podemos (Pavía, Bodoque and Martín, 2016). In a little over a decade, the country has leapt from a two-party system to a multi-party system. While Spanish politics was dominated for decades by the battle between PP and PSOE,¹ what we now see is fragmentation of the electorate. This has led to a bipolar struggle between the Left and the Right, with nationalist and pro-independence parties occasionally being able to decide which side wins.

This clear fragmentation can clearly be seen when one looks at the number of parliamentary parties (Laakso and Taagepera, 1979). Between 1982 and 2008, the figure was around 2.5 (Rama Caamaño, 2016) but rose to 4.8 in the April 2019 General Election (going from 4.1 in 2015 to 3.8 in 2016).² The new political parties began to occupy a significant number of seats in Spain's Congress and, together with other minority groups, played a decisive role in deciding who governed. Spain's political landscape has thus undergone a transformation.

This new political map forces parties to reach agreements — something that was hitherto unusual in Spain. In the rest of Europe, most countries are governed by coalitions

of parties (whether ideologically akin or different). For example in The Netherlands and in Sweden, Centre-Left and Centre-Right blocs have broken with tradition to keep the Far-Right out of government. Italy has been governed by coalition governments ever since the end of The Second World War and Belgium's government too comprises various parties. In Spain, one can find coalitions that prove more or less successful in managing various 'autonomous communities' [regions] and municipalities. At the national scale, there is a greater willingness to forge coalitions. The Spanish Congress that emerged from the April 2019 General Election proved incapable of investing a President, leading to political in-fighting and paralysis. The upshot was another General Election in November 2019, the results of which made it possible to forge the country's first coalition government.

The Valencian Country was governed from June 2015 onwards under the so-called *Botànic* Accord (named thus because it was signed in the City of Valencia's Botanic Gardens). The accord was renewed after the Regional Election on the 29th April 2019 and this time was signed in Alicante on the 12th of June 2019, producing a coalition government comprising parties with similar ideologies (PSPV-PSOE, Compromís, Podem).

All of these changes stem from great voting transitions (see Figures 1 and 2). Electors are no longer faithful to a given party but instead switch votes much more readily than hitherto. We live in an era of new election campaigns in which parties do their utmost to keep core voters loyal and to poach niche voters from parties with similar ideologies. That is why the so-called 'vote origin-destination matrices' are invaluable sources of information that shed light on voter trends and help answer questions such as "Where have a party's lost votes gone to?" and "Where do a party's votes come from?"

Given the closeness of elections to one another (local, regional, general, and European elections), it is worth asking what mutual influence they may exert and the impact of tactical (or dual) voting from an analytical standpoint. Understanding how voting has changed

1 PSOE and PP (AP until 1989) took an average of 83% of seats in Congress between 1982 and 2008 (Rama Caamaño, 2016), reaching a zenith in 2008 when between them they accounted for 323 out of the 350 seats.

2 In the 2019 General Election, this figure fell slightly to 4.6.

between elections of the same kind, or between elections for differing tiers of government greatly enriches studies on voters' behaviour. Such data also provides a tool for understanding contemporary politics. This paper analyses changes in voting behaviour during the last electoral cycle in The Valencian Country in 2019. The Valencian region shows greater fragmentation of the vote than is true for Spain as a whole. The effective number of parliamentary parties in Valencia's Regional Parliament (*Les Corts*) is 5.3, and with six parties being represented.

The remainder of than paper is structured as follows: The second section provides a broad overview of voting trends in the Valencian Region since 1982, in elections for Spain's Congress, and for Valencia's Regional Parliament. The third section describes the methodology for estimating and interpreting voting transitions (particularly in relation to vote transition matrices). The fourth section studies vote transitions from the 2015 Regional Election to the 2019 Regional Election, using two of the approaches described in the third section of this paper. The fifth section covers vote transitions from the 2016 General Election to the April 2019 Regional Election. The sixth section analyses vote transitions between two simultaneous elections — the General and Regional ones held in April 2019. The seventh section focuses on vote transitions between the General Election and the European Election, held in April. The eighth section covers the vote transitions between the two 2019 General Elections, one held in April and the other in November. Last, the ninth and tenth sections focus on local elections, taking The City of Valencia as a case study. The ninth section analyses vote transitions from the Regional Election to the Municipal Elections, and the tenth section returns to the subject of the links between two simultaneous elections, to wit: the European and the Municipal ones. The final section contains the conclusions. The supplementary material³ (MS) complements and expands on the information provided in the paper.

3 See https://www.uv.es/pavia/MATERIAL_SUPLEMENTARIO.pdf.

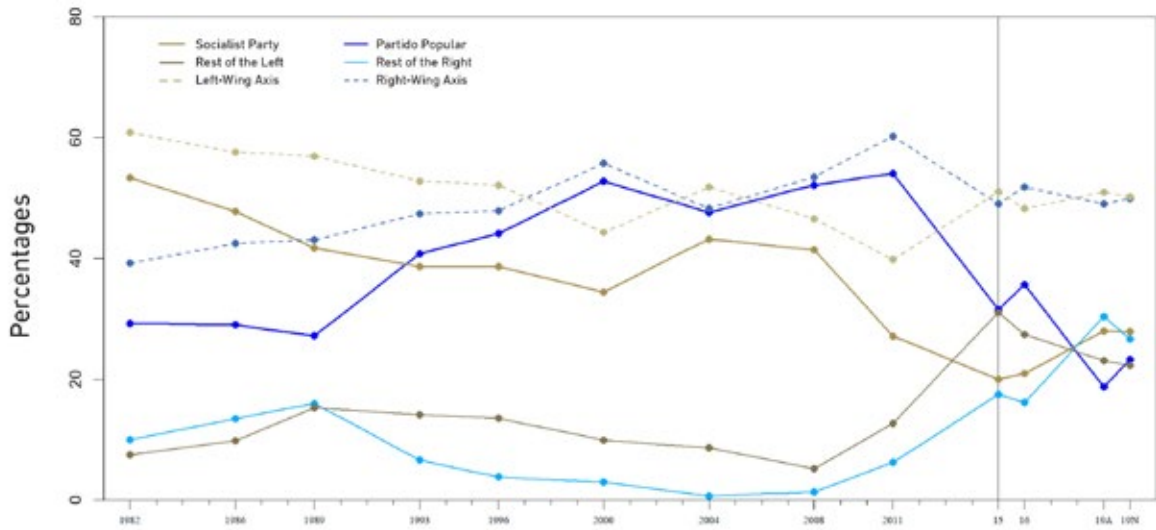
VOTING TRENDS IN THE VALENCIAN COUNTRY

To grasp the scale of the political change affecting Spain in general and The Valencian Country in particular, one only needs look at voting trends in the Valencian Region since 1982. Figure 1 shows the results of the national election for Spain's Congress. Figure 2 shows the election results for the Valencian Regional Parliament. Both figures show the percentage of all votes received by PP and PSOE — the two political parties that were the protagonists of the historical 'bipolar' system. The remaining parties are plotted on a line and are grouped under 'Left-Wing' or 'Right-Wing', as the case may be. In Tables A1 and A2 of MS, one can find the parties making up these 'Left-Wing' or 'Right-Wing' axes, together with the PSOE and PP respectively, plotted on each axis for each election.

In both figures (1 and 2), the elections from 2015 on have been highlighted. That is because this was the year in which the electoral predominance of the PP on the Right, and the PSOE on the Left began to wane. The 2015 elections came at a point marking a sea change in the electoral and political cycle in The Valencian Country. Here, new parties emerged on the scene such as *Compromís* (COMP), *Ciudadanos* (Cs), and what is now known as *Unides Podem* (UP) (a party that has undergone bewildering changes of name and has taken part in diverse coalitions after elections)⁴. The newest boy on the block is *Vox*, which fielded candidates in the 2019 elections.

In Figure 1, it can be seen that the 1993 elections hinted at what was to come in the 1995 Regional

4 In the 2015 General Election, UP fielded candidates with *Compromís* and other parties as part of the *Compromís-Podemos-És el Moment* platform. In 2016, the platform comprised *Compromís-Podemos-EUPV* in the Valencian Regional Election. In April and November 2019, *Unides Podemos* presented candidates as part of the *Podemos-EUPV* platform. *Compromís* on the other hand, fielded its own candidates in April but formed point of a joint list with *Más País* under the *Més Compromís* platform. With regard to the Regional Elections, in 2015 UP fielded candidates under the *Podemos* banner but separately from *Coalició Compromís and EUPV*. In 2019, UP fielded candidates under the *Unides Podem-EUPV* platform, and yet again, separately from the *Compromís: Bloc-Iniciativa-VerdsEquo* platform.

Figure 1 Historical series in the Spanish General Elections in The Valencian Country

Trend in the percentage of votes cast for PP and PSOE. The Figure also shows the trends in the percentage of votes cast for other Right-Wing political parties (Rest Right) and for other Left-Wing parties (Rest Left). The aggregate votes for Right-Wing parties (Right Axis) and for Left-Wing parties (Left Axis) are also shown. The percentages are based on the votes for candidates. Table A1 of the MS gives details of the parties making up each of the two axes during each election.

Source: The Authors, based on data provided by Spain's Ministry of The Interior [Ministerio del Interior].

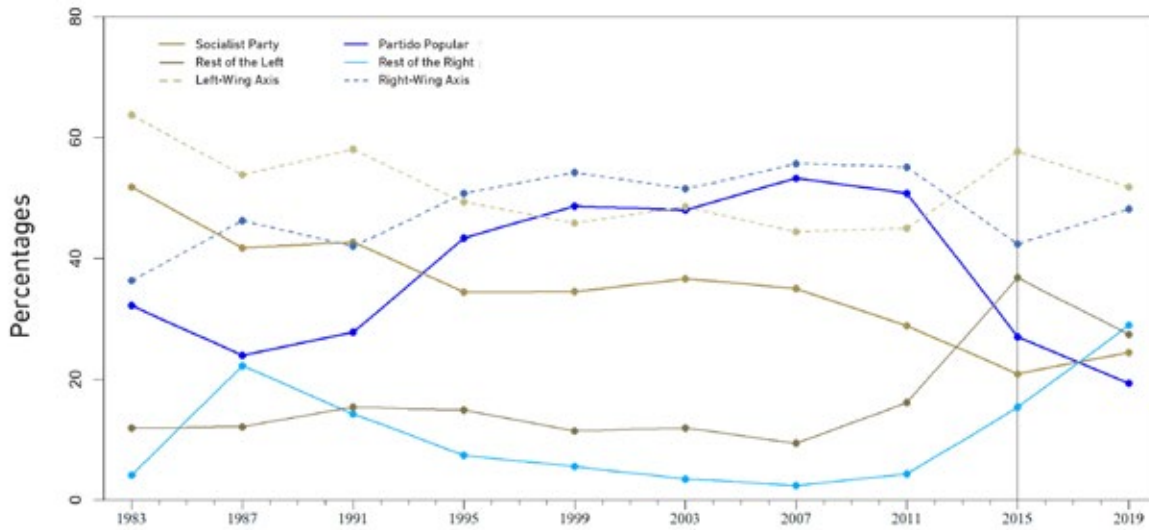
Election. Up until then, PSPV-PSOE had been the strongest political force in The Valencian Country. 1993 marked the first time the PP gained more seats than the PSOE in the region, even though the total number of votes cast for Left-Wing parties were greater than those for Right-Wing ones. The same occurred in 1996, despite the political sea change seen in the 1995 Regional Election (see Figure 2). From this moment on and up until 2015, PP accounted for almost all the Right-Wing votes and thus remained the dominant political force in the region. By contrast, in 2015, the electorate was much more politically fragmented. This was part of the economic, social, and political fallout that followed the 2008 financial crisis and that continues in Spain to this day (Royo, 2014; Torcal, 2014; Pavia Bodoque and Martín, 2016; Orriols and Cordero, 2016; Antentas, 2017; Benedicto and Ramos, 2018). The result was that the 2015 Regional Election saw the Left-Wing bloc winning more seats than the Right-Wing one. Nevertheless, a new General Elec-

tion in 2016 saw the balance temporarily swing back, returning the Right-Wing to power. The Right-Wing lost in the April 2019 General Election while the gap between the two parties in the November General Election narrowed.

The general panorama shown in Figure 1 is repeated in Figure 2. El PSPV-PSOE dominated regional politics until 1995, when the Right-Wing bloc overtook the Left-Wing bloc for the first time. PP formed the new Regional Government through the so-called 'Chicken Pact'⁵ (*Pacto del Pollo*) between PP and Unión Valenciana (UV). From this moment on, PP became the hegemonic (and ever stronger) political force, winning over 50% of all votes cast in 2007 and 2011. Finding itself on the ropes given all the corruption cases the

⁵ Translator's Note: This got its name from the fact that it was signed in the office of a Valencian entrepreneur (Federico Félix) who happened to be in the chicken business.

Figure 2 Historical series in Valencian Regional Elections (Les Corts)



Trend in the percentage of votes cast for PP and PSOE. The Figure also shows the trends in the percentage of votes cast for other Right-Wing political parties (Rest Right) and for other Left-Wing parties (Rest Left). The aggregate votes for Right-Wing parties (Right Axis) and for Left-Wing parties (Left Axis) are also shown. The percentages are based on the votes for candidates. Table A2 of the MS gives details of the parties making up each of the two axes during each election.

Source: The Authors, based on data provided by The Valencian Government [Generalitat Valenciana].

party was involved in, the PP lost a great many votes in 2015. The result was a change in the political cycle and a new, Left-Wing government after the so-called ‘Botanical Accord’⁶ (*Acord Botànic*).

The two figures show how the hegemony of the PP or of the PSOE was not challenged by the remaining Right-Wing or Left-Wing parties until 2015, when there was a sea change in which support for the other parties soared. At the moment, all the other Right-Wing parties together have more seats than the PP. In the PSOE’s case, all the other Left-Wing parties together have almost as many seats. It is clear that the emergence of new political parties is shaping the post-2015 scene. The rising fortunes of Ciudadanos, Compromís, Podemos and, in 2019, Vox, have greatly broadened political choice for both Right-Wing and

Left-Wing voters. Currently, voters have more parties to choose from and thus voting transfers have become more alluring, as this study shows.

Although our analysis focuses on Voting Transitions in the 2019 elections, the movement that occurred in the 2015 Regional Election is worth commenting on, especially if we compare its results with those for the 2011 Regional Election. This is why MS Figures A1 and A2 include an estimate of the vote movements (vote transition and vote composition) that occurred between the 2011 and 2015 Valencian Regional Elections.⁷ The most salient result (which marked the change in political cycle in 2015) was the large number of votes lost by PP. Compromís, Ciudadanos and abstention were the main beneficiaries of the PP’s lost votes.

⁶ Translator’s Note: This one got its name from the fact it was signed in The City of Valencia’s Botanical Gardens.

⁷ The voting transition matrices in Figures A1 and A2 were estimated using a methodology based on ecological inference, described in the third section of this paper.

Table 1 Results recorded in the elections covered by this study

Election	PSOE	PP	Cs	COMP	UP	VOX	Rest	Abst
The Valencian Country (Units: percentages of the census, including non-residents)								
REG. 2015	14.11	18.25	8.56	12.66	7.82	0.29	7.87	30.44
GEN. 2016	14.91	25.42	10.73	18.25		0.17	2.88	27.63
REG. 2019	17.60	13.90	12.86	12.12	5.89	7.70	3.67	26.28
GEN. 2019A	20.41	13.64	13.21	4.75	10.47	8.83	2.98	25.71
EUR. 2019	20.29	13.90	8.77	5.15	5.96	4.45	3.50	38.13
GEN. 2019N	19.09	15.93	5.35	4.81	9.26	12.76	2.59	30.20
City of Valencia (Units: percentages of the census, including non-residents)								
REG. 2019	16.61	13.22	12.73	15.23	5.46	7.47	3.73	25.55
GEN. 2019A	20.09	13.02	12.95	6.42	10.77	8.66	3.01	25.08
LOC. 2019	12.72	14.36	11.64	18.14	2.75	4.79	1.91	33.68

The UP acronym stands for: Podemos/Podem in the 2015 Regional Election; for Unides Podem-EUPV in the 2019 Regional Election; and for Podemos-EUPV in all other elections save the 2016 General Election.

The COMP acronym stands for: Compromís. In the April 2019 General Election (in relation to Valencia), it stands for: Compromís, Bloc-Iniciativa-VerdsEquo; in the November 2019 General Election, it stands for Més Compromís; in the 2016 General Election, the party was part of a joint platform with UP under the name of Compromís-Podemos-EUPV: A la Valenciana; in the 2019 European Election, it formed part of the platform Compromiso por Europa.

PSOE: Partido Socialista Obrero Español

PP: Partido Popular.

Cs: Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía.

Vox: Vox.

Others: all the other parties not grouped under any of the foregoing acronyms.

Abst. indicates abstention.

The rest of the paper will use these acronyms to identify the various electoral options.

Source: The Authors based on official and provisional data from Spain's Ministry of the Interior and The Valencian Regional Government.

Table 1 helps give an overall view of the aggregate results of the elections analysed in the paper. The table shows the results (official or provisional, depending on the election) in terms of percentages of the census population (including non-residents) in the whole of The Valencian Country and for The City of Valencia. The notes to the table explain the acronyms of the various political parties. Although the data in Table 1 include non-residents, estimates of vote transitions by these persons have not been taken into account. This is for two reasons: (1) non-residents are not usually considered in surveys; (2) this is a group whose composition may change significantly between elections held in different periods.

METHODOLOGY

The study of vote movements or transfers is a subject of great interest to political analysts. Having good estimates in this field is of value to many agents, including political parties, journalists, and social scientists. It is therefore little wonder that the subject has attracted dozens of researchers over the decades: for example, Hawkes (1969), Miller (1972), McCarthy and Ryan (1977), Brown and Payne (1986), Payne *et al.* (1986), Füle (1994), Park (2008), Forcina and Marchetti (2011), Romero (2014), Corominas *et al.* (2015), Puig and Ginebra (2015), Klima *et al.* (2016, 2019), Pavía, Bodoque and Martín (2016), and Plescia and De Sio (2018).

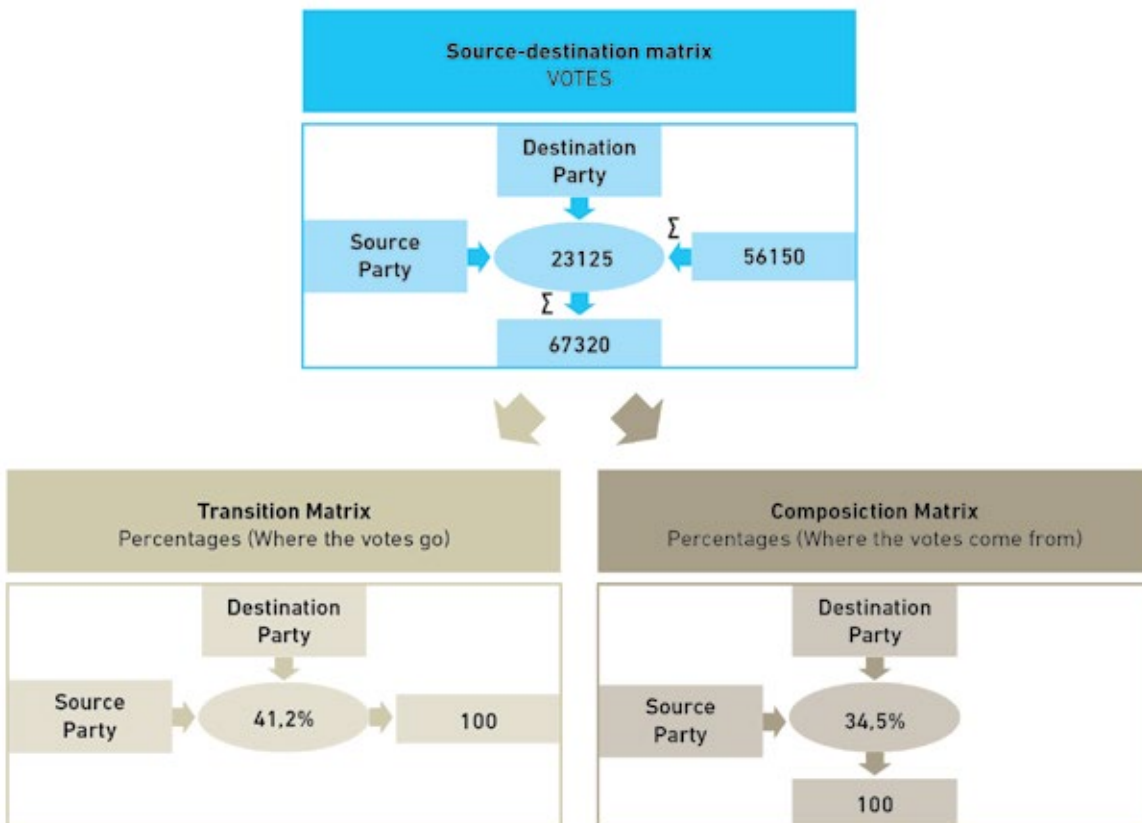
VOTING TRANSITION MATRICES. INTERPRETATION

Voting transitions are usually charted in matrices or double-entry tables in which the source electoral origins appear in rows and the destination options in columns. There are three ways to show the information in voting transition matrices: (1) source-destination of votes; (2) transfer matrices; (3) composition matrices. Transfer matrices and composition matrices are calculated based on the source-destination matrices. Each cell in the voting matrix contains the number of voters who chose the row option in the selection of the source, and the option in the column in the

selection of the destination. The transfer matrix is the result of the row standardising the vote matrix (dividing each row by the sum of the corresponding row). The composition matrix is the result of the column standardising the vote matrix (dividing each column by the sum of the corresponding column).

The source-destination of votes is shown in the upper panel, from which one obtains the transfer matrix (shown in the lower left panel) and the composition matrix (shown in the lower right panel). The matrix is constructed such that the percentages in the rows

Figure 3 Voting transition matrices. Scheme



The top panel shows the source-destination vote matrix, from which the transition matrix is obtained (shown in the lower left-hand panel), and the composition matrix (lower right-hand panel). The matrix sums the percentages in the rows of the transition matrix (adding up to 100%) and sums the columns of the composition matrix (also adding up to 100%). The sum of the votes matrix feeds into the results of the source choice and the sum of the columns for the destination choice.

in the transfer matrix sum to 100%, and the percentages in the columns of the composition matrix also sum to 100%. The sum of the rows in the vote matrix influences the results in source choices and the sum of the columns for the destination choice results.

Figure 3 schematically shows the voting transition process from an example. If one looks at the voting source-destination matrix in the upper panel, 23,125 voters chose the party of origin in selecting the source and the destination party in the selection of destination. Summing the rows gives yields the total number of votes that the party of origin received in the selection of origin (56,150), and summing the columns, the total number of votes the destination party received in the destination selection (67,320).

To answer the question, “Where do the votes of the source parties go to?” one needs to construct the transition matrix (the lower left panel in Figure 3), dividing the value of each cell by the sum of the values in the corresponding row, and multiplying the result by one hundred to yield a percentage. In the example, one obtains a value of roughly 41.2 % (that is to say, the result of dividing 23,125 by 56,150).

This percentage means that 41.2 % of voters choosing the origin party in the source election either voted for (or — in the case of pre-election polls — stated an intention to vote for) the destination party in the destination election. When the source party and the destination party are one and the same (the main diagonal in square matrices), this percentage tells us about voter loyalty.

If an answer is sought to the question, “Where do the votes cast for a political party come from?” one needs to look at the composition matrix (the lower left-hand panel in Figure 3). In this case, we read the columns, and standardise the figures. For example, a value of 34.5% (the result of dividing 23,125 by 67,320) is interpreted as meaning that 34.5% of the votes obtained by the destination party come from the source party.

Although the base of the transition matrices and composition matrices lies in the vote matrix, it is hard to interpret them given that they are expressed in terms of absolute frequencies. That is why in this paper (and for reasons of space), we shall only present the transition matrices. Readers who wish to find the composition matrices in the MS may consult these (which are offered to support some of the analyses we make in relation to the source of votes. That said, the information found in any of the matrices is largely redundant. The results from the choice of source and destination, and the transition matrix for composition are sufficient by themselves to reconstruct the source-destination matrix.

VOTING TRANSITION MATRICES. ESTIMATION

Given that votes are cast in secret, one cannot say how individual voters acted in the two elections. The vote transition matrices must therefore be estimated based upon the information available. One of two strategies is usually employed to make this estimate: (1) exploit survey data, or (2) use aggregated data available on voting sub-units (for example, by polling stations or census data).⁸ Each of these options has its own strengths and weaknesses.

To estimate transition matrices using survey data, one uses the statements made by respondents on their electoral behaviour before and after casting their votes. In voting surveys, responses on present and past voting behaviour are used. In panel surveys, responses are gathered from voters before and after the elections. However, this approach has major drawbacks stemming from accuracy issues (variance) and bias when making estimates.

On the one hand, large samples are needed if one is to ensure an acceptable degree of accuracy. This is so because from the statistical standpoint, one is not

⁸ Greiner and Quinn (2010), and Klima *et al.* (2019) propose a third approach that combines both sets of data, incorporating survey data within an ecological inference statistical model.

studying a single population but rather as many electoral options as those covered in the source election. On the other hand, surveys are subject to significant non-sampling errors (Biemer, 2010), mainly arising from non-response bias and measurement errors. Both issues undermine the representativeness of the findings. Non-response errors stem from the differing propensity among groups of voters to take part in a survey (Pavía, 2010). This propensity is not constant and depends on various factors such as: the interviewer; the socio-political context; the electoral behaviour of the respondent and even whether he changed his vote from the previous election⁹ (Haunberger, 2010; Pavía, Badal and García-Cárceles, 2016). Measurement errors arise from the difficulty people have in remembering past events or from deliberate hiding or falsification of past deeds. When asked about their past electoral behaviour, voters tend to be 'forgetful' or be unduly influenced by perceived socially desirable behaviour and even by their present votes (Krumpal, 2013).¹⁰

In addition to the foregoing problems encountered with surveys, one also needs to add: (i) the financial cost of the chosen approach; (ii) the fact that surveys are not always available; (iii), where pre-election surveys are used, respondents may change their minds between the date the interview was conducted and election day, sometimes because of published polls (Pavía *et al.*, 2019).

The main advantage of this approach is that given a sufficiently large sample, it is easy to calculate the likelihood of vote transitions (the cells in the transition matrix). Here, one simply needs to draw up a table of respondents' cross-referenced answer frequencies (or imputed answers) and row-standardise the table. The problem arises from the fact that the

estimated probabilities tend to be at odds with the recorded results, which is why the estimates obtained are taken as indicators, which are adjusted in the post-election analysis to ensure congruence between the real results in the source and destination elections. Among the adjustment options, those based on balancing matrices are those that have proven best (Pavía *et al.*, 2009). In this paper, we have therefore used the so-called RAS method (Bacharach, 1970) to make the adjustments (making these coincide with the real-life results) to the transition matrices based on survey responses.

The major weaknesses found in estimates based on survey data have led many researchers to estimate transition matrices solely from actual results (which are more reliable) by using mathematically-optimised statistical models. The main difficulty with this approach is that estimates are prone to what is termed *the ecological fallacy* (Robinson, 1950). This arises from the fact that the underlying mathematical problem is indeterminate. To overcome this limitation, both ecological inference approaches (statistical and mathematical) usually include hypotheses, such as supposing that there is a certain homogeneity in voters behaviour when these are close in geographical, demographic, institutional, political, and/or in socio-economic terms.

Approaches based on mathematical programming, whether quadratic (for example, McCarthy and Ryan, 1977), or linear (for example, Corominas *et al.*, 2015), minimise a loss function that depends on the deviations arising in each voting unit, subject to the restrictions imposed by the actual results. Methods based on statistical models — which began with seminal studies by Duncan and Davis' (1953) and Goodman (1953, 1959)¹¹ — exploit variations in the marginal distributions of registered voters in all units in both source and destination elections,

9 People who change their vote tend to be more willing to take part in surveys. As a result, surveys tend to over-estimate voter transitions.

10 It is not unusual to find statements regarding past voting behaviour regarding parties that did not exist at the time but that coincide with the way the voter is currently casting his vote.

11 This approach, which lay neglected for decades, received a big boost when King (1997) included key references to it, as did Cho (1998), King *et al.* (1999, 2004), Rosen *et al.* (2001), Wakefield (2004), Greiner and Quinn (2010), Puig and Ginebra (2015), and Klima *et al.* (2019).

learning from joint distributions yet comparing the finding with what actually happened.

One of the advantages of more modern statistical methods is that they let one obtain congruent estimates throughout all of the voting units considered. This issue tends not to be addressed by mathematical models given that the computational cost grows exponentially. In this paper, the transition matrices obtained from the recorded results — which is to say, those based on ecological inference — were obtained as the mean of the mathematical model proposed in Romero *et al.* (2019), and whose roots lie in Romero (2014, 2015, 2016), and in the statistical method programmed in Electoral Transition software (Pavía, 2016).

The main drawback of ecological inference methods is the high data-processing cost. Although one can obtain acceptable estimates using relatively few voting units, the more detailed the base information, the better the results. That is why this paper exploited provisional results at the polling station or census section level. Working with small voting units exponentially raises the cost of data processing given that changes occur between voting units in time-separated elections on the one hand, and between each voting unit on the other.

To solve the first problem of establishing a link between the voting units for two time-separated elections, we implemented the solutions proposed by Pavía-Miralles (2005), and Pavía and López-Quilez (2013).¹² To solve the second problem (the composition of each voting unit), we supposed that entries and exits produced by changes of residence and/or deaths produced in each voting units affected all the voting options *pro rata*. The solutions proposed by Pavía and Veres (2016a, 2016b) were used to estimate the number of new voters in each unit who were

entitled to vote for the first time having reached the age of majority.¹³

The solution to the second problem involved adjusting the number of votes obtained by each party in the election in the voting unit. The percentages obtained by the parties remained constant in this adjustment, whose purpose was to ensure that the source and destination electoral registers agreed.¹⁴ In this study, we aggregated residents' votes (adjusted by source election and registered for the destination election) for each voting unit as results of the various elections. On the one hand, this implies that there may be small discrepancies with the official results given that we worked with provisional data at the electoral table level.¹⁵ On the one hand, the votes cast in source elections did not match the official figures, although the percentages were essentially the same.¹⁶

To give an example of the solutions obtained using both methodologies, we present estimated transition matrices based on survey data¹⁷ and on ecological inference procedures. The estimate for the transition matrix for the 2015 and 2019 Valencian Regional Elections was obtained using both methodologies, which allowed us to compare their respective solutions. We estimated the remaining matrices using the ecological inference approach however we used solely survey data to estimate the two transition matrices obtained from the 2016 General Election as the source event.

¹² As Pavía and Cantarino (2017) show, establishing correlations through more complex methods does not guarantee markedly better results.

¹³ We opted for estimating the variable given the high financial cost that buying the electoral table data or census section data from Spain's National Statistical Institute (INI) would have entailed.

¹⁴ In the case of simultaneous elections using the same voter census, no adjustment is required.

¹⁵ Some months had to be excluded from the analysis given that the figures for provisional results in both elections were not available.

¹⁶ One should recall that the calculation of the transition matrices excludes non-residents.

¹⁷ In this study, we solely used surveys administered by Spain's Sociological Research Centre (*Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* — CIS), given that it is the 'gold standard' for opinion surveys in Spain (Pavía and Aybar, 2018).

Figure 4 Estimation of the vote transition matrix for the 2015 and 2019 Valencian Regional Elections, based on survey data

	PP	Cs	VOX	PSOE	COMP	UP	Rest	Abst.	
PP	58.5	12.4	16.3	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.2	10.4	629897
Cs	1.6	62.0	20.7	3.5	0.9	0.0	1.6	9.7	298685
PSOE	2.2	5.2	2.4	72.9	2.5	1.7	1.1	12.0	486058
COMP	0.0	3.9	1.5	12.0	74.6	2.6	4.2	1.2	437829
UP	2.3	3.2	2.5	17.3	9.5	41.8	3.4	20.0	373143
Rest	2.7	1.9	5.8	4.4	7.9	11.0	29.2	37.3	179893
NE.2015	3.5	7.2	11.2	22.6	10.2	6.3	8.6	30.4	164789
Abst.	10.7	14.0	6.2	10.4	3.4	0.9	2.4	52.1	975734
	507583	469416	280915	641852	441359	214426	132485	857992	3546028

The rows refer to respondents' recall of their votes in the 2015 Valencian Regional Election, while the columns show voting intention in the 2019 Valencian Regional Election. The transition matrix emerging from the survey (see Figure A3) was adjusted using the RAS method (Pavía *et al.*, 2009) so as to ensure consistency between the results of both elections. The 2015 was proportionally adjusted to coincide with the provisional results of the 2019 election (for more details, see the third section).

NE.2015: New electors who reached voting age. For a description of the remaining acronyms, see the note to Table 1.

Source: The Authors, based the data in the 3244 CIS 'barometer' (CIS, 2019b) and provisional results at census section level in the 2015 and 2019 Valencian Regional Elections.

VOTE TRANSITIONS IN 2015 AND 2019 VALENCIAN REGIONAL ELECTIONS

This section presents estimates of the vote transitions occurring between the 2015 and the 2019 Valencian Regional Elections. The estimate was based on the two approaches described in the foregoing section. Figure 4 shows the estimate obtained from processing the micro-data of Study 3244 in Spain's Centre for Sociological Research (CIS, 2019b).¹⁸ Specifically, the probabilities of the transition in Figure 4 were obtained after: (i) classifying respondents' recall of the vote cast and of voting intention from the 1109

survey responses¹⁹ which were then duly processed,²⁰ and (ii) adjusting the data,²¹ using the RAS method, to make them consistent with the results of the 2015 and 2019 Regional Elections. Figure 5 shows the estimate of the transition matrix obtained after applying the combination of the two ecological inference approaches (described in the third section) to the provisional results.

¹⁸ Study 3244 — which carries the long-winded name *Macrobarómetro preelectoral Elecciones Autonómicas Comunitat Valenciana* [Pre-electoral Macro-barometer for The Valencia Country Regional Elections] — was carried out between the 15th and the 24th of March 2019, with a total sample of size of 1373.

¹⁹ The final size used for the estimates excludes 'no answer', 'do not remember', 'still undecided', 'not entitled to vote in the 2015 Regional Election'. Respondents who said that they were not old enough to vote were classified as New Voters. Abstentions comprised those in the "I do not vote" and "I will not vote" categories.

²⁰ The raw results of the survey were processed by CIS experts to ensure the sample size was maintained, imputing wherever possible voting intention and voting recall among those respondents who declined to answer.

²¹ In Figure A3 of the MS, the reader may consult the unadjusted transition matrix if he so wishes.

Figure 5 Estimate of the transition matrix for the 2015 and 2019 Valencian Regional Elections based on the results from the census section

	PP	Cs	VOX	PSOE	COMP	UP	Rest	Abst.	
PP	69.8	3.2	16.3	1.5	3.4	0.4	1.5	3.9	629897
Cs	3.0	83.1	10.2	1.5	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.5	298685
PSOE	1.1	2.6	0.8	73.0	2.2	1.6	4.1	14.6	486058
COMP	2.1	3.2	1.2	7.7	78.3	1.5	3.0	2.9	437829
UP	1.3	6.9	2.1	33.0	7.4	40.3	6.0	3.1	373143
Rest	6.3	28.0	16.9	11.6	5.3	7.8	16.0	8.2	179893
NE.2015	6.4	28.3	18.0	18.6	7.1	4.9	4.9	11.8	975734
Abst.	2.2	5.3	7.3	7.2	1.0	3.0	3.0	71.1	164789
	507583	469416	280915	641852	441359	214426	132485	857992	3546028

NE.2015: new voters, having reached voting age. For a description of the remaining acronyms, consult the note in Table 1.

Source: The Authors, based on CIS 3244 barometer data (CIS, 2019b) and provisional results at the census section level in the 2019 Valencian Regional Elections.

While both estimates show similar movements in voters' opinions and indicate that the main vote transitions were among parties belonging to the same ideological axis, the estimate based on survey data shows a more volatile electorate.²² This result is unsurprising given that voters who change their vote or are thinking of doing so tend to manifest their views more strongly. Furthermore, surveys tend to systematically underestimate the abstention percentage.²³ In fact, the biggest difference between the two estimates can be seen between the rows and columns covering abstentions.

²² In general, voting transitions found in surveys are less reliable when it comes to variation and bias. One simply needs to apply the raw voting transitions obtained in the survey (Figure A3) to the source election to see the big gap between forecasts and results.

²³ This occurs for two reasons. One is because those abstentions are under-represented in surveys given that they tend to be less sociable and therefore are more likely to refuse to take part in the survey. The second is the issue of what is deemed to be socially desirable. Voting is seen as a civic duty, therefore respondents who intend to abstain are more likely to hide the fact when they give their survey answers.

The strongest vote transition covers UP (Podemos/Podem in 2015, and Unides Podem-EUPV in 2019), given that the percentage of loyal voters (that is to say, those casting their ballots for Podemos/Podem in 2015 and who also voted for the Unides Podem-EUPV coalition in 2019) is by far the lowest of all the parties at around 40%. Most of UP's lost votes went to PSOE or to abstentions, depending on the matrix we use. In any case, both matrices point to PSOE as the main beneficiary of voters deserting UP. It is possible that when the survey was carried out, a significant share of 2015 UP were weighing up whether to abstain and, as Figure 5 shows, finally ended up voting for PSOE, possibly mobilising to do so during the 2019 election campaign to stop the advance of the Far-Right party, Vox.

Obviously, in addition to evaluating said result, one should also mention Vox's results. From the standpoint of where the votes came from, many were from voters who had cast their ballot for PP and Cs in the 2015 election but who chose Vox in 2019, as did a fair percentage of new voters. From the standpoint of

composition (see Figures A4 and A5 of the MS), we find — as one might expect — that what was only a fringe party in 2015 won votes in 2019 from former PP and Cs voters. To these were added voters who had abstained in 2015.

Analysis of these first transitions clearly indicates major shifts in votes between the main parties forming the core of the two ideological axes. This result, which is almost a constant in the elections analysed, was confirmed by the transitions revealed by all of the tables analysed, in particular the dual vote of UP and Compromís followers between the elections (see Figures 8 and 12).

VOTE TRANSITIONS IN THE 2016 GENERAL ELECTION AND THE REGIONAL ELECTION IN APRIL 2019

This section covers the vote transitions between the 2016 General Election and the 2019 Valencian Regional Election. In this section, all of the transitions are estimated based on the survey data.²⁴ Estimation of the transition matrix between the 2016 General Election and the 2019 Regional Election was carried out by combining the micro-data covering the Valencian Autonomous Community in the CIS 3242 study (CIS, 2019a)²⁵ and the CIS 3245 study (CIS, 2019c)²⁶. Estimation of the 2016 transition matrix between the General Election and the 2019 Regional Election was based on micro-data from CIS study 3244 (CIS, 2019b).

24 The estimate of voting transitions from 2016 to 2019 using ecological inference was not made given the high data-processing costs this would have involved.

25 Study 3242, termed *Macrobarómetro preelectoral Elecciones Generales 2019* [Pre-electoral Macro-barometer for the 2019 General Election] was carried out between the 1st and the 18th of March 2019, with a total sample size in The Valencian Country of 1245.

26 Study 3245, termed *Macrobarómetro preelectoral Elecciones Europeas, Autonómicas y Municipales 2019* [Pre-electoral Macro-barometer for the 2019 European, Regional, and Municipal Elections] was carried out between the 21st of March and the 23rd of April 2019, with a total sample size in The Valencian Country of 1385.

The estimation methodology was exactly the same as that used to calculate the data shown in Figure 4.

Figures 6 and 7 show the estimates of the transition matrix for the 2016 General Election to the 2019 Regional Election. The tables were obtained after balancing out the cross-classification of the responses covered in the CIS survey to questions regarding vote recall and voting intention, making these consistent with the aggregated provisional results. Figures A6 and A7 in the MS show unbalanced matrices, and Figures A8 and A9 show the composition matrices associated with Figures 6 and 7. The data in Figure 6 are based on a combined sample of 2228, while the data in Figure 7 are based on a sample size of 1154.

Like in Figures 4 and 5, and in Figures 6 and 7, the biggest voting transitions were between parties making up the same ideological bloc. However, when it comes to hard numbers, one needs to exercise caution given the high bias and variance shown by estimates based on survey data and the under-estimation of abstentions. As occurred in Figure 4, the percentage of abstentions shown by the sample in relatively low (just 14 %) if one is to believe the numbers in Figures A6 and A7. These contrast with real-life abstention rates, which run at roughly 25 %²⁷ (see Table 1). This balancing algorithm²⁸ therefore tends to 'inflate' the percentage of 2016 voters who abstained in 2019, thus reducing parties' loyalty rates. In any event, one can again see the larger flow of votes to PSOE and the Left-Wing bloc (in this case, the UP-Compromís alliances), and to Vox in the Right-Wing bloc.

Figures 6 and 7 also show a notable contrast in vote transitions for UP-COMP (Compromís-Podemos-EUPV: à la Valenciana), which, depending on the elections,

27 This figure is a little lower — roughly 24%, lower — when one calculates it using Figures 6 and 7, given that these do not consider the votes of non-residents, who election turn-out is quite a bit less.

28 The balancing algorithms — such as RAS — seek the solution that involves least change in cell values, verifying the restrictions imposed (in our case, consistency with actual results).

Figure 6 Estimate of the transition matrix between the 2016 General Election and the 2019 General Election, based on survey data

	PP	Cs	VOX	PSOE	COMP	UP	Rest	Abst.	
PP	49.0	15.8	17.6	2.2	0.0	0.8	1.0	13.6	870591
Cs	3.7	53.2	10.0	8.1	0.0	1.3	3.2	20.5	624861
PSOE	1.0	5.0	1.4	77.6	2.6	2.5	1.2	8.7	510744
COMP-UP	0.2	2.0	1.4	16.6	21.4	47.9	3.4	7.1	367591
Rest	1.2	10.3	10.0	8.2	1.8	3.9	30.9	33.7	104524
NE.2016	8.4	9.9	6.9	15.8	5.3	9.4	3.3	41.0	946910
Abst.	4.1	9.2	10.3	17.6	1.9	4.5	2.6	49.8	120807
	743727	497509	481487	380991	321912	172712	108543	839147	3546028

The rows refer to recall of votes cast in the 2016 General Election and the columns to voting intention in the April 2019 General Election. The transition matrix obtained from the survey (see Figure A6) was adjusted using the RAS method (Pavía *et al.*, 2009) so as to ensure consistency between the results of both elections. The 2016 census was proportionately adjusted to coincide with the census of the 2019 provisional results (for more details, see the third section).

NE.2016: new voters, having reached voting age. For a description of the remaining acronyms, consult the note in Table 1.

Source: The Authors based on the data in CIS barometers 3242 and 3245 (CIS, 2019a, 2019c) and provisional results at the census section level in the 2019 General Election.

Figure 7 Estimate of the transition matrix between the 2016 General Election and the 2019 Regional Election, based on survey data

	PP	Cs	VOX	PSOE	COMP	UP	Rest	Abst.	
PP	48.2	15.4	17.1	2.1	0.4	0.0	0.5	16.3	870591
Cs	2.7	63.7	12.3	5.0	1.2	0.0	1.3	13.7	367591
COMP-UP	0.5	2.3	1.3	11.9	46.6	28.1	4.9	4.5	624861
PSOE	0.6	3.2	1.6	70.3	11.5	2.3	0.7	9.8	510744
Rest	0.0	0.0	1.9	10.3	1.9	4.8	52.2	29.0	104524
NE.2016	2.7	2.6	7.4	24.7	18.2	12.3	6.0	26.1	120807
Abst.	7.2	7.1	6.3	13.9	6.2	0.8	2.9	55.5	946910
	507583	469416	280915	641852	441359	214426	132485	857992	3546028

The rows refer to recall of the vote cast in the 2016 General Election while the columns refer to voting intention in the 2019 Regional Election. The transition matrix obtained from the survey (see Figure A7) was adjusted using the RAS method (Pavía *et al.*, 2009), in order to ensure consistency between the results of both elections. The 2016 Census was proportionately adjusted so that it coincided with the provisional census results for 2019 (more details in the third section).

NE.2016: new voters, having reached voting age. For a description of the remaining acronyms, consult the note in Table 1.

Source: The Authors, based on CIS 3244 barometer data (CIS, 2019b) and provisional results at the census section level in the 2019 Valencian Regional Elections.

Figure 8 Estimate of the transfer matrix for the April 2019 General Election and Regional Election, based on electoral table-level results

	PP	Cs	VOX	PSOE	COMP	UP	Rest	Abst.	
PP	95.0	0.9	0.9	0.7	1.6	0.1	0.6	0.2	497502
Cs	1.2	88.5	1.3	1.1	5.8	0.6	1.1	0.4	481481
VOX	4.7	6.9	80.7	1.2	2.2	0.7	2.7	0.9	321906
PSOE	1.0	0.7	0.4	82.9	6.2	2.2	3.5	3.1	743707
COMP	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	99.5	0.1	0.1	0.1	172710
UP	0.6	1.6	0.7	2.0	43.3	49.0	2.1	0.8	380985
Rest	2.7	2.1	1.9	4.6	8.9	3.9	73.1	2.7	108543
Abst.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	98.1	839127
	508228	467990	280246	644492	438295	215341	133108	858260	3545961

For a description of the acronyms, consult the note in Table 1.

Source: The Authors based on provisional electoral table-level results in the 2019 General Election and the Valencian Regional Election after applying the ecological inference procedure detailed in the third section.

benefits Unidas Podemos (in General Elections) or Compromís (in Regional Elections). As we shall see in the following section, this duality in the behaviour of UP-COMP voters in 2016 is strongly corroborated when one analyses the vote transitions between the General, and the Regional elections in April 2019 (see Figure 8).

VOTE TRANSITIONS BETWEEN THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS AND VALENCIAN REGIONAL ELECTIONS

The 28th of April 2019 was a remarkable day in the Valencian Autonomous Community for it was the first day that the Regional Election was held on the same day as Spain's General Election. The censuses

(voting registers) for both elections were the same,²⁹ allowing ecological inference algorithms to be applied without having to assume the absence of significant changes between the two elections.

Figure 8 shows the vote transition estimates arising between the April 2019 General Election and Regional Election. As is usual in simultaneous elections, we took the General Election as the first order election, and the Regional Election as the destination, second-order election. One should note that up until then, estimated transition matrices were obtained using ecological inference algorithms that were sensitive

²⁹ Even in simultaneous elections, one cannot take it for granted that the voting censuses for: local and regional elections; local and European elections; European and General elections, are the same because they usually differ. CERE voters (census of foreign residents in Spain) do not have the right to vote in Regional and General elections. That is why the voter census differs between local and European elections.

Figure 9 Estimate of the transition matrix from the April 2019 General Election to the 2019 European Election, based on electoral-table level results

	PP	Cs	VOX	PSOE	COMP	UP	Rest	Abst.	
PP	78.5	2.0	12.4	1.3	1.0	0.3	2.1	2.4	498606
Cs	3.2	54.9	1.4	4.5	1.8	1.2	2.4	30.6	482549
VOX	22.8	9.8	28.0	3.8	2.6	1.5	4.7	26.7	322620
PSOE	1.1	0.5	0.2	88.8	0.9	1.0	1.0	6.6	745357
COMP	1.8	2.7	0.6	7.7	69.7	7.7	6.5	3.3	173093
UP	1.5	1.3	0.4	4.7	5.6	47.6	7.9	31.0	381830
Rest	5.5	4.1	1.2	13.7	9.6	4.7	33.2	28.0	108784
CERE	14.0	2.5	2.8	6.1	7.7	1.7	8.5	56.7	74644
Abst.	1.0	0.4	0.1	1.2	0.7	0.3	0.3	96.0	840991
	522275	329521	167078	762178	193291	223670	131132	1299329	3628474

For a description of the acronyms, consult the note in Table 1. Census. CERE refers to the census of foreign residents in Valencia with the right to vote in the local elections.

Source: The Authors, based on provisional results at the electoral-table level for the 2019 General Election and European Election (European Parliament) after applying the ecological inference procedure detailed in the third section.

to deciding which election was the source and which the destination one. Accordingly, a different decision would have led to slightly different estimates. In any event, the transition matrix for the regional and general elections would have varied very little from that obtained by transposing Figure A10 of the MS, which corresponds to the composition matrix associated with Figure 8.

As was to be expected, there was less voting mobility given that the simultaneous elections were strongly linked, as can be seen in Figure 8. In general, voters chose the same party in both elections. An exception here concerned a significant share of voters for Compromís and Unidas Podemos (Unides Podem-EUPV). Taking voting transitions from the General Election to the Regional Election, one can see that UP voters in the General Election virtually split their vote between UP and Compromís in the Regional Election. Looked at the other way round (from the

Regional Election to the General Election), a significant share of voters split their ballot papers between Compromís and UP (see Figure A10).³⁰ In any case, analysing voting transitions from the General Election to the Regional Election and leaving aside the UP's case, among the main parties, Compromís and PP were the ones commanding greatest voter loyalty, while Vox, PSOE and Cs were the parties showing greatest vote transition. In Vox's case, almost 12% of its voters at the General Election opted to vote for Cs or PP in the Regional Election. In the case of PSOE voters, the party's greatest loss of votes from the General Election to the Regional Election was to Compromís (around 6%). The same thing happened to Cs voters in the General Election.

³⁰ On the other hand, one should not overlook that they voted for PSOE in the General Election.

Figure 10 Estimate of the transition matrix from the April 2019 General Election to the November 2019 Election, based on section-level results

	PP	Cs	VOX	PSOE	COMP	UP	Rest	Abst.	
PP	91.8	0.2	2.1	1.2	0.3	0.5	0.4	3.6	495843
Cs	22.4	38.5	17.4	4.1	5.7	1.9	4.1	6.1	480074
VOX	1.2	0.2	96.8	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	1.1	320993
PSOE	0.4	0.2	2.0	86.0	0.4	1.3	1.4	8.2	741102
UP	0.8	0.7	1.3	4.9	4.3	77.3	4.4	6.2	379812
COMP	2.8	0.7	4.0	4.4	71.3	9.8	3.2	3.8	172358
Rest	2.6	1.8	17.2	4.8	2.1	3.7	34.9	32.9	108236
NE.Abril	6.5	3.7	35.9	5.7	4.3	4.7	7.2	32.1	23721
Abst.	0.2	0.1	1.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	98.3	836265
	583121	195374	467019	697596	175092	337770	94837	1007595	

NE.Abril: New electors reaching voting age.

For a description of the acronyms, consult the note in Table 1.

Source: The Authors, based on provisional results at the section level of the census in the April and November General Elections, after applying the ecological inference procedure detailed in the third section.

VOTE TRANSITIONS IN THE APRIL 2019 GENERAL ELECTION TO THE 2019 EUROPEAN ELECTION

The General Election and the European Election are both considered to be ‘national elections’ so it is worth studying the vote transitions from the former to the latter. Figure 9 shows the estimated voting transitions obtained using the ecological inference procedure described in the third section, and based on the provisional results at the electoral-table level in both elections. Figure A11 shows the corresponding composition matrix.

The PSOE was the party that kept most of its voters by a long chalk, followed by PP. Furthermore, these parties were also the ones that got most votes. By contrast, Cs, UP, and Vox voters showed very little loyalty. Vox’s case is particularly noteworthy in this respect because, according to the estimate, it only retained 28 % of its voters. Nevertheless, Vox attracted a high percentage of voters who had chosen PP in the General Election.

Vox also lost almost a third of its voters in the General Election, and to abstention in the European Election — something that also happened to UP and Cs.

VOTING TRANSITIONS IN THE APRIL 2019 AND NOVEMBER 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS

The April 2019 General Elections shaped a Spanish Parliament in which PSOE had 123 seats — almost double that of the PP, the second-largest party, with 66 seats. Despite this, the Socialist candidate was unable to marshal enough votes in parliament to be invested President. It proved impossible to break the deadlock so another General Election was held in November 2019. Figure 10 shows the estimate of the voting transitions, using the ecological inference procedure described in section three and based on the provisional results at the census level in both elections. Figure A12 of the MS shows the corresponding composition matrix.

Figure 11 Estimate of the voting transition between the 2019 Regional and Local elections at the electoral table level

	PP	Cs	VOX	PSOE	COMP	UP	Rest	Abst.	
PP	86.4	3.7	1.7	0.6	3.5	0.5	1.4	2.1	83124
Cs	2.7	66.6	2.4	2.1	9.2	1.0	2.5	13.5	85582
VOX	17.7	13.9	48.5	1.7	2.2	1.0	1.2	13.8	48335
PSOE	0.3	0.3	0.3	71.0	2.0	2.7	1.8	21.7	88938
COMP	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.9	94.8	2.7	0.2	0.6	94453
UP	0.1	0.2	0.2	10.3	2.7	25.5	2.2	58.8	31299
Rest	2.2	1.9	1.8	19.5	7.8	3.2	22.6	41.0	20113
CERE	8.2	4.5	3.9	3.6	8.4	16.7	4.9	49.9	4693
Abst.	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	99.0	129683
	84290	68251	28109	74545	106353	16148	11269	197255	369179

For a description of the acronyms, consult the note in Table 1.

Census. CERE refers to the census of foreign residents in Valencia with the right to vote in the local elections.

Source: The Authors based on provisional results at the electoral-table level in the 2019 General Election and the Valencian Regional Election, after applying the ecological inference procedure detailed in the third section.

The new election brought major changes compared with the election held just seven months earlier. On this occasion, the big changes were on the Right Wing, with Cs doing very badly, while Vox's vote soared. Indeed, Cs only kept 38.5% of those who voted for them in April. The party's votes mainly went to PP (22.4 %) and Vox (17.4 %). Furthermore, Vox was the party that won the greatest share of new voters (35.9 %), and had the greatest voter loyalty — doing better in this respect than PP and PSOE. The repetition of the General Election hurt Left-Wing parties, with 8.2% of PSOE voters in April and 6.2% of UP voters choosing to abstain, most likely because both parties had shown themselves incapable of reaching an agreement to invest a new president following the April General Election.

VOTING TRANSITIONS IN THE 2019 REGIONAL ELECTION TO THE 2019 LOCAL ELECTIONS IN THE CITY OF VALENCIA

One cannot always study voting transitions using survey data. There are settings where surveys are not

available or they do not cover the right variables. This is this case with local elections, in which it is common to find surveys that do not contain any micro-data.

In the Spanish case, one can always resort to ecological inference algorithms to dis-aggregate data by voting units. As an example of a voting transition matrix in local elections, this section analyses the transitions that occurred in Valencia between the 2019 Regional and Local elections.³¹

If one examines the estimates shown in Figure 11, the most salient result is the high percentage of voters who abstained in the local elections after having voted in the Regional Election. The figure that most stands out in this respect is the one for UP, whose

³¹ There was a pre-electoral survey for the 2019 Local Election but this did not include the City of Valencia (CIS, 2019c) and accordingly it was not possible to build a matrix for this section given that no information on voting intentions in the Regional Election was gathered. In any event, the sample size corresponding to the City of Valencia was only 479.

Figure 12 Estimate of the voting transition from the 2019 European Election to the 2019 Local Election from the electoral-level results. City of Valencia

	PP	Cs	VOX	PSOE	COMP	UP	Rest	Abst.	
PP	93.5	3.4	0.7	0.2	1.6	0.2	0.3	0.1	82263
Cs	0.9	91.2	0.6	0.5	5.7	0.5	0.4	0.2	66360
VOX	12.9	8.8	73.3	0.9	2.4	0.6	0.8	0.3	33077
PSOE	0.9	0.6	1.3	64.3	19.7	6.4	5.4	1.4	109154
COMP	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	99.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	35990
UP	0.2	0.1	0.1	1.0	82.6	15.7	0.2	0.1	42938
Rest	7.4	6.8	6.9	4.7	41.0	7.7	24.5	1.1	17886
Abst.	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	98.3	197721
	84290	68251	28109	74545	106353	16148	11269	197658	585389

For a description of the acronyms, consult the note in Table 1.

Source: The Authors based on provisional results at the electoral-table level for the 2019 European Parliament and Valencia City Council elections, after applying the ecological inference procedure detailed in the third section.

voters in the Regional Election mainly abstained in the Local Election. Of the other large parties, Compromís and PP were the only ones that did not lose many of their Regional Election voters to abstention in the Local Election one month later. Vox and UP show the other side of the coin — both parties losing over half of their voters in the latter election. Here Mayor Ribó’s ability to hang on to almost all of the votes won in the Regional Election and to improve his party’s showing in the Local Election held a month later are particularly noteworthy achievements.³²

VOTING TRANSITIONS BETWEEN THE 2019 EUROPEAN ELECTION AND THE LOCAL ELECTION IN THE CITY OF VALENCIA

Last, given that the 2019 European and Municipal elections were held simultaneously, it is worth studying vote transitions between the two elections. In

this case, we once again study the City of Valencia. Figure 12 shows the estimates of voting transitions between the 2019 European and Local elections. Figure A14 shows the composition matrix associated with Figure 12, whose transposition can be interpreted as the transition matrix from the local to the European elections, given that both elections were held at the same time.

It is worth noting that almost all the voters cast their ballots in both elections, which undoubtedly helped cut the usually high abstention rate seen in European elections. The most salient fact is the movements voters showed between the parties on that day. This is a clear indicator that voters considered many other factors in addition to the party name, for example, the main candidates in each party list and the kind of election. Even so, given the results we can say that the ideological axis continued to be the decisive factor in most voters’ choices.

Another notable point is the huge number of votes picked up by the present Mayor, Joan Ribó, who

³² Figure A13 shows the composition matrix associated with Figure 11.

picked up almost all the voters who had plumped for Compromís in the European Election (the party being badged as ‘Compromiso por Europa’). He was also able to pick up a large number of voters from other parties. Here, one should note the voting transition from the candidacy of Unidas Podemos Cambiar Europa, the result of which was that Compromís won the elections and that Podem-EUPV failed to reach the threshold needed to win seats. Compromís also picked up a fair number of votes from PSOE.

The voting transitions were not only found among the Left-Wing parties but also occurred among Right-Wing ones. In the latter case, the main beneficiary was PP, which picked up almost 13% of Vox’s votes in the European Election. In fact, after UP, Vox was the second party to lose the greatest percentage of its votes. In any case, in the local elections the impact of the candidates and their connections made themselves felt — an area where Vox was at a disadvantage — as can be seen from Figure 12.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2008 economic crisis sparked great economic and global changes, upsetting the political apple-cart in most Western countries. Spain and The Valencian Country have also been affected by these changes as

can be seen from what has happened since the 2015 elections. These were the first to show major voting transitions. During the 2019 elections, these changes continued and were amplified by the appearance of a new actor — Vox — upon the political stage, and seemingly greater volatility in voting behaviour.

It is against this background that our study estimates and analyses the voting transitions in The Valencian Country for the 2019 General, Regional, Municipal, and European elections. Specifically, we used results drawn from small areas, and from survey results, to estimate voting transition matrices: (1) between the 2015 Regional Election to the 2019 Regional Election; (2) from the 2016 General Election to the April 2019 General Election and Regional Election; (3) between the April General Election and Regional elections; (4) between the April 2019 General and European elections and the November 2019 General Election; (5) at the local level, between the 2019 Regional Election and the Municipal Election for the City of Valencia; (6) between the 2019 European and Municipal elections.

The most salient results are: (a) virtually constant voting transitions in each ideological bloc, and (b) the flow of votes back and forth between UP and Compromís, in which the former wins more votes in national elections while the latter virtually absorbs all of UP’s votes in regional and local elections.

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Mediatisation and Rallies during the 2019 Valencian Regional Election: Between ‘media logic’ and ‘political logic’

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses how political rallies develop in an age of intense mediatisation in which politicians and media influence one another. In this connection, we look at the Regional Elections held in the Valencian Autonomous Community in April 2019. For the first time, these coincided with a General Election, so that even more was at stake than usual. We wanted to know how political rallies were designed and what impact they had on both social networks and on television. The data were obtained through a qualitative observational analysis of the key rallies of the main parties taking part in the elections (PP, PSOE, *Compromís*, *Ciudadanos*, *Unidas Podemos*, and *Vox*). We combined that approach with a quantitative methodology for content analysis of the various rally postings made by parties and their leaders on their official Facebook and Twitter accounts. We also studied *À Punt*'s TV coverage of the same rallies in its news. On the one hand, the results

* The framework for this paper is the R&D Project *Estrategias, agendas y discursos en las cibercampañas electorales: medios de comunicación y ciudadanos* [Strategies, Agendas, and Discourse in Electoral Cyber-Campaigns: The Media and Citizens] (reference CSO2016-77331-C2-1-R), which was granted by Spain's Ministry for the Economy and Competitiveness (MEC) for the period 2017-2020 and drawn up by the Mediaflows R&D Group (<http://mediaflows.es/en/>).

indicate that election rallies continue to be highly ritualised events. Political parties carefully plan their rallies, always mindful of how these will be reported in today's highly fragmented media systems — especially in social networks. On the other hand, our study suggests that information on rallies is still tightly controlled by the parties — something that is commonplace in Spanish election campaigns.

Keywords: election rallies, political ritual, election campaign, regional elections.

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INTRODUCTION: MEDIATISATION AND RITUALISM IN ELECTORAL RALLIES

Rituals and symbols are key factors in political communication, as a host of studies in many fields have shown, especially those in Sociology and Anthropology (Navarini, 2001). In fact, as Mazzoleni argues, there is no such thing as politics without ritual: “Ritual is, by its very nature, a kind of political language, a highly formalised communication that is governed by expressive rules that reflect the cultural organisation of a given society or political context” (2010: 132). To some extent, adds the author, political ritual is a language through which the competition for power is manifested in a more tangible, visible, and even theatrical form (Mazzoleni, 2010: 136). While there is no politics without rituals, neither are there rituals without symbols (understood as non-material meanings and values that clothe aforesaid rituals, legitimising them and giving them meaning). Although modern politics has traditionally been considered as a sphere shaped solely by rational deeds, several authors have highlighted the importance of symbolic, affective factors in political actions (Lakoff, 2016; Richards, 2010).

Election campaigns are highly symbolic events. They bring together a whole host of ritualised communication deeds channelling political activity. Rallies feature mass audiences at public venues where the candidate gives his or her election speech (López García, Gamir Ríos and Valera Ordaz, 2018: 132). Such rallies have always

been one of the commonest and most successful kinds of election events. That is why this paper analyses their role in election campaigns in general, and specifically in the April 2019 Valencian Regional Election. The latter is of particular interest given that it was a ‘double first’. That is because it was the first time that the Regional Election was: (1) held separately from the Municipal Elections; (2) coincided with Spain’s General Election.

The purpose of political rallies during an election campaign has changed markedly over the last few decades. Following the historic classification proposed by Norris (2000), in the so-called ‘pre-modern campaigns’, rallies were the first stage of political communication (Blumler and Kavanagh (1999)), the goal being to gather citizens so that the candidate(s)/party could explain his/its policies and interact with the general public. This goal made sense in a setting where: (1) the public was sufficiently politicised to attend rallies to discover a candidate’s policies; (2) rallies strengthened voting decisions, creating the fleeting impression of closeness between politicians and citizens. The latter function was particularly important at a time when the media were much less influential than today. From this standpoint, rallies were key rituals for conveying the political message to the citizenry.

From the 1950s and 1960s onwards, the media’s consolidation in conveying the political message, particularly through television, led to new models, languages, and

new users of political symbols and rituals. As Dayan and Katz (1995) explain, during this stage, the impact of rituals and ceremonies on society was conditioned by their media representation. The media's ability to constantly act as the go-between in the general public's knowledge of the social world has been termed 'mediatisation' (Couldry and Hepp, 2013; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). This concept, on which there is a large body of academic literature, does not allude to the media's role in mediating between events and the public, neither does it try to define or quantify the impact of the media's message on the audience. Instead, it seeks to critically analyse the media's interdependencies with other cultural, social, and political actors in interpreting this sphere (Hepp, Hjarvard and Lundby, 2015; Esser and Strömback, 2014).

There are two theoretical approaches to mediatisation, which have converged somewhat of late (Couldry and Hepp, 2013: 196). On the one hand, there is the so-called 'media logic' approach, which is to say that the media impose forms of representation on other social actors, whose protagonism depend on their compliance with said forms. This especially affects political subjects, who must design their measures and policies as media events so that they can be conveyed to society as a whole. On the other hand, there is the so-called 'constructivist perspective' (Berger and Luckmann, 1996), which stresses the importance of the media in modelling communication of social and cultural life. This approach stresses that we interpret and experience the social world through a set of messages, discourses, images, texts, and sounds. In modern societies, all these inputs overwhelmingly come from the media, which play a major part in our daily lives. The power attributed to the media's power to 'create' reality stems from processes, historical contingency, and institutional and technological complexity.

Election campaigns over these years underwent a stage of "modernisation" (Norris, 2000), in which the biggest changes went hand-in-hand with growing mediatisation. This has reached such a pitch that some speak of *media campaigns* in explaining these transformations, often overlooking the key role that political subjects

still play in their design and execution (Mazzoleni, 2010). In any event, we are now living in an age in which campaign organisation and communication is increasingly professionalised and placed in the hands of political advisors (or, less flatteringly, 'spin doctors'), who draw up sophisticated political and electoral strategies (Maarek, 2009). Furthermore, 'image management' is no longer the preserve of the wealthy few but rather, has become a basic necessity for ensuring election success. This development is in keeping with the advent of television as the main channel for conveying and legitimising political discourse. As far as voters are concerned, 'being on the telly' means being on "the political landscape" (Maarek, 2009).

In this second stage, the demands and pace of the new and popular medium of television greatly boosted both the appeal and fragmentation of political information both in and beyond election campaigns. In any case, TV's dramatic, leisure-oriented nature meant that election campaigns were presented as if they were shows (Edelman, 1988). The best-known TV genre — advertising — came to epitomise modern election campaigns, as did debates among the candidates (Canel, 2006; Barranco Sáiz, 2010). The importance of image in the medium meant that attention now tended to focus on the candidate, eclipsing the political party. This "personalisation" (Bennett, 2012) drew on both candidates and on entertainment strategies that made political information accessible to a wide range of audiences. Since then, simple straightforward messages delivered in an almost telegraphic form — 'sound bites' as we would say now — became the norm. This information could then be used to come up with attention-grabbing headlines. This approach was complemented by a sensationalist treatment of candidates' personal lives (Casero Ripollés, Ortells Badenes and Rosique Cedillo, 2017; Holtz Bacha, 2003). These have all become everyday practices in TV coverage of politics. These practices converged over time into "infotainment" [that is, a combination of 'information' and 'entertainment'] (Thussu, 2007; Langer, 2000), which comes in endless varieties. In relation to political discourse, we can find it in purely news programmes (such as news and interviews] but also in programmes that are more akin to entertain-

ment, such as talk shows and ‘magazine’ slots (Berrocal Gonzalo, 2017; Mazzoleni and Sfardini, 2009).

This ever more mediatised electoral setting (in which the public depend more on the media to explain what is going on in the campaign) has led to less public interest in going to rallies and listening to political speeches. This in turn has given rise to a different kind of rally, which is largely ‘pre-fabricated’ and for show. For several decades now, rallies have become little more than circuses put on for the media’s benefit (Contreras, 1990). Their purpose is just to put on a display of public support of a given manifesto and to make sure the media put over the message. Thus those attending rallies are now almost wholly drawn from the party faithful, who pack the stands and cheer on their leaders, showing the party’s strength before media audiences. Thus rallies are no longer held to convince those in the stands (for these are party hacks and supporters) but rather to persuade those at home who watch a brief, edited version of the proceedings in which the media give ‘the highlights’. If we put this in terms of electoral strategy, rallies are no longer political acts to convince to rally-goers but rather are little more than “position statements” (Mazzoleni, 2010: 150). Although rallies are not used to win votes, rallies and party members still play the ritual, ‘theatrical’ role of yore.

Finally, the third stage of political communication is the one in which we now find ourselves. In it, the electoral campaign has undergone further mediatisation so that those taking part not only include the media and leading politicians but also citizens themselves. Their messages now criss-cross the digital world. As sundry studies have shown, the causes behind this mediatisation of politics are many and complex. Strömback (2008), for example, sees today’s mediatisation as a four-stage process in which the media are also influenced by other political actors. For Strömback, the important thing is knowing the degree of interdependence between politics and society regarding the media (Strömback, 2008: 228). Mazzoleni and Schulz raised a similar point a few years back (1999: 247), arguing that although the media occupy centre stage in modern political life, political institutions still

have control over political processes. That is why this paper delves into the features, functions, and goals of political rallies today, and the extent to which they are mediatised in modern electoral campaigns.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESIS

To reach our goal, we shall analyse the major rallies of the main political parties in the Valencian Regional Election held on the 28th of April 2019. The parties are: PSPV-PSOE, PP, Compromís, Ciudadanos, Unides Podem, and Vox. We chose the Valencian setting because its Regional Election coincided with the Spanish General Election. The Valencian President — Ximo Puig — chose to bring forward the Regional Election to coincide with the nationwide election. The fact that both elections were to be held on the same day gave the major parties a somewhat stronger presence in the region than if only the General Election had been held in April. In fact, of the five major national parties, two chose Valencia to close their election campaigns on Friday the 26th of April, while another (PP) held a rally on the morning of the same day (even though its campaign had already closed in Madrid). This was highly unusual in national campaigns given that Madrid is the country’s information hub and is thus the natural choice for major rallies.

First, we shall analyse rallies based on a qualitative approach based on on-the-spot observation of each rally, with the sole exception of the Compromís closing rally held on the 26th of April (instead, we chose to attend the key rally held by Coalición Valencianista on Saturday 13th April). We paid special attention to the organisation of each rally, the staging, the key themes, and any other detail of a symbolic or ritual nature that one would only notice by attending the event.

We shall then look at how the various parties holding these rallies managed communication in social media — especially in Facebook and Twitter. We chose these social media because they are the ones currently most used in Spain (*The Social Media Family*, 2019). The gathering of the Twitter and Facebook corpus

was made possible by the Netlytic application, which allowed us to download all the tweets and posts published in real time by the political parties and their main leaders. All of the tweets and posts published on the day following the main rally in Valencia and the day after that were gathered for later analysis. In total, the corpus comprised 640 tweets and 85 posts. The social media were then manually examined, using quantitative methodology to analyse contents.

Last, we checked media coverage of these rallies by the news programmes of À Punt, Valencia's public television network. To this end, we looked at the treatment of these events in the TV station's main news (broadcast shortly after the rally), whether in the first or second edition of the news. We considered issues of a discursive nature regarding text and image to discover what elements the news prioritised and highlighted in the rallies of each political party. Here, one should note that the time spent on the electoral coverage of a given party is governed by the Central Electoral Board (Junta Electoral Central — JEC), with the time spent on a given party being proportional to the seats it won in the previous elections.

Based upon this analysis, in which we mixed various methodologies (a quantitative content analysis, and a qualitative approximation covering observation and discourse type), we came up with the following research questions and hypotheses:

H1: Rallies have become smaller events and are not aimed at those attending but rather try to create content to feed the media (both television and social media).

Q1: In this respect, to what extent are rallies still important rituals in today's electoral campaigns, especially in the case of emerging political parties?

Q2: Bearing in mind that the Central Electoral Board (JEC) sets the time that television networks can spend on a given political party during elections campaigns, how much mediatisation is there in news on election rallies?

RESEARCH RESULTS

The observational analysis of rallies

Compromís, the Valencian coalition, held its rally in Valencia at the beginning of the campaign on Saturday the 13th of April. The place chosen was an open-air one—the City of Valencia's Turia Gardens, close to the Music Palace (*Palau de la Música*). The venue allowed the public to attend in concentric rings around the stage. Those closest to the stage were seated, those further away were standing. The rally featured key figures in the coalition and focused on the candidates for the two elections: Joan Baldoví, Head of the Party List for Valencia, and Mónica Oltra, candidate for the presidency of The Valencian Regional Government. It was an election campaign that caught Compromís off-balance for the party had strongly opposed the decisions taken by Ximo Puig—the Valencian President—to bring forward the Regional Election. The rally mobilised party members and sympathisers in a campaign they would rather have fought later on. There were worries about the Regional Election falling on the same date as a General Election (in which Compromís did much worse than in the regional and municipal elections). In addition to this rally, Compromís' candidates returned for the closing campaign held on the 26th of April.

For the national elections, the first party to hold its main rally in Valencia was another coalition in our sample: Unidas Podemos. Its rally was held on the 17th of April. It had been planned for Valencia's Port area but there were last-minute changes and it was rescheduled for one of the halls in The Valencia Trade Fair. The setting was rather grey and depressing (outside Valencia's city centre and in a large, empty industrial warehouse to boot). This was made worse by the sparse turn-out of some 1,900 souls. This compared poorly with the turn-out for other parties' rallies with similar number of seats in Valencia (such as Ciudadanos, and Compromís) and with the historic rally in Pabellón de la Fonteta (stadium) in December 2015, which drew over 10,000 people (filling the stadium, and with 2000 listening outside). Going back to the grey warehouse, there was a circular dais in the centre

which the audience sat around. Sundry speakers (we counted no fewer than thirteen) took turns to speak until the star — Pablo Iglesias — gave his speech. His discourse was intended to surprise and to show off Unidas Podemos as a progressive political party whose mission was to serve citizens' interests ('folk', in the language commonly used by Unidas Podemos). Iglesias demanded "an opportunity" to change things.

A day before the campaign closed, Vox held a rally in the Science Museum (sited in Valencia's futuristic City of Arts and Sciences). There was a lot of media buzz before the event, given expectations that the Far-Right party would make big gains, and given the success of its rallies held elsewhere. One of Vox's strengths is its use of social media and it completely filled the venue to the point where some people were left outside. Vox's leader, Santiago Abascal (the party leader and main speaker) briefly spoke to them through a loud-hailer.

The size of the rally was not only spread through Vox's social medial but also by TV and radio, which covered the rally and went overboard in stressing the massive attendance. We do not know how Vox's other rallies went but we can say that the story of a stadium so chock-a-block with supporters that others were left outside was a lie. In fact, Vox shut the entrance gate when the stadium was still only two-thirds full. Even so, the usual scene took place, with Santiago Abascal addressing those left milling around outside (some 500 people) with a loud-hailer. Then the rally proper began.

There were three speakers at the rally (where attendance far outstripped that of other parties with the sole exception of PSOE). The speakers were: (1) the presidential candidate for the Valencian Regional Government, José María Llanos; (2) the man topping the party list for Valencia in the General Election, Ignacio Gil Lázaro; (3) Vox's leader, Santiago Abascal. When Abascal began his speech, the gates of the stadium were opened so that those outside could come in. They all found a seat and this was little wonder for the stadium was still one-third empty. The earlier scene with The Leader addressing those outside with a loud-hailer

was thus no more than a clever propaganda stunt to suggest a stadium packed to the gunnels.

The other three political parties held their rallies on the 26th of April — the last day of the campaign. However, in Partido Popular's case, the rally that officially ended the campaign was held in Madrid. PP scheduled a rally on Friday evening, hoping that the party's national leader, Pablo Casado, would attend but he finally decided to close the campaign in Madrid. In the end, PP hurriedly organised a rally for Friday morning at the Marina Beach Club venue, which Casado attended. The closing rally for the Regional Election was held on Friday evening, as planned. Having two rallies gave an impression of improvisation and differences between the party's national and regional management. To make matters worse, Pablo Casado turned up at the Marina Beach Club meeting an hour later, forcing the previous speakers to pan out their speeches before a sparse audience (some 400 people, who only filled half the venue). The staging of the event, instead of conveying political strength, revealed rifts and organisational problems.

Ciudadanos closed its campaign in Valencia in exactly the same place as Compromís — the Turia Gardens, near the Music Palace. Apart from the unusual nature of the venue, the rally itself was undoubtedly one of the most unconventional of those covered in this paper. Ciudadanos held activities in the Turia Gardens throughout the day, including a race between party candidates (which, as was wholly foreseeable, was won by Albert Rivera). Apart from Rivera, others taking part included: the presidential candidate for the Valencian Regional Government, Toni Cantó; the head of the party list for Valencia, María Muñoz; and the candidates for Madrid, Inés Arrimadas and Edmundo Bal. Despite the festive stage-setting, the rally was poorly attended, racking up more or less the same number as Compromís two weeks early — some 2000 people).

Last, PSOE held its closing rally in Valencia's Parque Central (central park). In many respects, the Socialists' meeting was the most like the rallies of the past. First,

it was the one that had the highest turn-out (some 10,000 people) and the organisation was impeccable, marshalling an army of Socialist party members and sympathisers in Valencia. The speakers were: the Mayoral candidate for Valencia, Sandra Gómez (even though municipal elections were not being fought); Spain's Minister for Employment, and Secretary of the PSOE, José Luis Ábalos; Ximo Puig, the President of The Valencian Region; the presidential candidate in Spain's General Election, Pedro Sánchez. In Sánchez's case, his arrival during the rally was perfectly staged. He entered the stadium through the central passageway, waving to party members left and right. He was cheered on until he reached the stage. His entry lasted over five minutes and, like the rest of the rally,

conveyed political strength and confidence in winning the elections — a message pressed home by the succession of speakers.

Analysis of the rallies in the social media

As one can see, the political parties used their social media accounts to spread information on forthcoming rallies. Of the 640 tweets published between the day of the rally and a couple of days later, no fewer than 298 (47%) were published after the event. As Table 1 shows, Compromís' presidential candidate for the Valencian Regional Government, Mónica Oltra (69%), and Ciudadanos (84%) were respectively the politician and the party that were most heavily promoted through Twitter.

Table 1 Twitter coverage of rallies in Valencia

Party / Candidacy	Rally date	Dates analysed	Number of Tweets	Tweets on the rally on VLC	% published on these days
Compromís	13 April	13 and 14 April	89	48	54%
Mónica Oltra	13 April	13 and 14 April	62	43	69%
PP	26 April	26 and 27 April	58	27	47%
Isabel Bonig	26 April	26 and 27 April	7	4	57%
PSPV-PSOE	26 April	26 and 27 April	54	23	43%
Ximo Puig	26 April	26 and 27 April	24	6	25%
Ciudadanos	26 April	26 and 27 April	70	59	84%
Toni Cantó	26 April	26 and 27 April	48	15	31%
Unides Podem	17 April	17 and 18 April	146	39	27%
Rubén Martínez Dalmau	17 April	17 and 18 April	21	2	10%
Vox	25 April	25 and 26 April	26	16	62%
José María Llanos	25 April	25 and 26 April	35	16	46%

Source: The Authors.

Table 2 Facebook coverage of rallies in Valencia

Party / Candidacy	Rally date	Dates analysed	Number of posts	Posts on rally on VLC	% published on these days
Compromís	13 April	13 and 14 April	3	3	100%
<i>Mónica Oltra</i>	13 April	13 and 14 April	7	3	43%
PP	26 April	26 and 27 April	11	4	36%
<i>Isabel Bonig</i>	26 April	26 and 27 April	5	3	60%
PSPV-PSOE	26 April	26 and 27 April	6	3	50%
<i>Ximo Puig</i>	26 April	26 and 27 April	6	3	50%
Ciudadanos	26 April	26 and 27 April	2	1	50%
<i>Toni Cantó</i>	26 April	26 and 27 April	11	6	55%
Unides Podem	17 April	17 and 18 April	10	2	20%
<i>Rubén Martínez Dalmau</i>	17 April	17 and 18 April	6	1	17%
Vox	25 April	25 and 26 April	18	3	17%
<i>José María Llanos</i>	25 April	25 and 26 April	0	0	0%

Source: The Authors.

In the case of Facebook, of the 85 initial posts published by parties and candidates between the rally and afterwards, 32 (38%) were about the event itself. Although this is far fewer than Twitter, some data stand out, for example, all of Compromís' posts were spent on promoting and managing communication of the party's main rally. PSPV-PSOE and its candidate, Ximo Puig, took more or less the same approach (50% of posts) as did Ciudadanos, whose candidate Toni Cantó was the politician who published most posts over the 11-day period and wrote most about the rally (6). This reveals the intense political activity in social media. Unides Podem shows the other side of the coin, with its leader (Rubén Martínez Dalmau) publishing very few posts on its rallies (20% and 17%). Despite the party

having two of the most active accounts in Facebook, only 10 and 6 posts, respectively were published. This also applies to Vox. Of the 18 posts published by Vox, only 3 covered the rally (17%). Even more remarkably, José María Llanos, Vox's presidential candidate for the Valencian Regional Government published nothing on Facebook.

From the data gathered, one can say that Twitter is the tool that is most used for these kinds of events. This is hardly surprising given the nature of the application since one can reach more people through public hash tags, channelling conversations on a specific topic. Even so, Twitter is also used in some corporate accounts to amplify messages published by the national party or

Picture 1 Social media posts on the rally's success

Source: content published on Twitter and Facebook.

by star politicians at both national and regional levels. This was mainly the case in Ciudadanos' account for the Valencian Region, whose original content only made up 14% of the news published on the rally (51 tweets of the 59 published on the rally were re-tweeted to other official party accounts). Vox and Compromís also used this approach, albeit to a lesser extent. By contrast, Unides Podem, PSPV-PSOE and PP hardly used this strategy.

With regard to the content shared on social media, it is common to combine two kinds of messages. These are ones: (1) citing what presidential candidates (whether for the national or regional governments) said at a rally, which usually sums up the key points in the party's

manifiesto; (2) showing photos, videos, include texts giving thanks and restating that the rally was a great success (at least in media terms). Looked at like this, a rally is always a big hit, showing the high hopes the party has of winning the election (Picture 1).

Television analysis of rallies

Our audiovisual analysis will follow chronological order. Compromís was the first party to hold its main rally of the campaign. It did so on the morning of the 13th of April. On this occasion, it was covered by the midday news, which starts at 14:30 P.M. The pro-Valencian group held its rally in the Turia Gardens near the Music Palace. The event was the first on the TV news and it was shown in the headlines, with

a picture of the main party leaders going up to the stage and being cheered by party members and other supporters. There were also several wide shots of the scene and of the audience.

The Compromís rally (04:02 minutes) also opened the news coverage of the campaign, even though the party did not have most seats in the Valencian Parliament. This was odd and the same treatment was not applied to the other parties. There was also live coverage even though the rally was already over. The reporter mentioned some of the proposals made at the rally, such as an office to recover public money in corruption cases, and free school lunches. The news shows several general shots of the stage and the audience waving party flags, along with the odd Valencian flag. The report conveyed a triumphant, festive event with sound bites from the candidate for Castelló, Vicent Marzà, and for Alicante, Aitana Mas. Oltra also spoke and was received with cries of “President! President!”. The report ended with a scene of all the candidates clapping the audience while flags were waved and the campaign music thundered through the stadium. The news report added new pictures of the rally to open the thematic block on the General Election, with the voice-over of the party’s Valencian candidate for the General Election, Joan Baldoví, demanding greater Central Government funding for the region.

Unidas Podemos’ main rally was held on the 17th of April in one of the halls of the Valencia Trade Fair. The rally also opened the party’s campaign and was featured in the headlines of the evening news, which began at 8.30 P.M. The TV showed the party’s presidential candidate in the General Election, Pablo Iglesias, as he entered the hall, smiling and waving to party members and other supporters. This was followed by several wide shots of the candidates climbing on to a small circular dais, with the audience gathered around them below. Unlike Compromís’ rally, the Unidas Podemos one did not open the campaign block of the news slot but correctly appeared in the order reflecting the number of seats the party held in the Spanish Congress (as required by Spain’s Electoral Act). Accordingly, it was scheduled after news cover-

age of PP, PSPV-PSOE, Compromís, and Ciudadanos. Information on the rally took up the whole of the news item (02:18 minutes), with a recording by the journalist who was following the event live. In the background, viewers could see Pablo Iglesias during his speech and the audience, who filled the small hall. The narrator explained some of the proposals. These included: (1) exhumation of those murdered and buried in unmarked mass graves during The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and in the repression that followed; (2) closure of Immigrant Internment Centres; (3) regulation of flat rental prices; (4) raising the minimum wage.

Both Iglesias and the presidential candidate for the Valencian Regional Government, Rubén Martínez Dalmau, appealed for tactical voting and criticised the misuse of the State apparatus for political ends. Sound bites from each were broadcast. Martínez Dalmau was shown from the back, with a bland background whereas Iglesias’ face was shown, insisting in the straightforward nature of his party’s proposals. During the newscast, there were several pictures of the two politicians with their arms around each other’s waist, the other arm raised with closed fist. The audience also raised their arms and fists (in the old pre-Civil War Republican salute), waving the party flags, and the odd person shouting “Yes we can!” The camera shots all gave the impression of a full hall.

It was then Vox’s turn, which gave its main rally in the Valencia Regional on the afternoon of the 25th of April. On Valencian public TV, The news on the rally (32 seconds) appeared at the end of the nightly electoral campaign block. At that moment, Vox had no seats in the Valencian Parliament. The coverage consisted of a couple of cell phone pictures of the rally with a caption “Vox holds its main rally in Valencia, filling the Science Museum”. The news section stated that the party’s national leader (Santiago Abascal) had been received with shouts of “President!”. In the pictures Abascal appeared, making his way with difficulty through the crowds of people cheering him and filming him with their ‘phones. The presenter also said that over five thousand people had attended

the rally. When it came to the political content, Vox's proposals to slash taxes and the public administration were highlighted, to scrap the Gender Violence Act, and to defend Valencian from the El Puig Norms.

The three other parties — PP, PSOE, and Ciudadanos — held their main rallies on the 26th of April, which was the last day of the election campaign. The central section of the public broadcasting TV news that night began with a report on the PP rally in Marina de València (03:20 minutes). The information began with a live feed from the meeting which at that moment had just finished. The reporter summarised some of the proposals made at the rally, such as amending the law to make life sentences permanently reviewable. She also highlighted the call by the presidential candidate for the Valencian Regional Government to concentrate the Centre-Right vote to ensure the unity of Spain. The report was titled "The PP campaign closes" and was illustrated with various scenes of the rally showing PP politicians.

The live feed gave way to a short extract from the rally in which Bonig said "The Valencian Region is a bulwark against secessionist nationalism". After the statements, there was a report on the rally that had been held in the same place that morning and that had been planned as the main rally in which the PP's presidential candidate in the General Election, Pablo Casado, demanded the Central-Right vote to stop PSOE winning. He stated that PSOE had struck a deal with pro-Catalan independence parties, promising to pardon their imprisoned politicians. The video included Casado's argument that his party was "the one that creates jobs". It also highlighted the PP's proposal to lower taxes for the middle class and to form an 'Andalus-style' government with a pact between PP, Ciudadanos, and Vox. The footage of the rally coincided with the image given by the party, especially when the candidates were shown against the background of the Valencian sea-side. By contrast, there were hardly any shots of the audience. The venue in which PP held its rally was fairly small compared with the venues chosen by other parties. The morning rally was also shown in the midday news, with all of

the election coverage being on the PP. Thus the rally paid handsome dividends in terms of media coverage.

The information on PSOE in the evening news (02:31 minutes) on the same day consisted of a live connection to the closing of the campaign in Valencia's Central Park (Parque Central). The reporter noted that according to Ximo Puig, the party's presidential candidate for the Valencian Regional Government, Sánchez was of key importance to the region. Puig also called for undecided voters to opt for the Socialist Party to stop Right-Wing parties coming to power. The report was captioned "'Puig and Sánchez end the campaign in Valencia'", showing footage of the festive atmosphere at the rally as the public awaited the arrival of the candidates.

The live broadcast gave way to a video showing the preparations for the rally. Mention was again made of the importance of the occasion given that the rally was the final event in the campaign and would take place at a venue that symbolised the change of government in both the city and the region. According to Puig, the goal was to stress the successful management in the Valencian region during the last legislature and to underline the Socialist Party's commitment to 'The Mediterranean Rail Corridor'. Nevertheless, Puig's statement was not made at the rally but instead at an earlier event. Sánchez was not shown at the rally so in this respect, his presence had no media impact. The report then went on to cover Sánchez's visits to Castelló and Alicante during the election campaign, showing the candidates at the rallies. This time, Sánchez did appear at a rally, albeit at one held in Toledo the same day, and at which he slated PP and Ciudadanos for having repeated the lies of the Far-Right. Sánchez asked for the votes of undecided electors. In this case, the footage was provided by the PSOE and relayed by satellite.

The last item in the news coverage was the end of Ciudadanos' campaign in Valencia (02:07 minutes). À Punt TV had a live broadcast from the Turia Gardens next to the Music Palace. The report was placed in the campaign news block that Ciudadanos was allocated

in keeping with its number of parliamentary seats. The reporter noted the number of people attending the meeting and highlighted the appeal for unity and equality made by Inés Arrimadas in her speech. The caption given to the report was “Rivera and Cantó also close their campaign in Valencia”. In the footage supplied by the party, one saw the candidates arriving, being cheered by the audience, and a packed venue. The live broadcast gave way to a video covering the morning race held by Ciudadanos in the City of Valencia, and which occupied all of the news on the party in the midday newscast. At the end of the race, Rivera said that the goal was to put on a final sprint before the elections so that he could head a Liberal, Constitutionalist government without having to rely on support from separatist parties, and that would throw Sánchez (Spain’s incumbent President) out of power. The evening news broadcast the same sound bite put out in the midday news but the statements at the main rally held that evening were not included. The video footage showed Ciudadanos candidates running in a group along the Turia Gardens athletics circuit, with Rivera being the first to cross the Finishing Line in what was a metaphor for the election race.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our study revealed the wide range of electoral choices given to voters, the host of technological devices for conveying information, and the way the media’s waning role way has begun to change the form taken by rallies.

From this standpoint and in response to our first hypothesis (H1), rallies in the present stage of political communication are not run as shows put on solely for the media’s benefit (even though parties strongly bear the media in mind). Rather, rallies have become a mechanism for firing up the party’s own supporters and sympathisers, and for showing enthusiasm and faith in victory. The reason why rallies now play this role is that the media have changed, fragmenting and diversifying (Chadwick, 2013). What can be seen now (unlike what happened in the past) is that

rallies have become events that fill up TV time, with vital spin-off for social media. Thus stage-setting no longer depends solely on the interests and criteria of the traditional media but also takes into account a party’s political strategy.

Other forums for holding campaign events have sprung up given that parties can no longer mobilise the general public as they once did (or they simply find that it is no longer worthwhile doing so). That is why parties now focus on both the traditional and the new media to put their messages across. As we have seen, this strategy generally leads to parties prioritising smaller events (which are both cheaper and easier to fill). The result is many more events than before, and whose purpose is to fill the news agenda and spawn an endless flow of messages aimed not just at the media but also at party members and the general public. The carefully programmed, choreographed rally is thus largely a thing of the past. In modern rallies, leaders preach to the converted, putting over a message that is carefully tailored for the consumption of the mass media, which have no choice but to both attend and to cover the events.

The 2019 Valencian Regional bears these points out. With the exception of the PSOE’s rally and possibly that of Vox, the party rallies were not the mass events and demonstrations of strength seen in days of yore. It was not so long ago that most political parties could fill Valencia’s Bull Ring without breaking into a sweat. One party — PP — even went so far as to fill the whole of the Mestalla football stadium in 1996. Despite changes in staging and new communication strategies, rallies are still ritual events for: (1) conveying an image of success and triumph to the party faithful and to society at large; (2) providing content within a ‘media’ framework. This is why rallies are planned to be as spectacular as possible. These events are strongly ‘personalised’, the speeches given must be short and make a big impression. The symbolic gestures historically used at rallies — flag-waving, the leaders’ entrance accompanied by cheering, applause and the rest of the ballyhoo — remain unchanged.

In this study and in response to the first research question (Q1), these functions were seen in all meetings although some fulfilled these better than others. For example, from this standpoint, the PSOE clearly emerged best from the comparison. Its rally was not only attended by more people but it also strongly conveyed an image of success and high hopes of victory — something that was clearly communicated in both the politicians' speeches and the general atmosphere. The same was true of the Vox rally, whose usual ritual and theatrical flourishes were perfectly planned to foster collective enthusiasm among the party's followers. This collective euphoria was packaged within the image of 'a full house' — an impression the party was keen to put over even when it was patently false (as we have shown). With regard to the remaining parties, two of them — *Compromís* and *Ciudadanos* — met expectations with up-beat, open rallies (two of them being held at the same venue). The rallies were canonical in various ways yet also had innovative touches (*Ciudadanos*' 'race'). By contrast, the other two rallies (*Unidas Podemos* and *PP*) were poorly organised and the *PP*'s last-minute changes of plan led to a second rally in an attempt to make good the blunders in the first one. The first rally seemed sparsely attended — something that was easy to miss on the TV coverage given that the party's communication teams supplied the footage so that the rally would appear in the best possible light.

From the media standpoint, the rallies did their job, generating lots of messages in the social media — something that the parties and candidates did their best to foster (although some did more than others). The rallies were also echoed on TV, occupying all the time the *À Punt* public broadcasting network spent on each party within the campaign section. Nevertheless, it is worth noting the treatment of *Compromís*' rally on the day of the rally and in the following electoral section when by rights the Central Electoral Board' (JEC) norms ruled out such coverage. The length of the report is also noteworthy for it was the longest report on any of the party rallies, as were the excerpts of the speeches given by *Compromís*' leaders (4). Yet the fact is that from this point on, the public TV network

scrupulously followed the JEC regulations. By contrast, the *PSOE* and *Ciudadanos* rallies were not as heavily covered on TV as the respective parties would have liked. In fact, *À Punt* did not give any excerpts from the speeches of the leaders of these two parties from the main rally. Instead, the excerpts given were taken from earlier events. This is somewhat surprising given that rallies are largely held to provide high-impact TV footage of the leader and the party with a view to garnering votes.

It is possible that these parties grasped that there was much more at stake in the social media than on mainstream TV, or that social media was much better for spreading political content. The number of tweets on rallies supports this idea (especially if one looks at the accounts of *Ciudadanos* in the Valencian Region, and of its leader Toni Cantó). These accounts were very active but the same cannot be said of the Twitter accounts of *PSPV-PSOE* and Ximo Puig. In this case, other parties were more participative when it came to this platform. Facebook did not seem to be a key channel, although it must be said that all the parties and their respective leaders used this social network to talk about their rallies. Despite the clear benefits of such tools for political marketing (Bode and Vagra, 2017), research carried out on the Spanish case reveals that most of the leaders in the main parties and their teams still disapprove of the social media. Both tend to be blind to their scope for creativity and communication (López García and Valera Ordaz, 2017). Our study suggests that this is indeed the case.

To end, in answer to Q2, we observed that the mediatisation of rallies is complex and that inter-dependencies between media and politicians suggest a two-way street (Hjarvard, 2016). Thus, on the one hand, the coverage of *Compromís*' rally by *À Punt* TV suggests some freedom when it comes to reporting on the election campaign. In this case, it might be taken as an example of the media's willingness to set the news agenda. This strong 'mediatisation' can also be seen in the fact that parties still plan their rallies in a way that takes media reporting into account. Yet, when they choose the content and staging, they not only

think about TV coverage but more and more about how they will be spread in social networks (where image and video are of key importance).

One should also remember that while the Valencian public TV network's coverage of Compromís' rally broke the rules, from then on it followed JEC guidelines to the letter (these rules set the order in which parties are reported on and how much time is spent on each). Furthermore, the TV network did not balk at saying that Vox's rally was 'full' when we saw with our own eyes that this was not so. On this occasion, the network preferred to toe the 'party line' rather than follow a basic journalistic criterion — namely that of checking the information and telling the truth. From

this standpoint, the party's aims prevailed over those of the medium (here, we can say that it was the party that 'mediatised' the medium rather than the other way round). This is a practice borne out by other studies on mediatisation in Spain over the last few years, where parties continue to control information during election campaigns (Casero Ripollés, *et al.*, 2016; Valera Ordaz, 2015; Casero Ripollés, Izquierdo Castillo and Doménech Fabregat, 2014). Other studies (Martínez Nicolás, Humanes and Saperas, 2014) nevertheless reveal towards growing freedom in the Spanish media when it comes to imparting political information. In the case of public broadcasting corporations, such freedom is vital if these institutions are to properly perform the duties they are charged with.

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Valencian Politicians under the spotlight of the *À Punt* TV network: A study of television coverage of the 2019 regional elections*

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ABSTRACT

Despite repeated failures by the former Valencian television network — *Canal 9* [Channel 9] — to live up to its public broadcasting duties, the station's closure in 2013 still came as a shock. The step by the regional government (then run by the Conservative *Partido Popular* — PP) had a huge public impact, depriving Valencians of their public TV network at a stroke. That is why Valencian society had high hopes when a new public media platform — *Punt Mèdia* — was launched. Among other things, politicians and broadcasters needed to show that a more even-handed, professional approach could be taken to media reporting. The 2019 Regional Elections were a wonderful opportunity to prove this. On the one hand, it was a chance to use new audiovisual methods to better convey political information to citizens. On the other hand, it gave the network and its masters the chance to renounce the shameless political partisanship that had so marred *Canal 9*'s history. This paper looks at the extent to which these goals were attained. It does so by examining *À Punt*'s coverage of the election. Specifically, we focused on political interviews with candidates, and on the electoral debates. Various methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, were used. We found that both the form and depth of news stories were fairly balanced. Nevertheless, the network showed a surprising lack of ambition despite *À Punt*'s stated aspiration to be Valencia's leading TV station.

Keywords: regional elections, Valencian politics, *À Punt*, political interviews, electoral debates, 'infotainment'.

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INTRODUCTION: THE MEDIA AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

À Punt Televisió (public TV network) began regular broadcasting on the 10th of June 2018 after two months of test transmissions. This ended a stage that had begun in 2016 with the creation of *Corporació Valenciana de Mitjans de Comunicació* (CVMC) [Valencian Broadcasting Corporation] under Act 6/2016 of the 15th of July and that continued with the beginning of *Punt Ràdio* broadcasts on the 11th of December 2017. The network's multimedia platform was launched a few days later on the 18th of December under the name *À Punt Mèdia*. The first television broadcasts showed that the Valencian public broadcasting network had finally overcome the legal, employment, technical, and financial hurdles that had hitherto seemed insuperable.

The re-launch of public broadcasting brought to an end the period marked by the sudden, unilateral closure of *Radiotelevisión Valenciana* (RTVV) by the regional PP government in November 2013. The fall-out from that decision left a deep, collective scar. During the period in which there was no regional public broadcaster, most Valencians realised that with the odd exception, they counted for nothing when it came to TV and radio broadcasting. Quite simply, there was no one to tell the story of their successes and failures. It was even harder to find reports in Valencian on the television and radio, despite the tongue being one of the two co-official languages in The Valencian Country and, furthermore, spoken by roughly half of the region's population.

On the one hand, the RTVV's mission included fostering the Valencian audiovisual industry, which went through lean times after the network's closure. Some AV businesses went to the wall. There were several rea-

sons for this. One was that the local audiovisual sector was over-cosseted by the RTVV. Another was the sheer inefficiency of policies for fostering the audiovisual sector, with lots of back-handers and favouritism. Certain firms and professionals (most of them from Madrid) took the lion's share of the work. When the public broadcasting corporation closed, it was not only the 1,600 people working in the network who lost their jobs but also many in ancillary sectors, with an additional 4,000 workers losing virtually their sole source of income overnight. This is without counting the hundreds of students and young professionals who suddenly faced bleak career prospects. Many left the industry for good (Peris Blanes, 2015).

Some have argued that the economic disaster RTVV became (what with the network's gross distortion of news, lack of plurality, and plunging audiences) were all part of a plot to discredit public broadcasting. The story is that there were plans to privatise it or to simply let it sink without trace (Col·lectiu Blasco, 2014; Xambó, 2013; Flors and Climent, 2013). During Spain's economic crisis in Spain, the notion grew — especially in Conservative circles — that public broadcasting was costing a fortune and could be scrapped so that the money could be spent instead on meeting citizens' basic needs. Back then, the discourse of those wishing to silence regional TV stations was that such public broadcasters were spendthrift, racking up huge deficits, and were poorly-managed if not downright corrupt. Such criticisms can still be heard today.

Since the idea of regional communication began to take hold in Spain some four decades ago (De Mora-ga, Garitaonandía and López, 1999), many research studies have been carried out on the subject Marzal and Zallo, 2016; Marzal, Casero and Izquierdo, 2015;

Francés, 2014; Zallo, 2011) calling for regional, county, and municipal radio and television coverage, whether through public broadcasters or through private ones. It is argued that such coverage is a benchmark of a societies' democracy. Such an approach has mainly been adopted in Northern Europe (Marzal and Soler, 2016: 123). From this standpoint, a good public communication service needs to be as highly prized as other planks in the Welfare State, such as Education and Health. Thus, a regional broadcasting system is not a waste of money but rather a social investment that boosts regional wealth.

There are many, diverse reasons why these regional and local broadcasters are prized. The first is that they provide an irreplaceable public service that both mirrors and trumpets social, cultural, linguistic, and institutional reality in Spain's regions, and in so doing, expresses the constitutional organisation of the Spanish State. Such an approach both helps articulate a region and fosters a feeling of belonging which in turn tends to boost both citizens' quality of life and social harmony. Second, it gives an impetus to a region's audiovisual industry and often powers innovation in both content and technology. Regional public audiovisual media have spawned talent and knowledge that has been exported to the rest of Spain and beyond. Furthermore, audiovisual output has given an economic boost to the hinterland it serves, supporting industry and companies in the area. Last but not least, it offers content that differs from producers elsewhere, both in terms of news and entertainment.

In this setting, the launch of *À Punt* raised high hopes in various sectors of Valencian society especially in the political sphere but also in the cultural and economic ones. Yet the launch took place in a fiendishly complex, highly-fragmented context, with 'free-to-air' content and 'pay content' available to all. The increasingly global nature of the industry made it ever harder to compete — a problem that was particularly acute for regional TV stations. The consolidation of OTT (Over The Top) audiovisual consumption platforms broadcasting continually over the Internet makes life tough for the mainstream media. Thus, for example,

Netflix, HBO, and Amazon Prime are transforming the audiovisual consumption habits of a big chunk of the population (Izquierdo-Castillo, 2017). Furthermore, the social media are creating, distributing, and consuming news and entertainment content, especially among young people (Conway *et al.*, 2015).

According to Barlovento Comunicación (which bases its findings on data furnished by Kantar Media), the upshot of all this is that *À Punt* captured 2.1% of screen share during its first full year in which its audience was measured. This was 0.8% more than in the previous year but fell a long way short of forecasts. This was a poor result if one takes programming as a whole. Nevertheless, there were a few bright spots: the daily quiz show *Atrapa'm si pots* ['Catch me if you can'] (4.0% of screen share for the 2019-2020 season); weekend 'docutainment' *A córrer* (4.9% of screen share in the same period); the popular series *L'alqueria blanca* (4.8% of screen share), also a hit during the RTVV period; NTC Migdia [Midday News] (5.9%). Despite this last figure, some programmes occasionally gained high shares at moments when all eyes were on the news (for instance, during the torrential downpours that hit the region, and during the Fallas festivities). One of the criticisms levelled at the network is that it has failed to establish itself as the key source of news for The Valencian Country. From this standpoint, an electoral campaign offered a golden opportunity to boost viewing figures and show Valencian society that the new public broadcasting project is a great deal better than what was offered hitherto both in terms of content and style.

In any event, the low audience figures were scathingly criticised by the political opposition — basically PP and Ciudadanos — which accused the regional network of serving the interests of Valencia's Regional Government led by PSPV-PSOE and Compromís, with the support of Podemos. In fact, the accusation of bias was so strong that these opposition parties — Isabel Bonig, for PP, and especially Toni Cantó for Ciudadanos — often referred to *À Punt* as "TeleCompromís", insinuating that Compromís exercised political control over the TV network's staff and content, as if the situation were

akin to that formerly found in RTVV. Going beyond political views, an audit report drawn up by GFK on the network's news programmes during the first quarter of 2019, the percentages of time given to the various politicians were: President Puig, with 78 appearance and 10.1% of the total — three times more than the Vice-President Mónica Oltra, who only appeared for 3.3% of the time, trailing the time given to PP's Isabel Bonig and Pablo Casado. Compromís chalked up the least speaking time, just a whisker behind Vox's 8.1% of the total. By contrast, PP led in this category with 31.6%. PSPV-PSOE had 30.5%, Unidas Podemos had 14.4% of screen time, and Ciudadanos came last with 14%. These data need to be weighed together with analysis of other political-content television formats.

The relationship between the media and politicians is a complex one. The concept of *mediatisation* (Hepp, Hjarvard and Lundby, 2015; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999) has been used to explain the negotiations carried out among the various social actors for establishing news priorities, taking for granted that — under given circumstances and in certain contexts — the media impose their production priorities, language, and pace on politics (Castelló, 2012). In other cases, it is politicians who pull the media's strings. In Spain, this negotiation follows a systemic dynamic that Hallin and Mancini (2004) term *polarised pluralism*, whereby Southern European media are heavily influenced by political parties. Some studies bear this out, especially in connection with election campaigns (Casero Ripollés *et al.*, 2016; Valera-Ordaz, 2015). During election campaigns, the Central Electoral Board (JEC) stipulates that TV coverage of each political party must be directly proportional to the number of seats each party held in the previous legislature and parliament. This principle runs counter to journalistic criteria. That is why it is worthwhile analysing TV in the run-up to the campaign because this is when any media bias is more easily seen.

It is for these reasons that we consider *À Punt's* TV news coverage of the 2019 Valencian Regional Elections to be of special academic and social interest. Given that the run-up to the campaign has already been tackled

by the aforementioned study, we shall focus on how the political interviews were conducted, and how the debate among the various presidential candidates for the Valencian Regional Government panned out.

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON TELEVISION: BETWEEN INFORMATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

Politics and its manifestations in the public arena are undergoing a deep transformation. Digital technologies (especially the Internet, social media, and mobile devices) have forever changed the way we relate to one another and how we socially organise (Shirky, 2008). Internet, for example, has become a dynamic ecosystem and fertile ground for grassroots participation, in which parties have lost sole control over political action, the media, and information. A radically different political culture is drawing on communitarian practices and collaboration given the enormous scope offered by digitalisation (Sánchez Duarte, 2016). Nevertheless, the new rules of the game remain fluid and it will take time before they become settled (López García and Valera Ordaz, 2017; Vaccari, 2013).

This transitional period of political communication exhibits hybrid features and is much more complex than the system that came before it (Chadwick, 2013). To this are added the changes and processes that have been under way for several decades, such as: (1) the blurring of the bounds between information producers and information consumers; (2) setting equal store by facts and opinions; (3) the confusion between what is public and what is private; (4) the disappearance of the distinction between information and entertainment (Delli Caprini and Williams, 2011; Mazzoleni, 2010). The last of these changes stems from the 'entertainment' approach taken to giving the news — the so-called *hard news* (Langer, 2000) — which involves a lot of showmanship in delivering the news discourse (Casero *et al.*, 2017; Pellisser and Pineda, 2014) — and the growing political content in entertainment programmes — especially in magazine slots and talk shows (Peris Blanes and López-Rico, 2017). This cross

between information and entertainment has given rise to the term *infotainment* (Thussu, 2007; Brants, 1998) and that, in the case of politics, has been called *political infotainment* (Berrocal *et al.*, 2014), *pop politics* (Mazzoleni and Sfaridini, 2009) and more recently, as *politainment* (Berrocal Gonzalo, 2017).

These practices began to appear in the second stage of political communication (Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999) in the mid 1960s, coinciding with the modernisation of election campaigns (Norris, 2000). The clearest changes during this period went hand-in-hand with growing mediatisation (Mazzoleni, 2010). Among other things, there was growing professionalism in campaign organisation and communication, hence the rise of political advisors and ‘spin-doctors’ in the political and electoral marketing field, which became much more sophisticated and reached maturity (Maarek, 2009). At the same time, television became the key tool for conveying and legitimising the political message, in keeping with the importance of image in winning elections. In general terms, the demands and pace of television boosted showmanship and personalisation (Bennet, 2012), fragmenting political information both in and beyond election campaigns. In any event, given the medium’s drama and leisure content, election campaigns naturally lend themselves to treating politics as an exercise in showmanship (Edelman, 1988).

Advertisements are the best-known form of TV propaganda so it is hardly surprising that these have become iconic features of modern election campaigns. Debates among the candidates have also become a key feature in TV coverage of campaigns (Canel, 2006). The fact that image is everything on TV means that news focuses on the candidate, pushing the party into the background. Politics is turned into a clash between leaders in a kind of electoral horse race (Maarek, 2009), with winners and losers and where political information is ‘dumbed down’ for mass audiences. This is why candidates’ messages are simple and brief, on the lines of a military briefing or a sports commentary. Everything comes down to ‘the sound bite’ and raking over candidates’ private lives — sometimes that

often crosses the line into gutter-press sensationalism (Holtz Bacha, 2003). Such an approach is now par for the course in TV coverage of politics. In the third stage of political communication (the one we are currently in), election campaigns have become hyper-mediatised thanks to the digital revolution, which has boosted many of these practices and brought new ones into play.

In any case, ‘infotainment’ is a subject that is hotly debated by the experts. For some authors, these practices lead to a debasement and trivialisation of information, with citizens losing interest in what has become little more than a televised ‘bear garden’ (Langer, 2000). The outcome of such an approach is ever worsening mainstream TV coverage that focuses on the anecdotal and the superficial (Abril, 1997). Here, journalistic principles are thrown to the winds and flagship news programmes sink in the ratings and in the public’s esteem (Redondo and Campos, 2015). In this respect, some authors have wondered whether ‘infotainment’ is a sign that journalism is giving way to economic interests. The ‘commercialisation’ thesis (McChesney, 1999) argues that the mainly economic view taken by the media is to blame for the changing approaches found on TV and radio, and the relentless rise of ‘entertainment’ in all networks’ slots.

For others, the introduction of political content in entertainment, and the incorporation of entertainment in news coverage may ‘empower’ the population (Hartley, 2000). This is because many people who would not otherwise be interested in politics are better informed, share arguments and views, and become aware of how politics affects their daily lives. From this point of view, such content may play a democratising, liberating, and even an inclusive role (Harrington, 2008) given that it opens public debate to new actors and themes, lessening the deep disillusionment felt by some sectors of society (mainly the young and/or less educated). Furthermore, such authors argue that criticism of ‘infotainment’ overlooks the fact that the genre gives journalists a great deal of freedom (Benson, 2005). Indeed, Bolin (2014) argues that we are living in an age of hyper-journalism that has invaded

new fields. Other authors prefer to sit on the fence, recognising the value of combining entertainment and information on the one hand, while arguing the need not to go overboard (León, 2010). The tensions between these approaches are clearly apparent in televised political interviews and election debates.

The political interview on television

TV interviews with politicians are a golden opportunity for viewers to discover political leaders' activities and proposals (Roca Cuberes, 2014). An interview is seemingly a collaborative venture but often the two speakers — interviewer and interviewee — form an asymmetric pair in which control over the interview is fought out between a powerful politician and a journalist hunting for a story or a headline. At this level, the interview becomes an exercise in negotiation, even if it is wrapped up in linguistic niceties (Cortés and Bañón, 1997). Here, a political interview is far from being a spontaneous encounter between journalist and politician. Instead, it is a meeting in which each party has clear, institutional objectives. Politicians are answerable to the general public and defend their deeds and political activities during the interview. The journalist assumes the mantle of a public representative, acting as middle-man. The questions asked by the journalists are supposedly of broad public interest (Bolin, 2014). The journalist's goal is to find out the details of the policies carried out by the politician and the party or government he represents. The interests of the two people in the interview are therefore at odds and it is not unusual to see sparks fly.

TV interviews with politicians were initially popular on private stations and were later taken up by public service broadcasters, given that the content can be broadly construed as being in the public interest (Wieten and Pantti, 2005). Nevertheless, there are differences in approach, depending on who owns the channel, and on criteria regarding balance and neutrality. Accordingly to Montgomery (2008), the classic form taken by a political interview can be described as a “rendering of account”, which is perfectly reflected in the so-called ‘turn system’ (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991). This

practice is based on two basic features of modern journalism: (1) neutrality or ‘neutralism’ as Clayman (1992) would have it; (2) adversarialism (Clayman and Heritage, 2002). Neutrality in interviews is based on precepts that are hard to pin down (Pomerantz, 1984; Heritage and Clayman, 2010). Sometimes, the journalist asks complex, delicate questions in order to drag third parties into the interview. It is possible to tread the fine line between neutrality and adversarialism but sudden interruptions from either side can easily lead to open hostility.

From this standpoint, in both kinds of interviews, companies whether public or private tend to generally adopt neutrality and adversarialism and this guides the way journalists behave. That said one can see a marked tendency to abandon or undermine these rules on commercial channels — something that is not seen on public TV programmes¹ (Roca Cuberes, 2014). In any case, the commercial TV stations also use the formulas, follow-up questions, challenges, preferences and so on that are associated with classic political interviews. Be that as it may, scholars continue to hotly debate the two alternative trends or editorial lines. Various studies highlight the financial aspect of TV political interviews and thus the tendency to put advertisements first and the public interest second. Such programmes have frequent advertising slots and form part of the entertainment output — a format that keeps advertisers happy but which is to the detriment of the public interest and makes it that much harder for audiences to follow the thread of the political argument. By contrast, other writers stress the media's growing freedom, which is also seen in interviews where journalistic interests prevail over political and economic ones (Marchetti, 2005).

The electoral debates

Political debates are becoming a key element in election campaigns and are expected by citizens (Maarek,

1 Translator's note: While this is true of Spanish public broadcasters, it clearly does not apply to some other countries (the UK's BBC has become something of a repeat offender in breaching its Royal Charter in this respect).

2009). It is almost as if such debates have become ritual events that legitimise arguments and candidates (Mazzoleni, 2010). In many cases, these debates have become the high point of the campaign, or at least, the most spectacular, and upon which media and public attention focus. That is why they are so important in shaping public opinion (Peris Blanes *et al.*, 2017), influencing how votes are cast, and in making ‘swing voters’ swing one way or the other (Barreiro, Pereira and García, 2015). Accordingly, election debates are like an arena in which the various political players slug it out like the gladiators of old. These events boil down to building a media agenda, giving voice to citizens concerns, winning over the public, and boosting public interest in politics for the short life of the election campaign (López García *et al.*, 2018; Humanes, 2014).

This is why TV political debates are big media events (Dayan and Katz, 1995) both in terms of audience numbers — with over 60% of screen share (García, 2015) — and in the amount of information they spawn (news, commentaries, analysis that feed other content in press, radio, television, and — increasingly — the social media). The importance of these debates does not solely lie in the TV audience but also in how they trickle down to diverse population segments. They provide a perfect example of how ‘old’ and ‘new’ media metaphorically copulate and replicate, turning the public into both onlookers (voyeurs) and participants (bedfellows), coupling multiple communication platforms — such as a second screen which many use with TV and Twitter (Vaccari, Chadwick and O’Loughlin, 2015).

As Mazzoleni (2010: 203-204) notes, there were precedents for election debates in the first stage of political communication. Yet they only became items of mass consumption during the presidential campaign between Kennedy and Nixon in The United States and this was quite simply because they were the first to be televised. Those debates personalised politics to an unheard of degree. They have been analysed *ad nauseum* from every angle (organisation; stage-setting; different kinds of formats, and so on). The Americans

took a rigid approach, with advisors and ‘spin doctors’ thrashing out every last detail, including pauses, the order of questions, camera movements, and so forth. The European approach was more fluid and followed media canons, such as those applied in French presidential elections. Thus in France, participants can interrupt and answer, there are no fixed times, and the end result is more genuine and immediate but also more unpredictable — something that whets the public’s interest. In those cases where the electoral system does not include a direct choice between two candidates, debates may include several contenders — something that requires rules to ensure that everyone gets a fair crack of the whip.

This is what happened in Spain, which began to hold election debates in 1993, in which the same two candidates (Felipe González for PSOE, José María Aznar for PP) battled it out twice. This kind of debate, held between the two biggest parties, was repeated in 2008 and in 2011. However in 2015, election debates were held in several formats in a wholly new political setting (López García *et al.*, 2018: 783). There was a one-on-one debate between the candidates of the two main parties (Mariano Rajoy for PP, and Pedro Sánchez for PSOE) but there was also a debate among the leaders of the four largest political parties (the ‘classic’ PP and PSOE plus two upstarts, Podemos and Ciudadanos). There was also a debate among the candidates of new parties, including minority ones such as Izquierda Unida, and in regional settings, Esquerra Republicana, and Partido Nacionalista Vasco [PNV, in Basque: Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea — EAJ]. Those taking part in the final election debate were: Pablo Iglesias for Podemos, and Albert Rivera for Ciudadanos. It took place within the framework of the popular *Salvados* TV programme (La Sexta). In the *Salvados* debate, the programme’s presenter, Jordi Évole, took the two candidates to a bar in a working-class area of Barcelona to conduct a more flexible, dynamic kind of debate (Peris Blanes *et al.*, 2017). Since then, there were no more debates between just two candidates. Instead, debates featured four candidates in the June 2016 election, and five candidates in the April and November General

Elections of 2019, this time incorporating Santiago Abascal of Vox. In the last three General Elections (one in 2016 and two in 2019), there were also debates between female candidates to ensure that the fairer sex were also given a political voice.

There were three broad differences between the first and the last debates (López García *et al.*, 2018: 776-777). The first was the sheer growth in the number of broadcasters given the sea change in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), with a plethora of new digital TV stations, and of Internet platforms with a long reach. Second, there was a rise in the number of parties with a chance of forming the next government. Third, there was the diversification of TV formats through which to present the dialectic clash of the candidates, along with the incorporation of infotainment-like approaches. However, some studies (López García *et al.*, 2018) found that election debates in Spain generally act as discussion forums for covering sectoral and public policies — something that contrasts with the trend towards mediatisation in most other political communication contexts and forums. Television can affect the debate through the format chosen and the questions put. The questions are usually agreed with the guests beforehand yet the candidates are the protagonists and these can still give detailed answers if they so choose. One can therefore say that, in the debates — unlike in the highly mediatised activity surrounding them — politicians can still set their own agendas through the preceding negotiations (Couldry and Hepp, 2013).

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

To find out what *À Punt's* coverage of the April 2019 Regional Election was, we examined the political interviews and the election debate. Both are classic genres when it comes to media coverage of election campaigns. We considered that this approach would perfectly complement the study on the network's news coverage of the run-up to the election campaign. The aforementioned study was carried out by an external firm.

With regard to the interviews of political leaders, the degree of combativeness or lack of neutrality is key to determining whether a publically-owned corporation (such as *À Punt*) is acting in accordance with its democratic mandate. Depending on the findings, we can either question or rule out the use of public broadcasting for party political ends. In Spain, the interviewing of politicians must take place within a legal framework for journalism and for the media, both public and private. Nevertheless, one should recall that professional ethics and style manuals only provide guidance and are never legally binding. This means that Spanish television networks are not subject to any restrictions other than those set by the journalists themselves and the nation's legal framework (which in Spain's case, stems from The Constitution). In other words, journalism in Spain is governed by the media.

To this end, we analysed the following interviews of Valencian politicians conducted by *À Punt*. The interviews were with: (a) Ximo Puig, the President of Valencia's Regional Government (PSPV-PSOE candidate); (b) Mónica Oltra, the Vice-President of the Regional Government (Compromís candidate); (c) Isabel Bonig (PPCV candidate); (d) Toni Cantó (Ciudadanos candidate); (e) Rubén Martínez Dalmau (Unidas Podemos candidate). Each of the presidential candidates for the Valencian Regional Government was interviewed on two occasions, one on the programme *L'entrevista*, whose sole purpose is to interview a leader, and another interview on the news programme *NTC Nit*. The dates chosen for the interviews were as follows: Ximo Puig, 22/04/2019 and 04/03/2019; Mónica Oltra, 16/04/2019 and 05/03/2019; Isabel Bonig, 23/04/2019 and 07/03/2019; Toni Cantó, 15/04/2019 and 11/03/2019; Rubén Martínez Dalmau, 12/04/2019 and 27/03/2019.

With regard to the electoral debates, we shall analyse the only debate held with the presidential candidates for the Valencian Regional Government. This debate was held at *À Punt* on the 25th of April — Valencian Parliament Day — a symbolic date because it marked the anniversary of The Battle of Almansa. That battle was decisive in securing a Bourbon victory against the

Hapsburgs in The War of The Spanish Succession. The Bourbon victory meant Felipe V became King of Spain. It also spelt victory for French-style Absolutism, the enactment of the *Decreto de Nueva Planta* [basically, an 18th Century version of an 'Enabling Act']. That decree swept away age-old Valencian rights, autonomy, and self-government, only to replace it with the kind of highly-centralised (and often dictatorial) government that has marked the course of Spanish history over the last three centuries. Our analysis will focus on issues bearing on the debate format and the way it was televised. We also make a comparison with the two debates held by Spanish TV networks for the General Election (TVE, 22nd of April 2019, and Atresmedia, 23rd April 2019). Last but not least, we shall make comparisons with the last electoral debate broadcast by the former public broadcasting network, *Canal 9*, for the 2011 Valencian Regional Election. Those taking part in the debate were the leaders of the political parties with seats in the Valencian Parliament.

Based on the foregoing considerations, we present the following research hypothesis and questions:

- H1: The coverage of the 2019 Regional Election by *À Punt* was conventional, even though the new television network could (had it chosen to) have taken an innovative approach to the run-up to the campaign and the campaign itself.
- C1: How neutral was the regional TV network in its interviews of politicians? Did it do its duty as a public service broadcaster in this respect or was there evidence of bias?
- C2: What electoral debate format did *À Punt* adopt? Were the debates like the ones broadcast by State-wide media such as TVE and Atresmedia? Did *À Punt* innovate compared with its forerunner, *Canal 9*?

As to the methodology used, the ten interviews were announced using the classical studio, presented by one of the network's star journalists. The set and the positioning of the presenter and guests followed similar narrative lines. The number of questions posed varied

slightly between programmes. Both Ximo Puig and Mónica Oltra were asked no fewer than 14 questions on each of the news programmes (A and B). Bonig and Martínez Dalmau were asked 13 questions apiece, and last, Toni Cantó was asked 12 questions in the first programme and 13 in the second one. To grasp the difficulty of each question asked, a 5-point Likert Scale (0-5) was used, in which 5 indicated the hardest question and 0 the easiest. To avoid errors arising from researcher subjectivity, all of the questions (n = 133) were evaluated using two external coders who had not taken part in the initial coding. The result of the inter-coding (*intercoder reliability*) was 80.4%, an acceptable value that exceeds the minimum considered valid for research in the Social Sciences (Neuendorf, 2002). SPSS V21 IBM software was used in the analysis using a qualitative approach that took into account all of the aforementioned elements.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Televised political interviews

Live audiovisual interviews of political leaders take in many internal and external factors. The internal factors are linked to the journalistic discourse on current affairs and editorial policy. The external factors cover such things as the setting, staging, and the audiovisual facilities for the interview. In televised political interviews, there are the principles of courtesy, neutrality, and co-operation in the face of deliberate control over the audiovisual discourse and its narrative elements. The term 'audiovisual courtesy' (Sánchez Castillo, 2018) alludes to a strategy adopted by the presenter in pursuing an audiovisual approach whereby he receives some of the guest's proposals favourably and other unfavourably. This study focuses not only on the semantic content of what the speaker says but also on the practical implications arising from certain audiovisual constructs, especially shots of the speaker, the intensity of the question, and audiovisual narrative resources (questions with split screen, questions with supporting video, the use of text — captions and so on).

Table 1 Difficulty of Questions

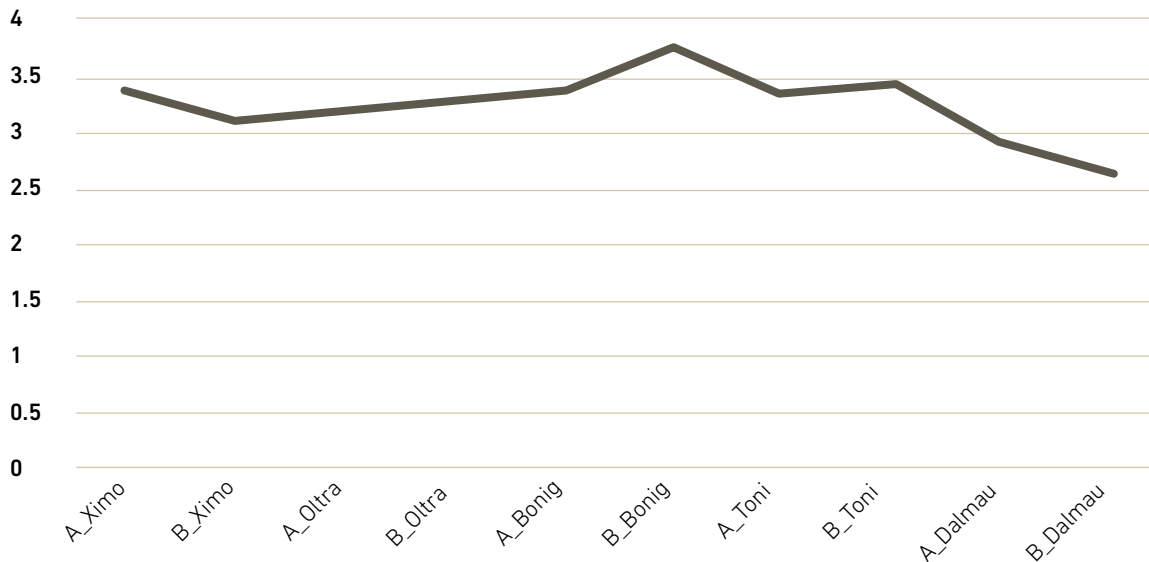
	N	Min.	Màx.	Sum	M	SD
A-Ximo P	14	2	4	47	3.36	.633
B-Ximo P	14	2	4	44	3.14	.663
A-M Oltra	14	2	4	45	3.21	.699
B-M Oltra	14	2	4	46	3.29	.611
A-I Bonig	13	3	4	44	3.38	.506
B-I Bonig	13	3	5	49	3.77	.599
A-Toni C	12	2	4	40	3.33	.651
B-Toni C	13	2	5	44	3.38	.870
A-R.M. Dalmau	13	2	4	38	2.92	.641
B-R.M. Dalmau	13	2	4	34	2.62	.650
Total: 133						

Source: The Authors.

With regard to neutrality, after analysing the questions put to the political leaders, it was clear that there was little difference in the median values (Table 1). While the results themselves show no significant differences, the highest median fell to Isabel Bonig ($M = 3.77$; $SD = .599$), who was asked harder questions with a stronger ideological bias. By contrast, the one with the lowest median was Rubén Martínez Dalmau ($M = 2.62$; $SD = .650$). On the other hand, Toni Cantó, the candidate for Ciudadanos, got a similar median ($M = 3.38$; $SD = .870$), as did the candidate for Compromís, Mónica Oltra ($M = 3.29$; $SD = .611$). Here, one should note that the scores for the two biggest parties — PSPV-PSOE and Partido Popular — were very similar, with barely 0.30 difference in their medians despite a tendency to favour Puig in the ‘B’ interviews. It is worth analysing whether the low score obtained by the Unidas Podemos candidate was due to his lack of experience of government management — a reason why the questions he were asked were less incisive, especially in Interview ‘B’. It is symptomatic that there was a difference of over a point between the ‘B’ interviews of Bonig and Martínez Dalmau. The trend

line in Graph 1 shows that the candidates received very even treatment over the 133 questions asked in the 10 programmes studied. This even-handed treatment applies both to the audiovisual discourse and the narratives arising from the programme. From a statistical standpoint, there is no significant correlation between a candidate and the questions he/she was asked ($r(133) = .43$ $p < .001$).

In addition, one of the core aspects of this study focuses on the scene-setting and conduct of the interviews. The goal was to discover how audiovisual language panned out in the television age. The data we gathered lets us say that *À Punt*'s audiovisual treatment of each of the regional political leaders was well balanced, with the guests being placed in very similar studio settings. The interviews were carried out in the studio, with tight control of the audiovisual discourse and thus the interview videos were more rigid than the campaign videos appearing on the news. Moreover, the programmes did not show any bias in the presentation of their guests. Although the motives behind ‘audiovisual courtesy’ go beyond the

Graph 1 Difficulty of Questions (median values)

Source: The Authors.

scope of this study, there was no reason to think that the narrative approach changed as a function of the candidate's place in the political spectrum ($r(10) = -.29$ $p < .001$). The videos accompanying the campaign were broadcast as news items. This gave more scope for improvisation, especially in the run-up to the campaign when there were fewer strictures on what could be shown. All candidates were interviewed in the same studio settings and there were no significant differences in the resources deployed between one programme and another. The camera shots cued viewers for when the audience should mark the candidate's words. As Nimmo (1995) suggests, the political image projected during a campaign may strengthen, change, or upset the general public's pre-conceived ideas. The data gathered in our study leads us to say that all the candidates used their studio presence to enhance their image with the public.

As far as audience figures went, most of the interviews fell below the network's average viewing figures, with little difference between the programmes. One can highlight the poor audience figures for Oltra's inter-

view, which was held on the 16th of April 2019 at the height of the election campaign. She only chalked up a 1.0% screen share. By contrast, Martínez Dalmau chalked up a 3.3% screen share (59,000 viewers) on the 27th of March. President Puig obtained a 1.9% screen share for his interview of the 4th of March, and 2.2% in the interview of the 22nd of April, just a week before the Regional Election. The figures are not especially relevant, even though it is generally considered an advantage to be interviewed last — particularly when the election is so near. In any event, the audience figures were so low that they were neither representative nor decisive.

À Punt's one and only debate

During the 2019 Regional Election, *À Punt Mèdia* only broadcast one TV debate with the candidates of those parties with seats in the Valencian Parliament (that is: PSPV-PSOE, PPCV, Compromís, Ciudadanos, and Podemos). This is why parties such as Vox and Pacma were left out of the debates. The date chosen to hold this debate was none other than the 25th of April — Valencian Parliament Day.

The debate, as is usual in Spain, was agreed with all the parties featuring in it (on this occasion, there were five). The debate itself was split into five large blocks, covering: (1) The Economy; (2) The Environment and Regional Government; (3) Regional Funding and Model of The State; (4) Social Policies; (5) Education and Research. Each thematic block lasted twenty minutes, with four minutes for each candidate. The candidates opening and closing each block were chosen at random. The candidate opening a block did so with a brief one-minute speech, while the candidate closing the block spoke for just thirty seconds. At the end of the debate, each candidate had a 'golden minute' in which to sum up his message for the general public. It was only during these three brief spells that the rest of the candidates were forbidden to interrupt. At the beginning of the programme, the moderator explained how the network wanted the debate to unfold. In general, the chosen debate format allowed intense discussion among the politicians.

Nevertheless, there were also flaws, such as the candidates being unable to interrupt directly but instead having to ask the moderator for permission to speak. This made the proceedings much less spontaneous and adversarial than one would expect of a TV debate. The rules covering whether one could or could not intervene confused some of the candidates. The rule on asking the moderator for permission to speak was intended to stop a candidate systematically interrupting one or more of his opponents. Yet in practice, there were several points during the debate in which candidates were clueless about whether they could speak with or without the moderator's permission.

Time control was another thorny issue during the debate given that it forced the moderator to constantly cut candidates off just when they were finishing their discourse. The format also forced candidates to respond very briefly to their opponents in 10 – 15 second sound bites. This led to more than a few short, superficial answers to deeper questions (something that has become a hallmark vice in modern political communication). By contrast, the fact that candidates had to ask the moderator if they could take the floor, and

were not obliged to answer their rivals was something they turned to their advantage. While the moderator repeatedly asked candidates to reply when a direct criticism was made, he was not always successful in getting them to do so.

Even with these glitches, the format often fostered a real debate among the five speakers (three men and two women). Yet it was not as lively as modern American or Spanish debates (for instance, the TVE General Election debate on the 22nd of April 2019, and the Atresmedia one on the 23rd of April 2019). Despite the rules and time control over each thematic block, there were more replies and counter-replies in these debates, which made the battle of ideas both more intense and absorbing. On those two networks, the candidates' dialectic thrusts and parries made for a much more attractive programme. That said, some analysts criticised the constant bickering, arguing that it forced the candidates to focus on anecdotal, superficial points.

In any event, the new Valencian public broadcasting corporation and its coverage of the election campaign broke with the kind of debates held by the earlier regional TV network. Thus the format adopted by *À Punt* owed nothing to that used by the old *Canal 9* during its 24-year life. First, the *Canal 9* debates were recorded, relieving the candidates from the stress of a live broadcast. Second, the old network's 'debates' were actually no more than a series of monologues, with the candidate staring at the camera. The old format gave no chance to challenge what he said. Last but not least, the programme format was linear, with no changes of camera shot until the candidate had ended his speech and the moderator gave the floor to another candidate to deliver his monologue.

By contrast with *Canal 9*'s starchy, unimaginative approach, *À Punt*'s format for the Regional Election did much to foster debate and featured a wide range of techniques. Thus there were shots in which one listened to the candidate, wide shots, cuts, close-ups, split screen showing the two candidates, modern graphics, and so on. Taken as a whole, *À Punt*'s pres-

entation was dynamic, with a well modulated pace providing a more complete, suggestive audiovisual tale for the audience. The programme was shot in Studio 2 at the Burjassot Programme Production Centre and was filmed live. It was preceded by a 40-minute programme in which analysts strove to raise audience interest in the debate. The studio was given an *avant-garde*, neutral style in which greys, blues, and white predominated, with the candidates standing behind modern stands. There was no studio audience, in line with the modern Spanish approach to political debates (similar to the French and German models). This differs from the American model in which such debates follow a talk-show pattern (Marín, 2003). The lack of a studio audience made it easier for the candidates to concentrate. A studio audience would have put them under greater pressure, with the risk of them losing the thread.

With regard to impact, *À Punt's* broadcast fostered later news, given that the debate was not seen on TV but was also spread through radio, the Internet, and social media. The TV broadcast chalked up a 4.1% screen (75,000 viewers), which was above the network's average screen share (2.4% at that time), and at some moments reached a 5.4% share (250,000 viewers). That was far less than the media impact of the two debates in the General Election on TVE (43.8%) and Atresmedia (48.7%), with TVE racking up over 9 million viewers and Altresmedia almost 9.5 million throughout Spain. The two networks' audience shares in The Valencian Country were 33.9% and 46.1%, respectively. The gap between the two elections reveals the overlap in the two electoral processes in 2019 — with a General Election and a Regional Election. In this case, there was more local interest in the General Election than in Valencia's regional one. In any case, one should not forget that *À Punt* had to compete with the TV fare served up to Valencian society in the context of a highly competitive media market. One should also bear in mind that just a year after the rebirth of a regional public broadcaster, the TV sets in many Valencian households had not been re-tuned to receive *À Punt*. Even so, the broadcast generated 10,000 tweets, with 1,500 participants, and 26 million

impressions. Furthermore, it was the 'trending topic' in Spain with the hashtag #DebatCortsÀPunt. This mass participation was made possible by the host of re-broadcasters in today's communication landscape. The amplification of messages through new channels gave the debate a much bigger social impact — something that also applies to election debates in Spain and in the wider world.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

À Punt's coverage of the 2019 Regional Election was the first by this public broadcasting network. That coverage was varied and drew on various news and entertainment genres to put over candidates' messages to citizens. Going beyond purely news programmes — whose election campaign coverage is subject to the strict rules of the Central Electoral Board (JEC) — the network also interviewed politicians and held an election debate featuring presidential candidates in the Valencian Regional Election. *À Punt* also invited candidates to attend one of its popular entertainment programmes — *Assumptes Interns* — but we shall consider this in forthcoming studies. With regard to H1, we argue that taken as a whole, *À Punt's* coverage was both conventional and appropriate.

À Punt's coverage was much better than the old *Canal 9* TV station. This is because the latter used a variety of television formats — something that was especially true in the debates. With regard to political bias for or against a given candidate, *À Punt's* coverage was generally balanced. Although there was a hint of bias in interviews with some candidates on news programmes, it was not significant. In any event, it was a great deal more even-handed than the news coverage in the run-up to the campaign, in which PSPV-PSOE and PP (respectively headed by Puig and Bonig) came off better while Compromís came off worse. In that case, the two main parties benefited from the more generous time allocation the broadcaster was forced to give by virtue of the Electoral Act (as noted earlier, such allocation is based *pro rata* on the number of seats each party had in the previous Valencian Parliament).

On the down side, the new network (launched in 2018 and thus the ‘new kid on the TV block’ in both Valencia and Spain) showed little innovation in its choice of news formats for putting over political messages. In this respect, its programmes were very similar to those of other Spanish broadcasters, whether regional or national. *À Punt* took no risks, while other networks considered debates of the kind seen in the *Salvados* series in 2015. Obviously such an initiative requires co-operation from politicians. Here, we have no way of knowing whether Valencian politicians declined more adventurous formats.

Maybe this is one of the reasons why Valencian society was less than enthusiastic about the network’s coverage — something reflected in sparse audience figures in both the *À Punt*’s election interviews and debate. One should not overlook the fact that the network is a new one and that many people have not yet made it part of their regular viewing. On the other hand, it is also true that *À Punt* has struggled to turn the public broadcaster into a trusted source of news for most Valencian citizens, as one can see from its screen share. That said, it was a stroke of bad luck for the network that the Valencian Regional Election coincided with the Spanish General Election for the first time ever. Not surprisingly, the latter hogged the limelight. The impact can be seen in the huge gap between *À Punt*’s audiences and those for national networks. In the latter case, the TVE and Atresmedia debates on the 22nd and 23rd of April racked up 792 000 (33.9% audience share) and a million viewers (46.1% audience share) respectively in The Valencian Country, overshadowing the regional broadcaster’s paltry figures. This clearly shows that Spanish national politics is the priority for Valencian society.

Regarding the political interviews and to answer C1, the programme was seen as serving the general interest and mainly struck a delicate balance between neutralism and adversarialism as behoves a public broadcasting service. This brings it closer to the ideal of a news programme described earlier. This style stresses the highly institutional nature of the interviews and thus more closely reflects the balance struck between

the powers wielded by the three actors involved: the media; politics; society. The journalist or interviewer was presented as a middle-man between the critical citizenry and the public TV broadcasting service (Lauerbach, 2004). Here there is little bias in either the purpose of the questions, the camera shots, or in other production values. The negative bias concerning Bonig or the positive bias concerning Martínez Dalmau is too slight to say that the network favoured one or other political party. Nevertheless, this may change in the future. One might say that the price of neutrality is eternal vigilance. Such interviews are commonplace on other channels, in which politicians tightly control the message they put over to viewers and journalists tend to bite their tongues rather than demand explanations or point out inconsistencies in a candidate’s arguments. In any case, this is a novelty for Valencian public broadcasting, bearing in mind that such personal interviews were very much the exception on *Canal 9*.

In connection with the election debates in to answer C2, this is a very rigid, well established format. *À Punt* chose not to stray from what other regional and national networks do. It is a format in which the politician sets out his arguments virtually unchallenged (López García *et al.*, 2018). The option of a five-way election debate used by the Valencian public TV network was dynamic and direct, fostering a ‘conversation’ among the candidates. All in all, it was a great advance on what *Canal 9* used to churn out. That said, there is still room for improvement if the goal is to turn the event into a true clash between candidates in which proposals and objections are freely discussed, giving the TV audience an idea of each party’s plans for the region. One of the problems that cannot be overcome is the presenter’s control over the time each candidate speaks for. Maybe a running tally of the time each candidate talks might solve this issue. The way the network planned the event made for a more attractive TV debate in terms of image and pace, spinning an audiovisual tale that was more interesting and suggestive for the audience. Even so, a little more willingness to experiment with more daring debate formats would not go amiss.

At the end of the day, we find that *À Punt*, Valencia's new government-owned broadcasting corporation, carried out its public mission to inform citizens on the 2019 Regional Election. It treated political parties and their candidates with neutrality and professionalism. At no point did we find data suggesting a TV station in cahoots with the present government or with *Compromís* in particular — the charge repeatedly levelled by the Opposition. In this respect, *À Punt* constantly negotiated with Valencian politicians in carrying out its reporting duties. While the network made all the decisions on technical TV matters, it let candidates play the leading role in interviews and debates, with

politicians clearly being the ones in the saddle. This ongoing negotiation typifies the great mediatization found in today's advanced societies (Casero Ripollés *et al.*, 2014). Yet all in all, we find that *À Punt* was a little staid in its reporting, making do with reproducing the schemes and formulas used by other State and Regional broadcasters. The result was too much 'showmanship' and a fragmentation of the political discourse because of the 'infotainment' approach taken. This problem was particularly marked during the debate. Given that *À Punt* is a public service broadcaster, it behoves the network to show a little more leadership and innovation in conveying political information to citizens.

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What is There in a ‘Like’? Political Content in Facebook and Instagram in The 2019 Valencian Regional Election*

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few years, social networks such as Facebook and Instagram have become the preferred places for political communication. On the one hand, politicians have incorporated them into their strategy as a channel through which they can share their messages. On the other hand, users have a space where they can take part and show their interest in political issues. This paper examines posts on Facebook and Instagram by the main Valencian political parties and their respective leaders in the election campaign. We analysed the nature of the content and users' 'likes' to reveal the functions and themes of the most popular posts and the use made of visual resources and interaction tools. The results show that the positioning taken by politicians influences the content getting the most 'likes'. While supporters of opposition parties are most pleased by critical messages, followers of pro-government parties prefer messages that focus on management success. At the same time, items focusing on social policies and election campaign issues are those that generate the most 'likes' among the public. Visual aids (such as photographs and videos) and hash tags and links help boost users' approval.

Keywords: political communication, election campaign, Valencian Community, social media, Facebook, Instagram.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, social media have come to play a major role in political communication (Vaccari, 2017; Rúas Araujo and Casero Ripollés, 2018). In this context, many studies take a sceptical view of social networks, arguing that they have not become institutionalised and that they spawn greater complexity in political negotiations (Mancini, 2013). They also argue that digital actions and activities have little impact on traditional political management and decision-making circles (Morozov, 2011; Christensen and Bengtsson, 2011). Nevertheless, other authors point to the communication potential of these platforms, which politicians now often use for communicating with citizens in digital settings (McNair, 2011; Chadwick, 2013; Casero Ripollés *et al.*, 2016). On the one hand, social networks help parties and politicians directly link to the online audience in a direct, familiar manner, dispensing with the mainstream media's 'man-in-the-middle' role (Jenkins, 2006). On the other hand, social media users play a more active part and are no longer mere passive consumers of information. That is because they produce their own information, content, freely give their views, and speak of their interests (Díaz, 2014; Micó and Casero Ripollés, 2014).

Social networks such as Facebook and Instagram have become major players in the political communication field. They are currently the two platforms with the most audience traffic, with over 2,000 million and 1,000 million users a month, respectively (Hootsuite, 2019). Likewise, recent studies show that Spanish leaders and parties now use both networks in their online communication strategies (Abejón *et al.*, 2012; Fenoll and Cano Orón, 2017; Marcos García and Alonso Muñoz, 2017; Selva Ruíz and Caro Castaño, 2017; López

Rabadán and Doménech Fabregat, 2018). Earlier literature on the subject reveals that both platforms help mobilise the electorate, promote parties, and facilitate the strategic presentation of candidates and the forging of stronger links between politicians and citizens (Enli and Skogerbø, 2013; Giansante, 2015; Filimonov *et al.*, 2016). Nevertheless, little is known about how citizens use these social networks given that there are few studies on the subject.

To shed new light on how Facebook and Instagram are used in the political sphere, this study compares the content of posts on Facebook and Instagram by the main parties in The Valencian Country, and by their respective leaders during the 2019 Regional Election. The study also gauges the impact of these posts on the general public. Specifically, the goal was to discover which post content spawned the most 'likes' among users.

The Valencian Regional Election was unusual in that it coincided with the appearance of new political parties and the fragmentation of the vote. This made it impossible for any single party to obtain an absolute majority and govern on its own — a context that is particularly interesting from the political communication standpoint.

FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM AS LEADING SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE POLITICAL COMMUNICATION FIELD

Over the last decade, digital tools have been steadily incorporated in the political field. As a result, parties and politicians have been forced to make their communication strategies dovetail with the Internet

(Kreiss, 2012). Right now, party use of digital resources has become a natural, daily occurrence (Stromer Galley, 2014; Lilleker *et al.*, 2015), and part and parcel of election campaign strategies (Castillejo and Semova, 2012; García *et al.*, 2012).

Since the beginning of its use in political communication, Twitter has been seen as one of the key social networks in the virtual politics field (Jungherr, 2014; Kruikemeier, 2014). This is why many researchers have studied: (1) the politicians' diverse goals on Twitter (Rahat and Sheaffer, 2007; Parmelee and Bichard, 2011; López Meri *et al.*, 2017); (2) the commonest issues on the social network (Zugasti Azagra and Pérez González, 2016; López García, 2016; Alonso Muñoz and Casero Ripollés, 2018); (3) the use of visual resources (Quevedo *et al.*, 2016); (4) interaction (Miquel Segarra *et al.*, 2017).

The large number of users of social networks such as Facebook and Instagram also makes these platforms attractive for politicians. Both platforms are increasingly used by parties and their respective politicians as channels for forging closer links with their voters (Abejón *et al.*, 2012; Fenoll and Cano Orón, 2015; Marcos García and Alonso Muñoz, 2016; Selva Ruíz and Caro Castaño, 2017). Such use was consolidated after the 2015 and 2016 Spanish General Elections (Abejón Mendoza and Mayoral Sánchez, 2017; Quevedo Redondo and Portalés Oliva, 2017).

Studies such as those by Magin *et al.* (2017) show that Facebook is a kind of feedback channel that lets parties strike up conversations with the electorate. This feature, together with this social network's gift for creating and organising communities (Casero Ripollés, 2018) fosters political involvement (Di Bonito, 2014). Likewise, the platform's many applications boost the dissemination of electoral information (Magin *et al.*, 2017) and the promotion of political players (Enli and Skogerbø, 2013), forging stronger links with citizens (Giansante, 2015). Recent studies reveal that the addition of new tools for interaction in 2016 helps users show their emotional reaction to content. This makes Facebook useful for getting a better grasp of the electorate's emotions (Coromina *et al.*, 2018).

Instagram has led a change in the way social networks are used, with visual elements (photos, videos, emoticons) becoming ever more common in users' communication strategies (Svensson and Russmann, 2017).

The incorporation of these tools in communication strategies is driving new ways of personalising content (Enli and Skogerbø, 2013; Bentivegna, 2015; López Rabadán and Doménech Fabregat, 2018). In particular, Instagram's individualisation features let one build a much more spontaneous and human image of a political leader, making it much easier for him or her to forge a personal relationship with users (Selva Ruíz and Caro Castaño, 2017; Viounnikoff-Benet, 2018).

Given social media's huge scope, the main studies on such networks have focused on how politicians exploit these platforms in their communication strategies. Yet while some authors have stressed the important role played here by citizens (Fenoll and Cano Orón, 2017; Coromina *et al.*, 2018), research in this field is still thin on the ground.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AS AN ARENA FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

One of the key features of social networks is the scope for citizens to freely take part in political debate. These digital media turn formerly passive consumers into active users who can create their own content, and express their own views on and interest in political issues (Jenkins 2006; Micó and Casero Ripollés, 2014).

Tools found on these platforms — such as mentions (@), strongly favour new contact channels among users, who can directly answer questions (which may be asked of users fitting a given profile) or hold a conversation (Larsson, 2015). However, earlier studies have shown that limited use is made of this kind of tool in political debates, whether by politicians or citizens themselves (Alonso Muñoz *et al.*, 2016; Marcos García *et al.*, 2017).

Nevertheless, there are other kinds of selective interaction tools that, while they do not foster conversations

among users, do show how users feel about the content (Miquel Segarra, *et al.*, 2017). Here, ‘likes’ appear on both Facebook and Instagram, allowing users to link content published by others and, of course, to say whether they like (or dislike) certain publications (Larsson, 2015; Coromina *et al.*, 2018).

Up until now, studies in this field show that political parties often use visual media — especially photos — (Fenoll and Hassler, 2019) because these are most effective for grabbing users’ attention (Viounnikoff-Benet, 2018). Links are another thing fostering user interaction (Miquel Segarra *et al.*, 2017). That said, we know almost nothing about the kinds of message and content that make the greatest impact on users.

THE 2019 REGIONAL ELECTIONS IN THE VALENCIAN COUNTRY

Studies in Spain on social networks and election campaigns have mainly focused on national elections. By contrast, research on regional, municipal, and European elections is very sparse. Here, one should note a study on the 2009 and 2012 Basque elections (Cebrián Guinovart *et al.*, 2013; Pérez *et al.* 2014); the 2011 and 2015 Madrid elections (Fernández Muñoz and Arceo Vacas, 2015; Marcos García and Alonso Muñoz, 2019), and another on the 2010, 2011, and 2015 Catalan elections (Di Bonito, 2014; López Meri, 2016). In the case of regional elections in The Valencian Country, two notable studies are those by Gamir Ríos (2016) and by López García *et al.* (2016) on Twitter and on the setting of a thematic agenda.

The Valencian Country’s Regional Election was held on the 28th of April 2019. It was unusual in that it coincided with the appearance of new political parties and the fragmentation of the vote. These new parties included Unides Podem and Ciudadanos (which first appeared in the 2015 election) and were joined by the more recent Vox. The large number of parties meant no single one could obtain an absolute majority. The result was a lengthy period of negotiations after the election before a coalition government was finally formed. In

this sense, it was a repeat of what happened after the 2015 Regional Election.

RESEARCH AIM

The aim of this study is to analyse the posts/publications on Facebook and Instagram by the main political parties in The Valencian Country and to discover the features of those garnering the most ‘likes’ among users. Here, we seek to answer the following research questions:

Q1: What functions did the themes covered perform and what visual and interaction resources garnered the most ‘likes’ among the posts/publications by politicians?

Q2: Was role did the following factors play in the number of ‘likes’? — (1) Ideological considerations; (2) The party’s track record (whether long-established or emergent); (3) The party’s position in government or in opposition.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample for this study was extracted from The Valencian Country’s Regional Election held on the 28th of April 2019 and focused on the Facebook and Instagram sites of the six main political parties: Partido Popular (PP); Partido Socialista (PSPV-PSOE); Compromís; Unides Podem; Ciudadanos (Cs); Vox (and their respective candidates: Isabel Bonig, Ximo Puig, Mónica Oltra, Rubén M. Dalmau, Toni Cantó). The Vox candidate, José María Llanos, was not included in the analysis because he had no publications on Facebook and only one on Instagram during the chosen period. The analysis covered the period spanning the fifteen official days of the campaign, the so-called ‘Day of Reflection’ before Voting Day, Voting Day itself and the day following it.

Specifically, the corpus of the study comprises posts on Facebook and Instagram getting more than the

Table 1 Number of posts selected for each party/candidate in each social network

Party / Candidate	Total N° of posts		Average N° of 'likes' (Total n° 'likes' / Total n° posts by party)		N° of posts with 'likes' above the average	
	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
PPCV	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
	66	29	30.33	64	26	12
PSPV-PSOE	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
	61	39	204.88	114	22	17
Compromís	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
	68	51	476.38	636	21	21
Unides Podem	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
	78	36	86.57	109	14	12
Cs	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
	40	20	68.32	110	11	7
Vox	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
	76	35	213.96	591	32	14
Bonig	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
	77	39	67.94	214	21	17
Puig	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
	63	32	170.22	195	15	10
Oltra	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
	49	27	562.53	963	19	7
Dalmau	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
	75	15	162.13	80	28	7
Cantó	FB	IG	FB	IG	FB	IG
		9	225.71	613	11	3
TOTAL by network					220	127
TOTAL posts analysed					347	

Source: The Authors.

average number of ‘likes’ for each of the profiles of the selected political players. We chose the number of post ‘likes’ as the basis for inclusion in our sample bearing in mind that this is a common benchmark in social networks. Furthermore, it is a simple measure and also happens to be the one most used to express interest in those posts that get most users’ attention (Larsson, 2015; Coromina *et al.*, 2018). Studying these messages sheds light on which features and elements typify the posts getting the most ‘likes’. Thus, of 1027 posts shared by the six parties and their respective candidates on Facebook and Instagram during the eighteen days covered by our study, we focused on 347 posts making up 33.78% of the total sample (see Table 1).

The selection of the political parties making up the sample was based on two criteria: (1) a party’s representativeness; (2) a party’s track record. There were six parties that between them accounted for 95.43% of the votes cast. PP, PSPV-PSOE, and Compromís had the longest track records in The Valencian Country. The three upstarts were Unides Podem, Vox, and C’s. Vox’s case is particularly interesting for it had no seats in the Valencian Parliament. The 2019 election allows one to compare the strategies used by traditional parties and leaders with the upstarts on the regional scene.

Tools

To meet our research goal and answer the questions raised, we used a methodology based on quantitative content. This let us conduct a descriptive analysis that was both objective and systematic (Igartua, 2006) in covering the features of the posts that garnered most ‘likes’. Posts in both the social networks were manually analysed by two coders and the inter-coding reliability achieved was 0.98 using Scott’s Pi coefficient.

A special analytical model was drawn up and tailored to the study goal, which was tackled under two broad heads.

The first level covers the function and theme of the messages posted by political players (Table 2).

The second level analyses the visual resources used and their type, context, and key elements. The spotlight is also shone on the interaction tools offered by Facebook and Instagram: mentions, hash tags, and links (Table 3).

Results

Our analysis of the posts selected in this study lets us identify various trends in functions, themes, visual resources, and the parties/politicians’ posts that have generated most ‘likes’ on Facebook and Instagram.

Functions with most ‘likes’ among Facebook and Instagram users

If we focus on the posting function, the data show that the posts getting most ‘likes’ were directly linked to the party or the candidate’s position in the Regional Government. In the case of Opposition politicians (PP, Cs, Vox), the posts that got the most ‘likes’ on Facebook were those critical of political opponents, especially those slating parties and candidates in the government (Table 3). Specifically, the greatest numbers of likes for the PP party/candidates (42.31%) were for Isabel Bonig (38.10%) and Toni Cantó (45.45%). The second greatest number of likes was for Ciudadanos (27.27%) and Vox (18.75%). In Vox’s case, the posts garnering most ‘likes’ were those sharing things on the agenda and information on the various campaign events (25%). In Ciudadanos’ case, they were manifesto promises (45.4%) (Table 4).

However, the pattern was different on Instagram, where users showed diverse interests (Table 4). Almost half the ‘likes’ from Vox followers (42.86%) and PP followers (41.67%) came from posts covering the agenda of campaign events and visits. In Isabel Bonig’s case, the posts spurring most ‘likes’ were those in which the candidate shared her proposals with users.

Different lessons can be learnt from the data on Ciudadanos and its leader, Toni Cantó. Party followers were mainly interested in those posts in which a given person or event was thanked (42.85%) or in which the electorate’s participation was sought, either directly by asking for citizens’ votes, or asking the public to attend campaign events (28.57%). In Cantó’s case,

Table 2 Protocol for analysing functions and themes

Function		Theme	
Agenda	Posts with information covering specific campaign events.	Economy	Posts on jobs, unemployment, wages, public deficit, public spending, debt, the crisis, taxes, entrepreneurship, etc.
Manifiesto or promises	Posts on manifiesto proposals, wishes, and views	Social Policy	Posts on pensions, Health, Education, The Welfare State, social justice, equality, immigration, etc.
Political achievements in government or in opposition	Posts praising the party's and/or leader's achievements	Culture & Sport	Posts on cultural industries (cinema, literature, art, etc.) and sport
Criticism of opponents	Posts explicitly attacking opponents, their manifestos, deeds, and ideology	Science & Technology	Posts on R&D, data infrastructure (optic fibre, ADSL, Wi-Fi), etc.
Media Information	Posts sharing media content featuring the party or leader	Infrastructure	Posts on transport services and infrastructure, such as roads
Interaction	Posts in which the party or leader responds to a user or raises a question for followers	Corruption	Posts on political and/or corporate corruption
Participation	Posts that directly call for a vote, call for donations and the mobilisation of volunteers	Democratic Renewal	Posts that cover the need for democratic renewal or to change certain things or Spain's Election Act; messages on Francoism, 'historic memory' defence of The Spanish Constitution, The Rule of Law, and The Separation of Powers
Community ; values/ ideology	Posts that strengthen the party and/or leader's values and ideology. Appeal to emotions to create an image of unity and to approach users who identify with said values.	Political tactics and strategy	Posts focusing on politicians' goals in terms of building a certain kind of government or on the scope for political pacts with other parties to form a government
Community: personal life/ backstage	Posts in which parties or leaders show a more human, personal attitude. Sharing private life (leisure pursuits, hobbies, sport, etc.).	Voting and election results	Posts focusing on voting, election results, polls and surveys.

Function		Theme	
Community: fun	Posts focusing on user fun.	Regional Model of the Spanish State	Posts on the Spanish State's regional organisation.
Humour	Posts sharing jokes, memes, etc.	Terrorism	Posts on terrorism.
Courtesy messages, protocol	Posts covering thanks, acknowledgments, condolences, etc.	Personal subjects	Posts covering politicians' personal lives.
Others	Posts that do not fall under any of the foregoing categories.	Campaign organisation	Posts relating how various campaign events (such as rallies, visits, gatherings, etc.) are organised.
		Relationship with the media	Posts sharing information on politicians' appearances in the media.
		No theme	Posts comprising emoticons or with few words that do not cover any of the themes listed and that it is hard to guess what they are about.
		Foreign Policy	Posts on the EU and other parts of the world.
		Political Propaganda	Posts similar to the campaign slogans.
		The Environment	Posts on pollution, protecting fauna and flora, global warming.
		Others	Posts that do not fall under any of the foregoing categories.

Source: The Authors.

Table 3 Protocol for analysing visual resources

Visual media		
Type	Photo	
	Selfie	
	Mash-up	
	Meme or sketch	
	Video	
	GIF	
	Poster	
	Graphic	
Context	Personal	Family: with friends and/or family.
		Leisure: engaging in leisure activities.
		Backstage: Backstage pictures of the campaign.
	Electoral	Rally: Leader and/or other politicians at a rally.
		Official visit: Leader and/or other politicians during an official visit.
		Debate: Leader and/or other politicians during a campaign debate.
		TV Spot: Pictures of campaign spots.
		Voting: Leader and/or politicians casting their votes.
	Media	Interview: Leader and/or other politicians giving an interview.
		Press Conference: Leader and/or other politicians giving a Press Conference.
		In situ: Leader and/or other politicians attending to the media.
	Protagonist	Leader.
Leader and members of the party.		
Leader and members of other parties.		
Leader before the public (e.g. at a rally).		
Leader with citizens (e.g. posing with them, shaking hands, and so on).		
Leader and journalists/the media.		
Leader and non-political celebrities (sportsmen, musicians, writers, etc.).		
Leader and party staff (Press Director, volunteers etc.).		
Leader, friends and family.		
Party politicians other than the leader.		
Other party politicians with citizens.		
Politicians from other political parties with journalists/the media.		
Politicians from other political parties and non-political celebrities.		
Politicians from other political parties with party staff members.		
No people shown (landscapes, objects, etc.).		

Source: The Authors.

Table 4 Functions of Facebook posts (in %)

Function	PPCV	Bonig	PSPV	Puig	Compr.	Oltra	Podem	Dalmau	Cs	Cantó	Vox
Agenda	7.69	-	31.82	6.67	4.76	21.05	-	10.71	-	-	25
Manifesto or promises	11.54	9.52	13.64	26.7	9.52	21.05	7.14	3.57	45.4	-	12.5
Political achievements in government/opposition	15.38	9.52	18.18	20	4.76	15.79	7.14	3.57	9.09	-	-
Criticisms of opponents	42.31	38.10	4.55	13.3	28.57	10.53	-	10.71	27.3	45.45	18.7
Media information	11.54	9.52	-	-	-	-	7.14	-	-	-	6.25
Interaction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Participation	7.69	9.52	13.64	20	-	15.79	21.43	32.14	9.09	-	9.37
Community: values/ideology	-	9.52	9.09	6.67	38.10	15.79	42.86	10.71	-	9.09	6.25
Community: personal life and backstage	-	4.76	-	-	-	-	7.14	7.14	-	9.09	3.12
Community: Fun	-	-	-	-	4.76	-	-	-	-	-	3.12
Humour	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.12
Courtesy messages/protocol	3.85	9.52	4.55	6.67	9.52	-	7.14	21.43	-	27.27	6.25
Others	-	-	4.55	-	-	-	-	-	9.09	9.09	6.25

Source: The Authors.

users also gave many likes to those posts whose main purpose was to spur participation or to give thanks, as well as those showing aspects of the candidate's personal life or backstage glimpses of the campaign (33.33% in all cases) (Table 5).

Thus while Instagram followers of PP, Vox, and Bonig were mainly interested in matters bearing on the course of the election campaign (such as agenda or electoral programme), followers of Ciudadanos and Cantó were more strongly attracted by content whose purpose was to forge a stronger, closer relationship with users.

When it comes to the parties in Government, the data show that there are no significant differences between users' reactions on the two social networks. The participation function spurred most 'likes' on both platforms when it came to parties and leaders. The only exception was Compromís' Facebook page (Table 4), where followers did not give any likes for contents that made use of this participation function.

Another of the functions chalking up most 'likes' in the case of parties/candidates in government concerned 'community values/ideology'. These are posts that

Table 5 Functions of posts on Instagram (in %)

Function	PPCV	Bonig	PSPV	Puig	Compr.	Oltra	Podem	Dalmau	Cs	Cantó	Vox
Agenda	41.67	17.65	17.65	20	9.52	-	25	42.86	-	-	42.9
Manifiesto or promises	25	52.94	11.76	30	28.57	-	8.33	14.29	-	-	7.14
Political achievements in government/ opposition	8.33	5.88	5.88	10	9.52	14.29	-	-	14.3	-	-
Criticisms of opponents	16.67	5.88	-	-	9.52	-	8.33	-	-	-	14.3
Media information	-	-	5.88	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Interaction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Participation	-	5.88	23.53	20	19.05	57.14	16.67	28.57	28.6	33.33	14.3
Community: values/ideology	8.33	11.76	35.29	10	14.29	14.29	16.67	-	14.3	-	14.3
Community: personal life and backstage	-	-	-	-	-	14.29	-	-	-	33.33	-
Community: Fun	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Humour	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Courtesy messages/protocol	-	-	-	10	-	-	16.67	-	42.9	33.33	-
Others	-	-	-	-	4.76	-	8.33	14.29	-	-	7.14

Source: The Authors.

praise and boost the party's ideas and positioning with a view to making followers identify more closely with the political project. This function is especially relevant when this kind of post is used to convey ideas and collective beliefs to create a community of followers who are loyal to the party's values. In particular, this function was the one that got most likes on Facebook for Compromís (38.10%) and Unides Podem (42.86%), and on Instagram, for PSPV-PSOE (35.19%).

The 'Agenda' and 'Manifiesto and promises' functions (Tables 4 and 5) get a similar number of 'likes'

as 'Community values/ideology'. This shows that while followers are interested in posts in which parties/candidates seek to get closer to voters, they also give many 'likes' to posts that bear directly on the campaign such as events or the electoral programme. Both functions are equally common among parties and leaders in the government. Nevertheless, one should note that in Puig's case, his followers on Facebook (26.7%) and Instagram (30%) mainly reacted to posts by the Valencian Regional Government's President. In those posts, he shared his proposals for a 'second term' were he to be re-elected.

In relation to this last datum, one should note that the posts getting most ‘likes’ in the case of PSPV-PSOE (18.18%), Compromís (15.79%), and Mónica Oltra (15.79%),

on Facebook focused on the achievement of these parties and their leaders (Tables 4 and 5). Followers of Government parties were more interested in posts highlighting the measures taken and successes racked up in the previous legislature — something that obviously contrasted with followers of Opposition parties.

Themes getting most ‘likes’ among Facebook and Instagram users

With regard to themes, the data reveal that the kinds of posts getting the most likes followed the same pattern for both Facebook and Instagram users. Here, most of the ‘likes’ fell under just three heads: election results; social policy; campaign organisation and workings. In some cases, there were various factors at work in influencing these choices.

First, posts focusing on election results were those that got most ‘likes’ among followers of all the politicians with the exceptions of PP and Isabel Bonig. Maybe this should not come as a surprise, bearing in mind the party lost over 150,000 votes in the election and the number of seats it held in the Valencia Parliament plunged from 31 (2015 election) to 19 (2019). Looking at the differences among the users of Facebook and Instagram, the electoral results theme strongly influenced the Facebook followers of Compromís (33.33%), Unides Podem (21.43%), Vox (15.62%), and Dalmau (17.86%) and Cantó (18.18%) (Table 5). On Instagram, the same theme strongly influenced followers of candidates for Compromís (42.86%), PSPV-PSOE (35.29%), Ciudadanos (28.6%), Oltra (57.14%) and Puig (30%) but was the second most important reason for giving ‘likes’ for followers of Unides Podem (33.33%) and Dalmau (28.57%) (Table 6).

The theme getting the second highest number of ‘likes’ was ‘Social Policy’, which was mainly found in traditional parties and leaders’ posts. It was noteworthy that both the Facebook and Instagram followers of

PSPV-PSOE and of their candidate (and as was also the case with followers of Bonig (PP)) mainly ‘liked’ posts on this theme. Yet the use made of these posts differed between the two parties. In the case of posts by PSPV-PSOE and Puig, social issues were given a positive slant, with the focus on the government’s political achievements. In Bonig’s case, many of the candidate’s posts criticised both the Government’s failure to take action and the failure of those measures that it did take (Figure 1). In third place came the number of

Figure 1 Example of posts on Social Policy



Source: Facebook.

‘likes’ for posts on the campaign organisation, which was directly conditioned by the collective-individual axis. Not surprisingly, this was more marked in the case of the party posts. Specifically, in the party posts on Instagram by the PP (58.33%), Vox (42.86%) and Unides Podem (41.67%), almost half of the ‘likes’ were on posts covering the organisation of the various electoral events, drawing up candidate lists, and other campaign-related aspects. On Facebook, there were fewer posts on the theme than in Instagram, although here one should highlight PSPV-PSOE (36.36%), Vox (28.12%) and Compromís (21.05%). With regard to leaders, only Dalmau’s posts on Instagram elicited more reaction from followers (42.86%).

Table 6 Post themes in Facebook (in %)

Function	PPCV	Bonig	PSPV	Puig	Com.	Oltra	Pod.	Dalmau	Cs	Cantó	Vox
Economy	7.69	14.29	4.55	-	-	15.79	-	10.71	9.09	-	-
Political & Social	23.08	23.81	13.64	26.67	19.05	21.05	-	7.14	36.4	-	9.375
Culture & Sport	3.85	-	-	6.67	-	-	-	-	-	9.09	3.125
Science & Technology	3.85	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.09	-	-
Infrastructure	-	-	4.55	6.67	4.76	-	-	-	-	-	-
Corruption	15.38	-	-	-	4.76	5.26	-	3.57	9.09	-	3.125
Democratic Renewal	7.69	14.29	4.55	26.67	4.76	10.53	64.29	21.43	-	9.09	-
Political tactics and strategy	3.85	14.29	13.64	13.33	4.76	15.79	-	10.71	18.2	9.09	-
Voting and election results	-	14.29	13.64	13.33	33.33	10.53	21.43	17.86	-	18.18	15.62
Spain's Regional Model	-	-	-	-	4.76	-	7.14	-	-	27.27	3.12
Terrorism	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.09	3.12
Personal themes	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.14	7.14	-	9.09	6.25
Campaign Organisation	19.23	4.76	36.36	6.67	4.76	21.05	-	14.29	9.09	9.09	28.12
Media Relations	15.38	4.76	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.12
No theme	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.37
Foreign Affairs	-	4.76	-	-	4.76	-	-	-	-	-	-
Political Propaganda	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Environment	-	4.76	9.09	-	14.29	-	-	-	9.09	-	12.5
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.12

Source: The Authors.

Table 7 Post themes on Instagram (in %)

Theme	PPCV	Bonig	PSPV	Puig	Compr	Oltra	Podem	Dalmau	Cs	Cantó	Vox
Economy	-	5.88	-	-	-	-	8.33	14.29	-	-	-
Social Policy	8.33	29.41	29.41	30	4.76	14.29	-	-	14.3	-	7.14
Sport & Culture	16.67	5.88	5.88	10	-	-	-	-	-	33.33	-
Science & Technology	8.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Infrastructure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Corruption	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Democratic Renewal	-	-	5.88	-	23.81	-	-	-	14.3	-	-
Political Tactics & Strategy	-	5.88	-	10	9.52	-	8.33	-	14.3	-	7.14
Voting & Election Results	8.33	11.76	35.29	30	42.86	57.14	33.33	28.57	28.6	66.67	7.14
Regional Model of The State	-	-	5.88	-	4.76	-	8.33	-	-	-	-
Terrorism	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Personal themes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14.3	-	-
Campaign organisation	58.33	11.76	17.65	10	4.76	-	41.67	42.86	-	-	42.86
Relationships with the media	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No subject	-	17.65	-	-	-	28.57	-	14.29	-	-	14.29
Foreign Affairs	-	-	-	-	4.76	-	-	-	14.3	-	-
Political propaganda	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14.3	-	-
The Environment	-	11.76	-	-	4.76	-	-	-	-	-	12.5
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.12

Source: The Authors.

When it comes to the general pattern for post themes garnering the most 'likes', one should also note that Unides Podem and Cantó on Facebook are the only cases where followers showed keen interest in subjects of 'Democratic Renewal' (64.29%) and 'Spanish State's Regional Model' (27.27%), respectively. These are posts that on the one hand argue the need for a change in Spain's current political system, and on the other, the desirability of a more federal organisation of the State. Above all, these posts criticise the current deadlock surrounding the issue of Catalan independence (Table 6). As both an emerging political party and emerging leader, both posed these issues as a way of distinguishing themselves from other political parties and politicians. This is why Unides Podem was strongly attracted to these themes.

Visual media with most 'likes' among Facebook and Instagram users

Ever since social networks began to be used for political communication, they have proven to be powerful tools for disseminating pictures (Russmann and Svensson, 2017). Instagram's approach forces all posters to use images in their posts, whether stills or videos. In Facebook's case, posters do not have to use images if they do not want to. Here, one should note that users of Facebook were particularly appreciative of posts that used pictures. With the exceptions of Ciudadanos (18.18%), Vox (31.25%), and PP (34.61%), over half of all the posts getting the most 'likes' contained a photo, video, or other visual element (Table 8).

These data reveal that the reactions of Facebook users were shaped by the collective-individual axis and by the position that the political party and the leader held in Government. On the one hand, the followers of the Government parties were the ones who reacted most to posts containing visual media. On the other hand, the photos and videos used by Opposition leaders were the ones arousing the greatest interest among followers. Here, one should note that almost all the posts getting the most 'likes' in the cases of Cantó (100%) and Bonig (90.47%) were ones containing images. This revealed these two candidates' preference for visual media in forging

links with their supporters and for building their political leadership.

Table 8 Posts with the most 'likes' containing visual media in Facebook

PSPV-PSOE	81.81 %	Puig	53.33 %
Compromís	90.47 %	Oltra	68.42 %
Unides Podem	92.85 %	Dalmau	64.38 %
PP	34.61 %	Bonig	90.47 %
Cs	18.18 %	Cantó	100 %
Vox	31.25 %		

Source: The Authors.

On the kinds of visual media found in posts with the most 'likes', the data reveal that photos are the preferred element on Instagram while video is what grabs most attention among Facebook users. In the latter social network, the only exceptions to the general preference for video are found among followers of PP, Vox and Ximo Puig, where posts containing photos got the best response (Table 9). Users on both platforms showed no interest whatsoever in selfies, GIFs, memes, and photo-montages. Only in the case of Compromís' Facebook page (21.05%) and Instagram's Vox page (21.43%) did posters featuring pictures and explanatory text elicit any interest from users (Table 9).

With regard to kinds of visual media, photos and videos showing candidates or other members of the party giving a rally speech were those that aroused most interest among followers in one or other of the social networks. This was particularly so in the case of parties, in which such images were used in roughly 50% of the posts getting most 'likes' (Table 10). The only exceptions to this rule were Compromís (10.53% in Facebook and 28.57% in Instagram) and Unides Podem (23.08% in Facebook), whose followers were also interested in visual content showing candidates or other party members in a debate or casting their votes at polling stations (Table 10). In the case of leaders, the 'likes' for pictures of rallies

Table 9 Kinds of visual media generating most 'likes' on Facebook and Instagram (in %)

Party / Candidate	Social network	Photo	Selfie	Mash-up	Meme	Video	GIF	Poster	Screen	Graphic
PSPV-PSOE	FB	33.33	-	-	-	50	-	16.67	-	-
	IG	58.82	-	-	-	35.29	-	-	-	5.88
Compromís	FB	21.05	-	-	5.26	42.11	-	21.05	5.26	5.26
	IG	38.10	-	4.76	-	33.33	-	4.76	4.76	14.29
Unides Podem	FB	84.61	-	-	-	-	-	7.69	-	7.69
	IG	75	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	-
PP	FB	66.67	-	-	11.11	22.22	-	-	-	-
	IG	91.67	-	-	-	8.33	-	-	-	-
Ciudadanos	FB	-	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	-
	IG	71.43	-	-	-	14.29	-	-	-	-
Vox	FB	60	-	-	10	20	-	10	-	-
	IG	64.29	-	7.14	-	7.14	-	21.43	-	-
Puig	FB	75	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	-
	IG	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Oltra	FB	-	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	-
	IG	71.43	-	-	-	28.57	-	-	-	-
Dalmau	FB	33.33	-	5.55	-	44.44	-	11.11	-	5.55
	IG	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bonig	FB	36.84	-	-	-	52.63	-	10.52	-	-
	IG	76.47	-	-	-	23.53	-	-	-	-

Source: The Authors.

were especially numerous on the social network pages for Bonig and Puig (Table 10). In the case of Oltra, Dalmau, and Cantó, such pictures proved less popular.

Visual media with personal content aroused little interest in users on both social networks. The few reactions to such videos and photos were mainly limited to followers of Unides Podem, Ciudadanos, Dalmau, Cantó, and Oltra. The same was true of the visual content of the posts, which mainly focused on leaders sharing their pastimes or backstage insights into the campaign. Only in Dalmau's case did some

users react to posts in which he appeared together with his family (Figure 2). One can therefore say that that leaders and followers are just beginning to consider content in which politicians share their personal lives so as to forge stronger, warmer links with voters.

The protagonist is another key aspect of visual content. In all the posts studied, followers' showed greatest interest in three kinds of photos/videos, depending on their protagonists: (1) those showing only the regional leader; (2) those showing the regional leader together with other party members; (3) those showing

Table 10 Context of the visual media generating most 'likes' on Facebook and Instagram (in %)

Party / Candidate	RRSS	Personal			Electoral				Media-based			Other	
		Fam.	Fun	Back-stage	Rally	Visit	Debate	TV ad.	Voting	Interview	Press Conf.		In situ
PSPV-PSOE	FB	-	-	-	55.56	-	5.56	16.8	16.8	-	-	-	5.56
	IG	-	-	-	47.06	5.88	-	23.5	5.88	-	5.88	5.88	5.88
Compromís	FB	-	-	-	10.53	-	26.32	-	26.32	5.26	10.53	-	21.05
	IG	-	-	-	28.57	-	-	4.76	9.52	-	-	4.76	52.38
Unides Podem	FB	-	7.69	-	23.08	-	23.08	15.4	23.08	-	7.69	-	-
	IG	-	-	-	41.67	-	16.67	-	33.33	-	-	-	8.33
PP	FB	-	-	-	44.44	22.22	11.11	11.1	11.11	-	-	-	-
	IG	-	-	-	66.67	33.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ciudadanos	FB	-	-	-	-	-	50	50	-	-	-	-	-
	IG	-	14.3	-	42.86	14.29	14.29	-	14.29	-	-	-	-
Vox	FB	-	-	-	60	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	30
	IG	-	-	-	42.86	-	-	-	7.14	-	-	-	50
Puig	FB	-	-	-	50	12.5	12.5	-	25	-	-	-	-
	IG	-	-	-	30	10	-	-	20	10	-	-	30
Oltra	FB	-	-	-	38.46	-	38.46	7.69	7.69	-	-	-	7.69
	IG	-	-	28.57	-	-	14.29	28.6	-	-	-	-	14.29
Dalmau	FB	5.55	5.55	5.55	22.22	11.11	22.22	-	16.66	-	-	-	11.11
	IG	-	-	-	28.57	28.57	-	-	28.57	14.29	-	-	-
Bonig	FB	-	-	-	36.84	21.05	15.78	10.5	-	-	-	10.52	5.26
	IG	-	-	-	52.82	11.76	17.65	5.88	-	-	-	-	5.88
Cantó	FB	-	-	9.09	-	-	18.18	-	18.18	18.18	-	-	36.36
	IG	-	33.3	-	-	-	-	-	66.67	-	-	-	-

Source: The Authors.

the national leader, whether alone or accompanied by the regional leader. The number of 'likes' received in each case depended on sundry factors.

First, the visual media used in posts showing only the regional leader had an impact on their leadership

status, whatever their position in the government, their track record or ideology. Here, one should note the strong interest shown by Instagram followers of Oltra (42.86%) and Cantó (66.67%) — roughly half the posts presented the two politicians as protagonists. Indeed, these two cases (and again for Oltra on

Figure 2 Examples of personal publications

Source: Instagram and Facebook.

Facebook) are the only ones in which the pictures of regional leaders aroused greater interest among users than pictures in which they were accompanied by other party members or by the national leader (Figure 3).

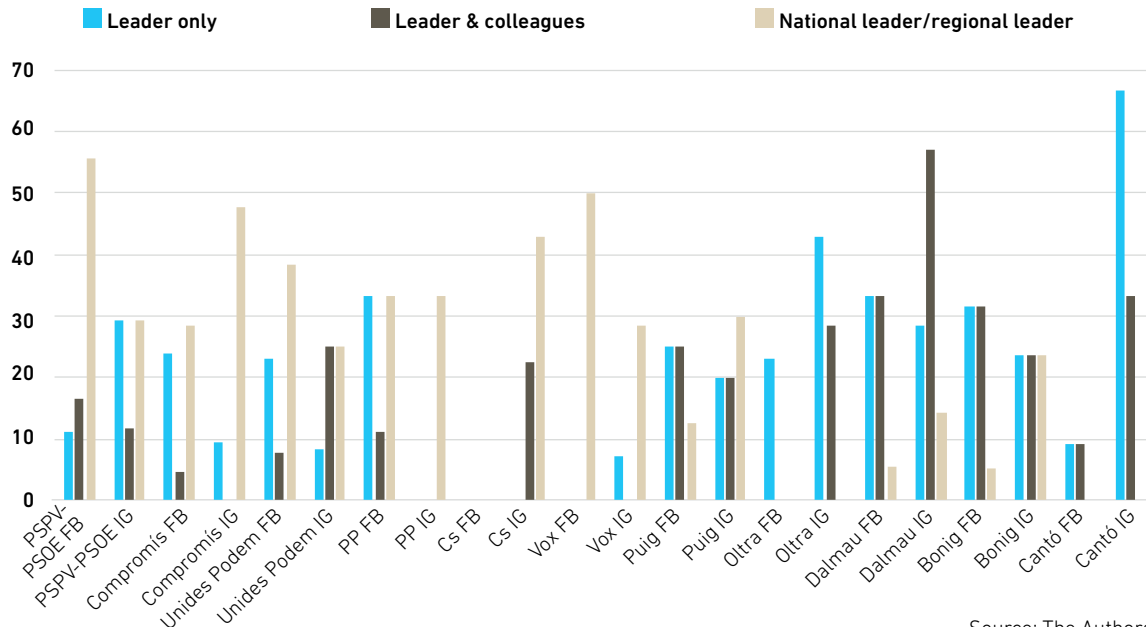
With regard to the impact of social media showing regional leaders being accompanied by other members of the party, once again there was a greater impact on candidate profiles (Figure 3). Dalmau's case stood out, where this kind of photo/video got twice as many 'likes' as those in which he only appeared as regional candidate (57.14% versus 28.57%). The data showed that followers of Unides Podem reacted strongly to videos portraying a united party rather than just the leader on his own.

Last, visual content protagonised by national leaders on their own or accompanied by regional leaders boosted party profiles (Figure 3). The use of such content was striking in the case of traditional parties such as PSPV-PSOE (55.55% in Facebook) and Compromís (47.62% in Instagram), as well as in emerging parties such as Cs (42.86% in Instagram) and Vox (50% in Facebook). With regard to leaders, it was only in Puig's Instagram page that such content aroused much interest among users (30%) (Figure 3). These data show that while followers of regional leaders reacted more favourably when the pictures/videos showed the leader as the focus, they were still more attracted by the national candidates, revealing the influential, central role played by the latter.

Interaction resources getting the most likes among Facebook and Instagram users

Both Facebook and Instagram offer diverse ways for fostering two-way communication. The best-known are mentions, hash tags, and links. These foster interaction and forge links among users. Apart from driving information-sharing, they also broaden information on a given theme or issue. Although they are both social networks, the data suggest that the interest aroused by politicians' posts varies between the two platforms.

Figure 3 Posts with the most 'likes' depending on the visual media protagonist



Source: The Authors.

Thus posts including one or more mentions did not correlate with getting 'likes' since they hardly grabbed users attention. The only exception was in Toni Cantó's case, in which 66.67% of posts including this feature had led to a significant number of user 'likes'.

By contrast, the hash tag feature was generally popular with users. On Facebook, this feature was least popular on the Ciudadanos (9.09%), Cantó (9.09%), Compromís (14.29%) and Dalmau (14.29%) sites. For all politicians, user reaction to posts containing hash tags was significantly higher than ones without them. It was especially marked in the cases of Unides Podem, Cs, and PP Instagram accounts, where this feature appeared in every one of the posts that most grabbed users' attention (Table 11).

Last but not least, the use of links by parties and candidates also generated a fair number of 'likes'

among the public (albeit to a lesser extent than was the case for hash tags). With the exception of Unides Podem on Instagram (7.15%), all of the posts on this social network that used links got a percentage of 'likes' that ranged between 32% and 69% (Table 11). This shows that users took to the link feature.

When it came to the nature of the links, most of them linked to media web pages (independently of the politician covered). All of the links posted by Cs, PP, Unides Podem, Bonig, and Dalmau took users to the web pages of newspapers, TV and radio stations, and news agencies whose content bore directly on the party, the candidate or some other party member. This percentage was lower in the case of Compromís (42.85%), PSPV-PSOE (42.85%), Vox (77.27%), Puig (85.71%), and Oltra (84.74%). In these cases, apart from media links there were also links that took users to one or more of the following: (1) other party social networks; (2) the networks of other members of the

Table 11 Interactive tools in posts with the most 'likes' on Facebook and Instagram

Party/ Candidate	Social net-work	Mention		Hash tag		Link	
		Sí	No	Sí	No	Sí	No
PSPV-PSOE	FB	9.09	90.91	27.27	72.73	31.82	68.18
	IG	35.29	64.70	83.35	17.64	-	-
Compromís	FB	9.52	90.48	14.29	85.71	33.33	66.67
	IG	28.57	71.42	90.47	9.52	19.05	80.95
Unides Podem	FB	7.14	92.86	28.57	71.43	7.15	92.87
	IG	33.33	66.67	100	-	-	100
PP	FB	15.38	84.62	46.15	53.85	69.23	30.77
	IG	33.33	66.67	100	-	-	100
Ciudadanos	FB	18.18	81.82	9.09	90.91	81.82	18.18
	IG	18.57	71.43	100	-	-	100
Vox	FB	12.50	87.50	37.50	62.50	68.75	31.25
	IG	28.57	71.43	85.71	14.29	-	100
Puig	FB	13.33	86.67	40	60	46.67	53.33
	IG	20	80	60	40	-	100
Oltra	FB	10.53	89.47	15.79	84.21	36.84	63.18
	IG	28.57	71.43	42.86	57.14	-	100
Dalmau	FB	3.57	93.43	14.29	85.71	35.71	64.29
	IG	14.29	85.71	54.14	42.86	-	100
Bonig	FB	19.05	80.95	57.14	42.86	-	100
	IG	23.53	76.47	70.59	29.41	-	100
Cantó	FB	18.18	81.82	9.09	90.91	-	100
	IG	66.67	33.33	33.33	66.67	-	100

Source: The Authors.

party, as in the cases of Compromís, Vox, PSPV-PSOE, Puig; (3) the party's web pages, as in Oltra's case. These data show the great store users still set by traditional media, which continue to play a key political communication role during election campaigns, even in today's digital setting. Thus, although users now use social networks to get information and to spread their views, they still have a strong interest in the content put out by newspapers, television and radio stations.

CONCLUSIONS

The study has four major findings that shed light on which items in politicians' posts elicit the most likes on Facebook and Instagram during an election campaign.

The first finding covers the answer to RQ1. The data showed that the posts by parties and leaders getting the most likes on both social networking platforms

were generally those sharing information on the agenda and on manifesto proposals. In keeping with earlier findings in the literature, this indicates that politicians commonly use social networks to spread electoral information (Magin *et al.*, 2017; López Meri *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, users showed great interest in this kind of content.

In answer to RQ2, the results indicate that the position occupied by the party and the leader in Government strongly determined the number of 'likes' given. In the case of Opposition politicians, followers reacted strongly to posts criticising or attacking opponents, especially those in Government. By 'liking' these posts, users reaffirmed their discontent over the Regional Government's measures and management. By contrast, followers of Government parties 'liked' posts praising the measures and the political successes racked up during the legislature rather than those attacking political opponents. Thus citizens use social networks to support the parties and leaders they follow. They express this support through 'likes' (among other ways), helping to spread the message. Similarly, participation is another function that gets a lot of 'likes' for Government parties and candidates. This participation involves users taking part in the various election events and in highlighting the party's values and ideology. The approach helps voters identify with the party's ideas and to forge a feeling of belonging to the same community (Giansante, 2015; Casero Ripollés, 2018).

The study's second major finding is that Facebook and Instagram users were strongly interested in three issues: (1) Social Policy; (2) Election results; (3) Campaign organisation (RQ1). Followers (especially in traditional parties) reacted strongly to posts on Education, Health, and other social rights. This revealed users' concern on issues directly affecting them as citizens. At the same time, many users also reacted to themes that were directly linked to the election campaign (such as voting results and the organisation of election events). This, as in the case of functions, shows that users were particularly interested in as-

pects bearing on the election campaign. Such aspects mainly covered information on which events they could attend and where they could see their leaders and other party members. By contrast, the issues that got the strongest response from followers of emerging parties and leaders (such as Unides Podem, Dalmau, and Cantó) were those of democratic renewal, and Spain's regional model (RQ2).

The study's third major finding is that those posts that included visual media got more 'likes' (RQ1) — something that is also suggested in the previous literature (Viounnikoff-Benet, 2018; Svensson and Russmann, 2017; Fenoll and Hassler, 2019). While Instagram users showed particular interest in photos, the posts that shared videos were the ones that had the greatest impact on Facebook. By contrast, common tools in these social networks such as selfies, memes, and GIFs left users cold. Visual content revealing a candidate's professional role (for example, speaking at a rally, taking part in a debate, or making an official visit) made a bigger impact on users than content showing a candidate's private life and 'human' side. This is at odds with findings in previous literature, which indicated that the use of pictures/video showing politicians' private lives tended to strengthen links with users (Selva Ruíz and Caro Castaño, 2017).

The study's fourth major finding is that when it came to interaction tools, 'mentions' did not grab users' attention. This again is at odds with findings in earlier studies (Larsson, 2015). Indeed, one can go further and say that these tools hardly elicited any reaction from users. By contrast, posts containing hash tags and/or links made a big impact on users (Miquel Segarra *et al.*, 2017). In this connection, the results showed that social media users still set great store by rallies, confirming the findings of earlier studies (Chadwick, 2013). In this respect, most of the links in posts getting the greatest number of 'likes' were to newspaper, TV and radio content (RQ1). This revealed that users combined the power of the digital setting with mainstream media offerings (Casero Ripollés *et al.*, 2016).

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The use made of video in the social media by candidates in the 2019 Valencian Autonomous Government elections*

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ABSTRACT

Videos are increasingly being used in social networks for a wide range of purposes, including political campaigning. Here, social media seem to be gaining an edge over the mainstream variety when it comes to making political choices, especially during election campaigns. This paper examines the extent to which social media is used in Valencian Autonomous Government elections and looks at each of the candidate's experiences in this regard in the April 2019 elections. We pay particular attention to the differences between the three networks analysed — Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and consider what kind of video information is shared. For these purposes, we create nine formal categories, some of which draw on traditional media while others are created *ad hoc* for our study. Based on these categories, we identify which media are most used, and give guidelines on best practices. We also consider differences in usage between politicians from the left and right ends of the political spectrum. The results point to a general lack of communication strategy in candidates' use of discretionary video materials.

Keywords: social media, politics, elections, audiovisual communication, The Valencian Country.

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INTRODUCTION. PANORAMA 2.0

“Things have changed out of all recognition. It has been this way ever since the Internet Universe came into being as the result of Big Science, military research, and liberatarian culture” (Castells, 2001). Since Internet’s appearance on the scene, experts’ views on the phenomenon have swung wildly between optimism and pessimism. In the first wave (now over twenty years ago), it was thought that a virtual democracy would spring up, shifting opinion and the Habermasian sphere to the infinite space of the worldwide web (Loader and Mercea, 2011). Others warn that this shift will have dire consequences. The doom-sayers include Benkler, Faris and Roberts who from Harvard’s hallowed halls warn that we are in a ‘post-truth stage’ characterised by the rampant growth of misinformation and propaganda on influential social networks (2018). Yet the battle between apocalyptic visions and integrating ones is nothing new and has become a classic dichotomy. For instance, Umberto Eco (1968) argued that television, then just a shadow of what it is today, should not be watched by the public more than strictly necessary because of the medium’s hypnotic powers. Habermas (1989: 231) defined this public sphere as “a domain of our social life in which public opinion can form”. For him, access to the public sphere is open to all citizens, who can thus openly discuss their ideas with others.

In today’s world, most public meetings are held on social networks. The rise of the Internet has broadened the scope for interaction to the point where users have become assets in Web 2.0 (Túñez and Sixto, 2011). The trend has reached parts of the News Industry and also what is called ‘Politics 2.0’ (Barberá and Cuesta, 2018) or ‘Cyber-democracy’ (Dader García and Campos, 2006). Some authors, such as Caldevilla Domínguez (2009), defend the term ‘Democracy 2.0’ and even propose changing the notion of ‘activists’ to that of ‘cyber-activists’ to define citizens wishing to take part in politics by using various digital tools to this end (2009). At present, there is growing worry about young people’s loss of interest in politics but by contrast, there is “general optimism that social networks may foster political participation by the young”

(Storsul, 2014: 14). Internet’s open architecture may help youngsters approach political activity in more informal, anti-authoritarian ways that take the views of parents and friends into account (Livingstone, 2009).

Social networks’ emergence and success have both led to a convergence of and clash between old and new communication media (Jenkins, 2006). At the same time, one should note that we have moved from the era of *flow television* to *file television* (Kompere, 2002), not just thanks to YouTube but also to cable TV, streaming services such as Netflix and HBO, or even the video-on-demand options offered by conventional TV channels (Elorriaga and Monge, 2018). What we are seeing is not the end of television but rather the end of the *flow television* of yore, especially among young people (Prado, 2013). Other authors also think that while television is still the main medium, in its old form it is one that it is ever farther removed from the habits of Millennials, whose culture is shaped by the new technologies and ease of access to political information (Lago Vázquez, Direito Rebollal, Rodríguez Vázquez and López García, 2016). This sea change in the broadcast/reception of audiovisual information is setting a trend in the mainstream media, namely a rise in the amount of information supplied through various platforms despite shrinking budgets in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Yet sadly, this growth in digital content does not necessarily mean greater diversity or pluralism (Doyle, 2015; López Olano and Fenoll, 2020).

The advent of social networks and their subsequent success — especially among the young — is shown by the numbers. In 2018, there were 25.5 million social network users in Spain, and 89% of Internet users between the ages of 16 and 65 have at least one active profile. Another telling datum is that 57% of social networks users get their information through them (IAB, 2018).

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Much of the information channelled through social networks is political and it is what our study will focus on. Barack Obama’s victory in the 2008 US Presidential

campaign was the first successful application of online politics (Guterres Ludwig, 2009). The use made of social networks back then was again put into practice in the 2012 campaign. A study by Baviera, García and Cano Orón (2017) on the 2015 Spanish General Election campaign, featuring a corpus of 900,000 users, showed the protagonism of Twitter users in the public debate. It revealed “a certain hybridisation of media approaches, especially on TV and audiovisual communication, and the dependence on Twitter rather than TV. This suggested that the mainstream media took an increasingly vicarious approach to the news” (p. 190).

The next big change occurred in 2016 when a Referendum and a Presidential election shook up the political establishment. The UK’s Referendum on whether to stay in or leave the EU saw the defeat of the Government-backed ‘Remain’ campaign, leading the Prime Minister, David Cameron, to resign. This really set the cat among the European pigeons. After a long drawn-out conspiracy to overthrow the result of a democratic referendum, the UK at long last left the EU at 11 P.M. GMT on the 31st of January 2020. The second upset was Donald Trump’s victory in the US Presidential election. Some authors argue that these elections reveal “an epistemological crisis in modern democratic societies” (Benkler *et al.*, 2018: 4). Since the Brexit Referendum and the US Presidential election, one can say that techno-pessimism has scaled new heights. Other authors, for example Rhys Crilley and Marie Gillespie (2019), consider that the biggest challenge facing journalists today is the untrammelled growth of social media platforms and their use for political ends. Mistrust of the traditional media was in some cases fostered by key politicians. Trump himself, in his memoirs, states “Nobody is more dishonest than the Press. There are some good journalists but there are also a lot of rogues” (2008: 152). Other negative factors helping to destabilise politics and democracy on the networks are the so-called ‘echo chambers’¹

(Benkler *et al.*, 2018) and the ‘filter bubble’² (Pariser, 2011). Some argue that we now find ourselves in a political news ecology that is toxic by design and because of its lack of accountability³ (Crilley and Gillespie, 2018).

This highly-charged atmosphere of tension and of mistrust of the social networks has also reached Spain. Yet Spanish politicians have failed to grasp: (1) the impact of these networks on elections; (2) the nature of the medium, which requires more of politicians than just running a social media account (Túñez and Sixto, 2011). Here, the networks behave like affective forums, creating their own audiences, engaging emotions, and allowing personalisation in ways that should not be taken lightly (Arias Maldonado, 2016). The message for politicians is that they are going to get poor results if they fail to exploit the unique set of features found in each social media platform. Here, it is message recipients who decide what they want to feel. If they get the impression that they are not being treated as individuals, they will simply ignore the message (Del Moral, 2006). Furthermore, the reaction to a poorly-framed message can go beyond indifference and spark strong rejection. Those wishing to influence others on social networks need to do more than merely be present on them (whether willingly or unwillingly). They should forge and strengthen a direct, personal relationship with everyone targeted by the message (Alcat, 2011). Another study by Valera, Sampietro and Fenoll (2017) highlights the interaction among users on Spanish parties’ Facebook pages (PP, PSOE, Ciudadanos, and Podemos) and concludes that these exchanges constitute desirable democratic conversations, given that most users are well-mannered and show mutual respect.

1 In this context an ‘echo chamber’ means a forum in which ideas and beliefs are passed on and amplified by repetition within a closed system [a criticism levelled at the BBC in relation to its strong pro-Remain stance on Brexit].

2 A *filter bubble* is where Internet users end up in a ‘mini-verse’ of opinions and information that is as far-removed from those with conflicting views as our galaxy is from others.

3 *Accountability* means rendering account for one’s actions to others.

THE VARIOUS SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE USE OF VIDEO

The search for political communication on social networks now constitutes an established field of study and debate. It is a challenge for researchers, who face a setting that is undergoing swift technological change, with new tools and apps springing up alongside old ones, greatly widening the scope of what can be done (Larsson, 2018 and 2017; Filimonov, Russmann and Svensson, 2016; Lalancette and Raynauld, 2017; Quevedo Redondo and Portalés Oliva, 2017).

Within this general panorama, one needs to draw distinctions and nuances both when it comes to influencing public opinion and making analyses. Each social network has its own rules for behaviour and communication and one needs to grasp these and exploit them to the fullest (Caldevilla, 2009). Compared with Facebook (used for more personal communication), Twitter is the information network par excellence (Bernal, 2015). Therefore it makes sense for a candidate wishing to make sure his message wins him votes will use the latter. In fact, both parties and candidates seem to be familiar with the tools Twitter offers to boost interaction with its users. While political parties are the ones that use these tools, candidates' tweets elicit the greatest interaction from voters (Miquel Segarra, Alonso Muñoz and Marcos García, 2017). With regard to videos on Facebook, the most popular category covers meals and gastronomy — more than double the interactions in the next most popular category (beauty and fashion) (Dent, 2017). In principle, politics is not an important subject on this social network, trailing in at twelfth place. Nevertheless, in the community established by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004, there are lots of general messages on politics, particularly among the youngest users given that they use this as their main source when seeking information (Barberá and Cuesta, 2018).

According to IAB Spain's 2018 *Estudio Anual de Redes Sociales* [Annual Study of Social Networks], when it comes to preferences for the various kinds of network, we can distinguish the following three groups: (1) Generation Z — users aged between 16 and 23 — these

prefer Instagram; (2) Millennials — aged between 24 and 38 — who prefer WhatsApp and Facebook (on which they spend an average of 1.02 hours a day); (3) Users aged between 35 and 44, the most popular network is Twitter (31%), followed by Facebook (29%) (IAB, 2018). Although Instagram and Facebook are not the best for political communication, overlooking networks that are so popular with youngsters seems a poor strategy for winning elections. Despite the big growth in Instagram users around the world — with 1000 million users in June 2019 — very few researchers consider the use of this tool by parties and politicians. By comparison, researchers studying the use of Facebook and Twitter are two-a-penny (López García, 2016). On the international political scene, Instagram is consolidating its position as a way to grab social attention, especially among the youngest users. This is the case in Sweden (Filimonov *et al.*, 2016), Canada (Lalancette and Raynauld, 2017), The United States (Muñoz and Towner, 2017), Austria (Liebhart and Bernhardt, 2017), and Spain (López Rabadán and Doménech Fabregat, 2018; Quevedo Redondo and Portalés Oliva, 2017; Selva Ruiz and Caro Castaño, 2017; Sampietro and Sánchez Castillo, 2020).

When it comes to video, YouTube is easily the biggest social network for spreading audiovisual messages. That said, audiovisuals are gaining ground throughout all the social networks. Here, one should note that YouTube is the second most popular web site after Google (which happens to own it). YouTube is the go-to web site for video blogs (or 'vlogs'), short on-line videos (usually filmed at home and often no more than a monologue in front of a web cam) (Raby, Caron, Théwissen LeBlanc, Prioletta and Mitchell, 2018). Despite the seeming amateurishness, this has given rise to a new genre to the point where some talent agencies such as *Gleam Futures* look for charismatic people to build big web audiences (Cocker and Cronin, 2017). Although some YouTubers, such as Swedish PewDiePie,⁴ have 60 million followers and make over US \$12 million a year, many still cultivate

4 <https://pewdiepie.com> [Accessed: 20/06/2019].

an ‘amateur’ image and a confessional style that fits in with their content. They often use unconventional shots — a hangover from the ‘selfie’ craze which, it should be noted, made it into the Oxford Dictionary in 2013. The success of these approaches led to schools jumping on the bandwagon to teach punters how to succeed in the genre. Such courses are utterly pointless (though profitable for the schools) given the lack of guiding principles in this field (Elorriaga and Monge, 2018). YouTubers are seen by their young followers as equals — something that undoubtedly helps their idols succeed, although they also see them as creative and talented. These YouTubers make themselves accessible, which makes it all the easier for followers to quickly identify with them (Pérez Torres, Pastor Ruiz and Abarrou Ben Boubaker, 2018). Vlogs owe their aesthetic to web cams and the features of so-called ‘bedroom cultures’ (Scolari and Fraticelli, 2017). They use one of the classical resorts of language, looking straight into the camera to engage and excite the viewer, which also ties in with the target recipients of the message. Such ‘influencers’ create their own brand, with its own features whether this be a greeting, a gesture, a way of talking that is easy to recognise and distinguish from others. Given all these features and circumstances, YouTube and other online video servers have shown that they are capable of being used as viable political communication channels during elections (May, 2010). Furthermore, their stylistic aspects go beyond the channel and spill over into all audiovisual messages on social networks. Here, one needs to bear in mind both the huge potential influence that such messages may have and the fact that posting videos on the Internet is vastly cheaper than broadcasting them on TV (Caldevilla, 2009).

In addition, political parties grasp the fact that putting the personal profiles of their candidates on social networks appeals to independent voters (Bennett, 2012). Analysing the year’s Instagram profiles of presidential candidates in Spain’s 2015 General Election, Quevedo Redondo and Portalés Oliva (2017) found that they hardly used video (2.7%) (yet were liberal with photos). This was despite the big impact audiovisuals have on voters. The study shows that the views and statements

of a personal, emotional nature had an impact six times greater than just asking for a vote. Thus a persuasion strategy based on ‘political fandom’ (seeking empathy and approachability) is one that makes citizens see the party as one with the skills needed to govern. This is reflected in the *participatory culture* announced by Henry Jenkins (2006, 2017), even if users do not end up shaping events as much as they think they do.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Given the foregoing, we studied presidential candidates’ activities in social networks during the 2019 Valencian Regional Election. Within the general framework of the posts shared by candidates, we focused on analysis of audiovisual content (that is to say, various kinds of video). The goal was to conduct a comparative study on whether audiovisual content was commonly used, and if so, how. To this end, we drew up the following research questions:

- RQ1.** How do candidates use audiovisuals on the various social networks? Are there differences in these uses depending on whether a city is left-wing or right-wing?
- RQ2.** Are there differences in the use made of the candidate’s image among the parties analysed?
- RQ3.** Are there formal and narrative differences in the audiovisuals depending on whether a party is left-wing or right-wing?

METHODOLOGY

No fewer than 579 items were chosen for analysis ($n = 579$), consisting of videos and clips taken from the social networks of the six presidential candidates in the Valencian Regional Election held on the 28th of April 2019. The videos were analysed by party candidate and those shared (for the same candidate) from other sources. The time frame used for the analysis spanned from the 12th of April to the 26th of April 2019, which were the dates covered by the regional campaign.

There was a surge in social network activity during this period. The politicians covered by our study ($M = 3.57$; $DT = 1.62$) were Ximo Puig, PSPV-PSOE ($n = 82$; 14.2%); Isabel Bonig, Partido Popular ($n = 92$; 15.9%); Mónica Oltra, Compromís ($n = 120$; 20.7%); Rubén Martínez Dalmau, Unides Podem-EUPV ($n = 38$; 6.6%); Toni Cantó, Ciudadanos ($n = 193$; 33.3%); José María Llanos, Vox ($n = 54$; 9.3%). The 579 audiovisuals were drawn from Twitter ($n = 414$; 71.5%), Facebook ($n = 126$; 21.8%), and Instagram ($n = 39$; 6.7%).

A splitting variable was used to indicate whether candidates were right-wing ($n = 339$; 58.5%) or left-wing ($n = 240$; 41.5%). We also considered it important to quantify how much the candidate appeared in each audiovisual ($n = 397$; 68.6%) and when he or she did not appear ($n = 182$; 31.4%).

Finally, we used a mixed deductive and inductive method to construct the variables for each analytical element covering the audiovisuals' narrative categories. First, we created variables based on the research authors' academic and professional experience. Then we incorporated the analysis details in these initial variables for 20% of the sample, rejecting those irrelevant variables and adding new variables that had not been considered at the outset. This process led us to come up with nine audiovisual categories ($M = 4.02$; $DT = 2.17$), which were as follows:

1. Discourse or clip recorded with a mobile ENG camera like those used for outside TV news broadcasts ($n = 40$; 6.9%).
2. Clips from a rally ($n = 121$; 20.9%).
3. Clip from a TV/radio interview or debate ($n = 196$; 33.9%).
4. News item or clip from TV news ($n = 4$; 0.7%).
5. Live broadcast from rallies or other events ($n = 11$; 1.9%).
6. Spot, with background music, not subtitled ($n = 112$; 19.3%).
7. Unedited 'atmospheric' footage ($n = 59$; 10.2%).
8. YouTube-style selfie in which the speaker peers into the camera to engage the viewer ($n = 23$; 4%).
9. Other audiovisuals that are unusual or that are hard to categorise (Spotify-type lists and others) ($n = 13$; 2.2%).

The statistical analysis was based on contingency tables, bi-variate analysis, and linear models. This was carried out using SPSS IBM v.21. The numerical and percentage data making up the contingency tables used in the study were extracted after analysing the code book. A correlation index was drawn up using the Chi-Squared (X^2) Model to detect null hypotheses (H_0) and alternative hypotheses (H_a), setting a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ (p-value), which is within the parameters used for research in the Social Sciences field. In most of the tables included, the p-value associated with the Chi-Squared statistic was 0.000 and thus highly significant. The data was confirmed using the Chi-Squared Test. We also checked the Central Tendency of nominal values using the Phi coefficient, yielding values between 0 and 1, and that were identical to the Pearson correlation coefficient (r_{x-y}).

RESULTS

We obtained the first results after applying the statistical model. With regard to RQ1, Table 1, shows the percentage of posts featuring audiovisuals in the three social networks, giving an initial idea of how candidates' used video in the regional elections. The table shows that each party had its own preferences for a given social network. In quantitative terms, all the candidates with the exception of Toni Cantó mainly used Facebook. Ciudadanos' leader mainly used Twitter — a network on which he was very active. Instagram was little used in campaign strategies, with a total of only 39 videos among all the candidates.

Table 2 shows the contingent relationships and which social networks parties used most. The most popular network for putting over party political messages during the 2019 Regional Election was Twitter, followed

Table 1 Candidate/Use of the videos on social networks

	FACEBOOK			TWITTER			INSTAGRAM		
	Total	Videos	%	Total	Videos	%	Total	Videos	%
Toni Cantó	516	19	3.6	746	173	22.6	8	1	12.5
Mónica Oltra	1515	23	1.5	502	82	16.3	26	15	57.7
Isabel Bonig	738	36	4.8	88	43	48.8	26	13	50
Ximo Puig	496	26	5.2	161	49	30.4	28	7	25
José María Llanos	903	2	0.2	153	52	33.9	2	0	0
Rubén Martínez	424	20	4.7	161	15	9.3	13	3	23

Source: The Authors.

by Facebook, with Instagram in last place. The table also reveals that Toni Cantó was the candidate who, by far and away, was the most active in using that these networks. He was followed by Mónica Oltra, the candidate for Compromís. The remaining candidates were markedly less active. Among the data, one should highlight the scant use the leader of Unides Podem-EUPV made of audiovisual content on the social networks during the campaign.

Regarding the secondary question in RQ1 (that is to say, whether there were differences between left-wing and right-wing parties), Table 3 shows the differences in the use made of social networks by the part of the political spectrum occupied by each candidate's party. What one finds is that the right-wing parties — PP, Cs, and Vox — used audiovisuals on social networks a little more ($n = 339$; 58.54%) than left-wing parties — PSPV-PSOE, Unides Podem-EUPV, and Compromís ($n = 240$; 41.45%). With regard to RQ2 (showing the

Table 2 Candidate/Social network

	Instagram	Twitter	Facebook	Total
Toni Cantó	1 (0.2)	173 (29.9)	19 (3.3)	193
Mónica Oltra	15 (2.6)	82 (14.2)	23 (4.0)	120
Isabel Bonig	13 (2.2)	43 (7.4)	36 (6.2)	92
Ximo Puig	7 (1.2)	49 (8.5)	26 (4.5)	82
José María Llanos	0	52 (9.0)	2 (0.3)	54
Rubén Martínez	3 (0.5)	15 (2.6)	20 (3.5)	38
Total	39	414	126	579

N (%)

 $X^2(10) = 111,365^a$, $p < .000$

A count of less than 5 was expected for 2 boxes (11.1%)

The minimum count expected was 2.56^a

Central Tendency of nominal values, Phi .439

Source: The Authors.

Table 3 Political spectrum / Social network

	Instagram	Twitter	Facebook	Total
Right-Wing	14 (2.4)	268 (46.3)	57 (9.8)	339
Left-Wing	25 (4.3)	146 (25.2)	69 (11.9)	240

N (%)

 $X^2(2) = 23,970^a$, $p < .000$

A count of less than 5 was expected for 0 boxes (00.0%)

The minimum count expected was 16.17^a

Central Tendency of nominal values, Phi .203

Source: The Authors.

candidate), Table 4 shows the percentage in which candidates appeared in audiovisuals on the three social networks considered. Both Puig and Bonig played a big role in their videos, appearing in over 90% of them. Oltra lagged only a little way behind

in this respect (81.6%). By contrast, Cantó (52.8%) and Martínez (63.1%) featured on fewer videos, even though Cantó’s overall presence on social networks was outstripped that of all the other candidates. Llanos showed up little in videos but one can say little here given the few cases involved.

Table 4 Candidate/Presence of the candidate on the video

	Present	Not present	Total
Toni Cantó	102 (52.8)	91 (47.2)	193
Mónica Oltra	98 (81.6)	22 (18.3)	120
Isabel Bonig	85 (92.3)	7 (7.6)	92
Ximo Puig	79 (96.3)	3 (3.6)	82
José María Llanos	6 (11.1)	48 (88.8)	54
Rubén Martínez	27 (63.1)	11 (36.8)	38

N (%)
 $\chi^2 (5) = 168,072^a$, $p < ,000$.
 A count of less than q was expected for 0 boxes (00.00%)
 The minimum count expected was 11.94^a
 Central Tendency of nominal values, Phi .539

Source: The Authors.

The appearance of candidates in audiovisuals as the protagonists varied depending on the narrative used. Table 5 shows that clips from traditional media made up the narratives in which candidates most often appeared — something that comes as little surprise given their direct participation in such footage.

With regard to RQ3, there were marked differences between the presidential candidates’ use of audiovisual narratives in the Valencian Regional Election. First, as one can see from Table 6, the commonest category was 3, where clips from traditional radio and TV media were used. Category 2 came second (sound bites taken from rallies), and Category 6 came third (recorded and edited TV spots), usually made by the parties themselves for specific political purposes. They also used audiovisuals falling within Category 5, which covers diverse kinds of live broadcasting of campaign rallies. This option was

Table 5 Audiovisual category/presence of the candidate in the video

	Present	Not present	Total
3.- Media clips	154 (26.6)	42 (7.3)	196
2.- Rally clip	86 (14.9)	35 (6.0)	121
6.- Spot	67 (11.6)	45 (7.8)	112
7.- Atmosphere	20 (3.5)	39 (6.7)	59
1.- Total	39 (6.7)	1 (0.2)	40
8.- Selfie	14 (2.4)	9 (1.6)	23
9.- Others	7 (1.2)	6 (1.0)	13
5.- Live broadcast	9 (1.6)	2 (0.3)	11
4.- News report	1 (0.2)	3 (0.5)	4

N (%)
 $\chi^2 (8) = 680,226^a$, $p < ,000$.
 A count of less than 5 was expected in 4 boxes (22.2%)
 The minimum count expected was 1.26^a
 Central Tendency of nominal values, Phi .334

Source: The Authors.

heavily employed, especially by the Socialist candidate. Here, the wholesale lifting of content from mainstream TV was particularly noteworthy — thus the audiovisuals were not solely targeted at social networks but rather included made-for-TV ones. Here, we do not mean audiovisuals falling within Category 4 (which directly refers to TV news and videos, both of which are seldom used on social networks) but rather to those in Category 3 (clips from interviews and debates).

At the other extreme, there were contents falling within Category 7, which includes unedited footage and ‘atmospheric’ shots. This footage was in RAW file format and was often highly amateur. The videos came from rank-and-file party members or those following the events, and fitted in well with social networks’ affective nature. In addition, this kind of content forges a relationship with viewers of one between equals. In this category, the Vox candidate, José María Llanos (n = 27), was easily the one who shared the most content, followed by Mónica Oltra (n = 17), and the Ciudadanos candidate, Toni Cantó (n = 14), as can be seen in Table 6. One should also note that most of the posts shared by Llanos were re-tweets showing what was passed off

as stadiums ‘filled to overflowing’ — a standard resort used by this new Far-Right party in all of its rallies in Spain, many of which are attended by its national leader Santiago Abascal. Neither Puig nor Martínez shared such contents. Second, social networks use their own kinds of content that we consider highly worthwhile yet which candidates used very sparingly. Here, we are referring to Category 8, which we term ‘selfies’ given that they adopted the typical YouTube pose in which the ‘influencer’ speaks straight to the camera as if establishing ‘eye contact’ with the user. Martínez Dalmau was the candidate who made most use of this technique ($n = 11$) in his posts, no doubt influenced by the fact that the leader of his party — Pablo Iglesias — does the same. He was followed in the use of selfies by Mónica Oltra ($n = 7$) and Toni Cantó ($n = 5$). Neither Bonig nor Puig made any use of this kind of content. In any event, one should note that leaving the statistic aside, the use of ‘selfies’ lies within everyone’s reach. That said, if the technique is poorly used, one not only fails to identify with users but one also runs the risk of the video backfiring. The styles adopted by the candidates in these ‘selfies’ were completely different.

Martínez Dalmau, came over as hesitant and clumsy whereas Cantó and Oltra were confident and effective. This was an area in which their long experience of public speaking and appearing before the cameras paid handsome dividends.

Within Category 9 (‘Others’), one can highlight two items that sought to pitch the candidate as ‘an ordinary bloke’. We chose not to include them in the ‘selfie’ category because neither candidate looked into the camera (the hallmark of selfies). On the 24th of April, Cantó shared a post in the ‘Others’ category, and Dalmau did so the next day (25th of April). Although both candidates spoke about themselves as individuals rather than as politicians, the end results were practically identical. Cantó spoke of IES Benlliure (high school) — “This is where I studied”. Dalmau spoke about pizza and pineapple. Whereas Cantó’s video worked with the slickness of a TV spot, delivering a clear, direct message, Dalmau’s video came over as long-winded and rambling. Both are good examples of how the same kind of video can be put to sundry uses (and yield diverse results).

Table 6 Audiovisual Category / Candidate

	X. Puig	I. Bonig	M. Oltra	R. Martínez	T. Cantó	J. M. Llanos	Total
3.- Media clips	32 (5.5)	15 (2.6)	57 (9.8)	9 (1.6)	82 (14.2)	1 (0.2)	196
2.- Rally clip	4 (0.7)	38 (6.6)	12 (2.1)	6 (1.0)	45 (7.8)	16 (2.8)	121
6.- Spot	35 (6.0)	20 (3.5)	20 (3.5)	7 (1.2)	23 (4.0)	7 (1.2)	112
7.- Atmosphere	0	1 (0.2)	17 (2.9)	0	14 (2.4)	27 (4.7)	59
1.- Total	3 (0.5)	18 (3.1)	0	3 (0.5)	16 (2.8)	0	40
8.- Selfie	0	0	7 (1.2)	11 (1.9)	5 (0.9)	0	23
9.- Others	0	0	3 (0.5)	1 (0.2)	7 (1.2)	2 (0.3)	13
5.- Live broadcast	6 (1.0)	0	3 (0.5)	0	1 (0.2)	1 (0.2)	11
4.- News report	2 (0.3)	0	1 (0.2)	1 (0.2)	0	0	4

N (%)

$\chi^2(40) = 350, 621^a$, $p < ,000$

A count under 5 was expected in 26 cells (48.1%)

The minimum expected count was 26^a

Central Tendency of nominal values, Phi .778

Source: The Authors.

CONCLUSIONS

The first conclusion we reached after analysing the data was that the candidates showed no clear strategy in their use of videos on the three social networks. In general, there was no evidence that candidates took a systematic approach to campaign strategy, their use of video being both patchy and arbitrary. Clearly, success on social networks cannot be plucked out of thin air during the campaign because it is something that has to be worked on long beforehand. Trump was already a veteran influencer on Twitter before becoming a presidential candidate. Traffic on the various social networks depends on previous popularity. For instance, both Oltra and Cantó already had some 240,000 followers on Twitter before the campaign. By contrast, José María Llanos had just 4,600. When we look at the quantitative differences in the use of audiovisuals on the web, as well as their respective, heterogeneous narratives, one can see a general failure to grasp the persuasive power of videos. The opportunities offered by this political tool were squandered. The strategies adopted all stemmed from poorly-organised political video activism in both chronological and iconographic terms. Political efficacy was conspicuously absent amid the welter of videos and user intermediation. Our findings coincide with those from other studies on the Spanish context and cited in the introduction.

The weak audiovisual communication strategy seen in Government parties' social network sites during the campaigns (especially those of the PSPV-PSOE) contrasted with that in Opposition parties. The latter were more active in and sensitive to these platforms, aware of their scope for targeting younger voters. Our study — which was confined to the Valencian Autonomous Region — further supports the idea that new parties (such as Ciudadanos) mainly use Twitter. Yet this was not the case with Podemos, whose preferred choice of channel depends on the kind of election. In the 2015 Spanish General Election, it was the party that by far and away most used Twitter (Miquel Segarra *et al.*, 2017).

Data analysis following a left/right split reveals that conservative parties were more active in sharing videos, especially on Twitter, yet the difference was not strik-

ing. With regard to candidates' projections of their own images, there were marked differences. While Puig and Bonig were very active, closely followed by Oltra, Cantó and Martínez trailed a long way behind. Llanos was an outlier, sharing virtually no videos (little can be read into this given his scant use of audiovisuals in general).

With regard to RQ2 (image projection by candidates), Table 4 shows the percentages that audiovisuals were used in each of the three social networks. Both Puig and Bonig played leading roles in the respective videos they shared, appearing in over 90% of them. Oltra came only a little way behind them, with (81.6%). By contrast, Cantó (52.8%) and Martínez (63.1%) put in middling figures. However, one should note that Cantó put in more appearances than any of the other candidates given that his activity on social networks was also far ahead of the pack.

Another point worth highlighting was the under-use of Instagram, a well-consolidated social network when it comes to political campaigns abroad, and in which political use of candidates' profiles comes to the fore. Recent studies reveal the efficacy of this network when it comes to political marketing (Filimonov *et al.*, 2016; Lalancette and Raynauld, 2017; Muñoz and Towner, 2017; Liebhart and Bernhardt, 2017; Quevedo Redondo and Portalés Oliva, 2017; Selva Ruiz and Caro Castaño, 2017; Langer, 2010; Driessens, 2013; Street, 2004; Van Zoonen, 2006). Instagram is effective for publicly presenting a candidate, conveying a feeling of familiarity and closeness to followers, and wrapping this up in apparent sincerity and authenticity — traits that are key to both holding on to supporters and boosting their number (Marwick and Boyd, 2011). We can therefore say that Instagram was the social network that candidates used least in the Valencia Regional Election. Vox, Ciudadanos, and Unidos Podem-EUPV were, in this order, the parties that used it least. They therefore lost a golden opportunity for publicising their manifestos and their candidates (both as politicians and individuals). This under-use was both qualitative and quantitative — a finding that is in line with the conclusions drawn by other studies (Selva Ruiz and Caro Castaño, 2017). It also mirrors elections at around

the same time elsewhere in Spain, for instance in the unofficial Catalan Independence Referendum of 2017 (Cartes Barroso, 2018).

The audiovisual techniques for scripting a political story-line on social networks followed classic media techniques (especially those used by television). The campaign strategies in the last Valencian Regional Election lacked a special, clearly-differentiated story for these networks and thus failed to capitalise on the huge scope offered by these new channels. All the candidates endlessly recycled made-for-TV (or made-by-TV) videos. That said, there were differences among the seven parties: the audiovisual categories we considered as native to the Web 2.0 universe were, first: Category 7, ‘Atmosphere’”, which was profusely used by (in this order) Llanos, Oltra, and Cantó. Neither Puig nor Martínez used this category. The second is Category 8, ‘Selfies’, which was most used by Martínez Dalmau, Mónica Oltra, and Toni Cantó (in descending order). In this case, Puig, Bonig, and Llanos did not use it at all. Going beyond quantification, Dalmau put in a stilted performance in his videos, whereas both Oltra and Cantó put in highly-polished ones.

In any event, the overall findings in this section are the same, namely: candidates’ strategies for social networks were amateurish, arbitrary, and unsystematic. There were other issues too but these lay outside the scope of this exploratory study. They include matters such as personalisation and emotiveness in the various audiovisual categories used by candidates.

Even so, one cannot draw hard and fast conclusions on the relationship between “use of videos/social networks”

and “election results”. That is because there were many factors shaping the election result but that lay beyond our research goals. However, one should note that PSPV-PSOE, despite ranking fourth among the parties in its use of videos on social networks (82 videos), was the party that won the most seats (27). This was possibly because the party’s role in government meant that it was constantly present in both traditional media and on social networks during the four years of the previous legislature. This gave the party a huge ‘shop window’ in which to display its political wares. Compromís seems to show the other side of the coin. Despite the party forming part of the ‘Botanical’ Coalition Government (so called because the pact was signed in Valencia’s Botanical Garden), its share of seats shrank from 19 in 2015 to 17 in 2019. This was despite the party being second in the ranking of those making most use of videos (120 videos). By contrast, Toni Cantó came first in the video-use ranking (193 videos) and it was the first time he had headed the Ciudadanos list of candidates. In the 2015 election, his party got 13 seats, which rose to 18 seats after the 2019 election, becoming the fourth-largest party, pushing Compromís’ into fifth place (17 seats). Last but not least, one should reflect on the rise of Vox, a new ‘upstart’ party that, despite being last in the ranking in its use of video (almost wholly on Twitter (52 videos) with only two videos on Facebook), nevertheless racked up a major victory garnering no fewer than 10 seats and 278,000 votes.

We therefore consider that future studies should extend the analysis to other elections and candidates and, by so doing, enrich the overall vision and delve deeper into the links between social networks/videos on the one hand and election results on the other.

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Competitive Discourses among the Valencian Right Wing: Communication and strategy in the 2019 regional elections*

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ABSTRACT

The 2019 regional government election in The Valencian Country led to a new panorama on the Right. For the first time, there were three political parties competing for votes. In addition, the notoriety gained by the Far Right created a new political scene, posing a challenge to other parties. This paper analyses how the *Partido Popular*, *Ciudadanos* and *Vox* managed a campaign in which they were both electoral opponents but also potentially future parliamentary allies. The research examines the performance and campaign discourse of these three parties based on content analysis of the coverage of two newspapers' (*Levante-EMV* and *Las Provincias*). The study examines the preferred frames of reference, the main topics, the cultural resonances and the ideological frameworks chosen by these parties. The results showed that news on these parties stressed leadership style and strategy — issues that were highlighted in the parties' discourses given that they resonate strongly with Conservative voters. The issues chosen by the Far Right had little impact on the messages put over by the majority parties. The presence of three right-wing parties meant each tried to differentiate itself from the others. *Vox* [the farthest on the right, reminiscent of France's *Front National*] tried to distinguish itself from the more mainstream *Partido Popular* (PP), which in turn was forced to defend its position as the 'institutional' party of the right. *Ciudadanos* (Cs) was the right-wing party that spoke most often of potential co-operation among the three forces.

Keywords: Autonomous Community of Valencia, regional election, political discourse, media coverage, right-wing parties, framing.

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INTRODUCTION

The Valencian Regional Election held on the 28th of April 2019 took place in a political context that was entirely new for Valencia's Centre-Right parties. For the first time since 1995, the main Conservative party in The Valencian Country —Partido Popular (PP) with Isabel Bonig as its presidential candidate — faced an election as Leader of The Opposition, after PSPV-PSOE and Compromís had cobbled together a coalition government during the previous legislature, with the parliamentary support of Unides Podem. It was also the first time that in the 'best case scenario', PP would have to strike a deal with two other Right-Wing parties if it wanted to form a new government and wrest power from the Opposition. The other two Right-Wing parties were: (1) Ciudadanos (which was running in a Valencian Regional Election for the second time after winning 13 seats in 2015); (2) Vox, which was running in the election for the first time, and was in with a chance of winning its first seats (the first time round in 2015, it won no seats, polling only a paltry 0.41% of the votes cast (10,184 ballot papers).

The polls published in the run-up to the election forecast that the only chance of pushing the Left-Wing three-party coalition out of Office would be to form a three-party Right-Wing coalition. Various opinion polls indicated that The Valencian Country might change political colour after the 28th of April. One such poll was produced by SyM Consulting and published in *Valencia Plaza* newspaper on the 3rd of February, forecasting that a PP-Cs-Vox coalition would win 54 seats out of a total of 99. A poll published by NC Report for *La Razón* newspaper forecast that the three Right-Wing parties might win 51 seats (an absolute majority, albeit by a whisker), which would be sufficient to invest a Conservative President.

These early polls were encouraging for the Centre-Right parties. The poll published by SyM Consulting for *Valencia Plaza* put Partido Popular as the party enjoying the greatest electoral support in The Valencian Country, with the prospect of winning 23-24 seats. The same poll also rated Vox's prospects highly, forecasting it might get 14-15 seats. Even so, the Regional Election not only created uncertainty as to whether the Right would regain control of Valencia's Parliament but also revealed a battle between Ciudadanos and PP. Some polls even went so far as to suggest Ciudadanos might wrest the crown from PP as the party leading the Right-Wing of Valencia's political spectrum. A study carried out by Spain's Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) was published on the 11th of April and left this possibility open, forecasting Ciudadanos would win 16-19 seats (16% of votes cast) and PP with 18-19 seats (15.4% of the vote). An IMPO Insights poll for COPE radio pointed in the same direction, forecasting that Ciudadanos would win 17 or 18 seats (16.5% of votes) and that PP would win 16 seats (15.5% of votes).

The scenario was thus one of great uncertainty both regarding whether the combined Centre-Right parties could beat the incumbent Centre-Left coalition, and which party among PP, Ciudadanos, and Vox would get the most seats. This study looks at how two of The Valencian Country's two main newspapers (and the biggest ones in the City of Valencia) — *Levante-EMV* and *Las Provincias* — covered the campaigns of these parties. To this end, we focused on the dominant frames in that coverage, the weight given to the historic Conservative discourse in The Valencian Country, and the extent to which each of these parties tried to position itself in the media with a view to clearly differentiating itself from the other two parties it was competing with for the Central-Right vote.

To properly frame this study from a technical standpoint, one needs to examine the electoral activities of Centre-Right parties in Valencia from both diachronic and synchronic standpoints. The two following sections therefore examine: (1) Anti-Catalanism as the rhetorical key to parties in this part of the political spectrum since the times of the so-called ‘Battle of Valencia’ — an event that took place during Spain’s rocky transition from dictatorship to democracy and in which the Valencian Far-Right played a key role; (2) the recent rise of the Far-Right in Europe and its growing influence on the discourse of hegemonic Central-Right parties. We shall then describe some of the key ideas on political communication during an election campaign. We also set out the methodological approach used in the study, our main findings, and the conclusions that can be drawn from our testing of the research hypotheses.

THE RIGHT WING AND THE RADICALISATION OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN THE VALENCIAN COUNTRY

Although no Far-Right party (such as Vox) gained parliamentary seats until 2019, the Far-Right’s views and deeds have shaped the development of Valencia’s Regional Government ever since the 1970s. The emergence of the ‘identity conflict’ during the years in which Spain transitioned from dictatorship to democracy constituted the so-called ‘Battle of Valencia’. This was instigated by stalwarts of the Franco Regime, such as Miguel Ramón Izquierdo and Ignacio Carrau, Mayor of Valencia and President of the *Diputación* (Regional Board) up until the first municipal elections in 1979. The ‘battle’ marshalled a complex, reactionary alliance, bringing together political and socio-cultural interests (Junta Central Fallera, Lo Rat Penat, Academia de Cultura Valenciana), and the media (*Las Provincias*). The alliance’s goal was to split the Valencian people and to lure part of the electorate to Far-Right positions” (Sanz, 1982: 76-77). This strategy was clearly evidenced by the positions the alliance shared with the regime towards the end of the Franco dictatorship. In drawing up the elements of regional identity in Valencia’s Statute of Autonomy, the

Far-Right intervened in the political and social arena, tolerated and sponsored by the well-ensconced forces of reaction (Sanz, 1982; Cucó, 2002). The Statute of Autonomy determined the region’s name, language, and flag. As Mira notes, “He who controls the content and meaning of the symbols used, and how they are disseminated and learnt also controls the awareness that stems from them” (1985: 29).

Historians such as Cucó have argued that calling “a singular, uncivil, undemocratic rebellion” ‘The Battle of Valencia’ is a misnomer because: “This ‘battle’ never took place [...]. It was a welter of deliberately-provoked violence that was almost always of a unilateral nature [...], marking a watershed that deeply scarred culture and democracy in The Valencian Country” (Cucó, 2002: 136). Albert and Hernández link this campaign of violence with “a strategy by the Far-Right after Franco’s death to stop the advance of the Left-Wing in general and Left-Wing nationalists in particular” (2011: 6).

The clash was a way of watering down, if not wholly thwarting, aspirations for greater self-government (for which provision was made in Article 151 of Spain’s new, post-dictatorship Constitution). Article 151 was applicable to Spain’s historic nations. The politicisation of symbols, in particular anti-Catalanism, turned Article 151 into a tool of the UCD (Unión de Centro Democrático) and its leaders. The anti-Catalan strategy was seized upon as a pretext for thwarting progress towards self-government and, in the process, the advance of PSPV-PSOE as the party winning most votes in The Valencian Country (Sanz, 1982: 163). Picó and Reig blame UCD and its main leaders in Valencia for fuelling a “visceral, aggressive Valencianism” supporting all groups boycotting incipient democratic institutions, aided and abetted by “notorious Fascist groups”. The aim was to shamelessly ‘exploit’ popular feeling against the supposed “Catalan peril” (1988: 958-961). In this context, a “socio-political movement” — *blaverismo* — turned anti-Catalanism into its *raison d’être* (Flor, 2009), wrapping it up in a travesty of “Valencian self-government” which, in effect, “re-invented Valencian traditions and identity” (Flor, 2010: 113).

Las Provincias newspaper and its then Deputy Director, María Consuelo Reyna, played key roles in “Blaverism’s successful social penetration” (Flor, 2010: 121) in what Cucó termed the “neo-Fascist Populism” (1983: 84). The Right shamelessly banged on about the evils of regional autonomy as a way of drumming up votes. This political-media alliance (Xambó, 1995, 2001; Viadel, 2006; Iranzo, 2011) played a major role in ‘The Battle of Valencia’. “*Las Provincias*, Reyna and gang turned anti-Catalanism into a crusade that threw journalistic ethics and rules to the winds, ruthlessly hounding public figures and providing an intellectual pretext for violence” (Viadel, 2006: 214).

Far from being limited to the realm of debate, the clash was “long, complex, virulent, the prosecution of a war” (Mollà and Mira, 1986: 157). There were many violent acts in the late 1970s and early 1980s, many of them attributed to Grupo de Acción Valencianista (GAV), which had links with the Far Right. Bombs were used against intellectuals such as Joan Fuster and Manuel Sanchis Guarner, attacks were made against those defending the unity of Catalan [of which Valencian is a dialect], and against *Llibreria 3 i 4* [bookshop]. Threats and attacks were also made against staff at RTVE’s [Spanish TV] Regional Centre in The Valencian Country, and there was street violence too. The strategy pursued by UCD and backed up by sections of the media and Right-Wing thugs sought to kill off any hopes of self-government. The goal was to make citizens drop their support for regional autonomy and negotiation with Spain’s highly centralised national government” (Picó and Reig, 1988: 958-961). This dastardly plan succeeded.

THE RISE OF THE FAR RIGHT EUROPE: MESSAGES AND IMPACTS

Right now, Far-Right parties are waxing in many European countries and some are even in government. In Poland, for example, the Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* - PiS) won 37.6% of the votes cast in the 2015 election. The Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* - FPÖ) got 26.65% of the

vote in the 2017 election, and Italy’s *Liga Norte* won 17.4% of votes in the 2018. All these parties formed part of the government in some shape or form. France’s *Front National* (the second-biggest party in the 2017 election with 21.3% of the votes), the ‘Movement for a Better Hungary’ (*Jobbik*), got 19.1% of the vote in 2018), Denmark’s People’s Party (Dansk Folkeparti – DF), got 21.1% in 2015) and Germany’s *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) won 12.6% of votes in 2017).

These are all examples of a re-birth of the Far Right in Europe over the last few years, although one should note that this growth has taken place over the last four decades. Since the early 1980s, a new Far Right began to rise in some Eastern European countries. Despite their marked ultra-nationalist natures, they eschewed Fascism and Nazism because they did not seek dissolution of institutions and democratic freedoms, despite their fierce criticism of the Welfare State and the defence of lower taxes (Rodríguez Jiménez, 2006). These parties, encouraged by the success of France’s *Front National*, carved out a niche for themselves in their respective parliaments (De Lange, 2012), and also in the European Parliament, ever since Le Pen won ten MEPs in the 1984 elections (Gómez Reino, 2009). Since then, the Populist Far Right has become a major political player in Europe (Hernández Carr, 2011).

In great measure, this protagonism has been the result of an ‘us and them’ populist discourse designed to broadly appeal to Europeans. “Them” in this case comprises various groups that are tarred as a threat (Kraeva and Lazaridis, 2016). Immigrants have been one of the main targets of this strategy of constructing “the other”. As Hernández Carr (2011), notes, anti-immigration xenophobia has become the launch pad for political mobilisation among the whole of Europe’s radical, populist Far Right. This includes parties such as *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), which sprang into being with the sole aim of battling European Monetary Union in the midst of the Sovereign Debt Crisis. However, it soon shifted its discourse towards criticism of immigration, using xenophobic messages in its campaigns (Schmitt Beck, 2017). The anti-immigration discourse harped on diverse themes. Sometimes it was

based on cultural racism; on others it linked immigration to terrorism (Pajnik, Fabbro and Kamenova, 2016). The latter theme helped Far Right parties come up with one of their main discursive ploys, namely anti-elitism, accusing ‘the powers that be’ of betraying those they were supposed to represent. Using this anti-establishment argument (Krasteva and Lazaridis, 2016), Far Right parties could pass themselves off as different from traditional ones and indeed, as ‘super parties’ seeking to represent the nation/folk that had been done down by those at the top (Antón Mellón and Hernández Carr, 2016).

Apart from immigrants, other targets of the Far Right’s wrath are the elites, the LGBTBI community, and ‘gender politics’. Such parties stress the traditional family and women’s role as mothers (Mayer, Šori and Sauer 2016). Although these parties deny homophobia and say they are in favour of equality between men and women (especially in countries such as Denmark and Norway), they oppose gender-equality policies, such as quotas and ‘positive discrimination’ measures. (Meret and Siim, 2013). Instead, they argue that LGBTBI groups and feminist organisations are no more than lobbies and militant ideological movements that one needs to oppose (Mayer, Šori and Sauer 2016). Paradoxically, these parties also present themselves as great defenders of women and sexual minorities when it comes to attacking certain immigrant and religious communities (especially Muslim ones) for the latter’s retrograde treatment of such groups (Meret and Siim, 2013).

The growth of Far-Right parties in European institutions has led to marked changes in the political landscape, especially in the position occupied by the Centre-Right. As De Lange (2012) notes, since the end of the 1990s most majority Conservative began to co-operate with radical Right-Wing parties in various national governments — something that occurred first in Italy and Austria and then, several years later, in Denmark, Norway, and The Netherlands. According to De Lange, this trend can be explained by majority parties’ desire to attain the kind of power where they can put their policies into action. It was, he argues,

also part of a strategy to neutralise the Far Right, which had begun to win more and more votes and posed an ever greater threat as a political opponent. The upshot was growing bipolarisation of national politics and an increasing drift to the right in Conservative parties on issues such as culture, immigration, integration, and security as a way of facilitating coalitions with Far Right parties. Bale (2003) concurs with this diagnosis, indicating that the Centre Right turned Far Right parties into coalition partners and in the process legitimised the latter and their agendas. A clear example of this process can be seen in the political party led by Pim Fortuyn in The Netherlands, which managed to reconstruct the nation’s political agenda by pushing certain themes — such as the management of asylum applications — which other parties had long shunned. This turn allowed Fortuyn’s party to pass itself off as a respectable party in Dutch society (a nation with a long tradition of progressive thinking and tolerance) (Van der Brug and Mughan, 2007).

For many years, Spain was unscathed by this political trend. There were several reasons for this, the two main ones being: (1) Spain’s Far Right had strong links with and hankering after the Franco dictatorship; (2) the Partido Popular’s monopoly of the electoral space in which a Far Right party might otherwise hope to find voters (that is to say, a Central Right party — PP — commanded the loyalty of potential Far Right supporters) (Hernández Carr, 2011). Thus the two biggest Far Right Spanish parties — Fuerza Nueva, and Falange Española de las JONS — made no impact whatsoever on the nation’s institutions (Rodríguez Jiménez, 2012). The Far Right contagion eventually reached Spain from the rest of Europe but it occurred in municipal politics, examples being parties such as Democracia Nacional, España 2000, and Plataforma per Catalunya, which have drawn up electoral strategies based on issues such as immigration and criticism of the establishment, mirroring approaches taken by the Far Right elsewhere in Europe (Sánchez Duarte and Rodríguez Esperanza, 2013; Rodríguez Jiménez, 2012). The Far Right in Spain saw the opportunity to go beyond local politics, with Vox racking up victories in the Andalusian Regional Election held in December

2018. Here, Vox played a key role in the formation of a Conservative alliance, toppling PSOE from the regional government after almost 40 years in power.

JOURNALISTIC COVERAGE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The media play a key role in the way citizens' access political information — a role that becomes all the more important during election campaigns (Esser and D'Angelo, 2006). Even so, research on journalistic coverage of politics reveals a mainly media-based approach that makes it hard to foster critical public views on subjects of general concern (Cappella and Jamieson, 1996; Trimble and Sampert, 2004). By contrast, the media facilitate a reading of the campaign in two ways. On the one hand, a campaign is presented as a game or competition between the parties taking part, which implies that the narration is framed in terms of winners and losers — often based on the scenarios painted by opinion polls (Aalberg, Strömback, and De Vreese, 2011). On the other hand, information on the parties in the campaign usually focuses on their strategies more than their manifesto promises, on their attacks on their opponents, and on their leadership styles (Valentino, Beckmann and Buhr, 2001; De Vreese and Semetko, 2002).

Yet research on campaigns is also covered: (1) the relative weights given to campaign subjects; (2) the policies parties put in their manifestos (which should be central to the pre-election debate but which are usually overlooked). Other studies (Valera Ordaz, Carratalá and Palau Sampedo, 2017) have approached research on political communication in campaigns by considering parties as mobilising agents, seeking to place their messages in diagnostic and prognostic frames of reference (especially the latter) (Entman, 1993) — something that is characteristic of social organisations seeking to spark collective action (Benford and Snow, 2000). In any event, recent studies on political parties' communication find that their discourses have also been shaped by the media. Thus media-created frames have played a hegemonic role, with campaign coverage strongly influencing the way parties put over their proposals to the electorate

(Palau Sampedo, Carratalá and Valera Ordaz, 2017). This process is a clear example of mediatisation (Strömback, 2008; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999).

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on analysis of the three main Right-Wing parties taking part in the Valencian Regional Election held on the 28th of April 2019 — Partido Popular, Ciudadanos, and Vox — and their public discourses in a context where they were rivals yet also potential coalition partners in a new government.

We drew on coverage by The Valencian Country's two main newspapers — *Levante-EMV* and *Las Provincias* — to get an idea of the political discourse of all three parties during the campaign. We took this approach after ruling out using messages published on the parties' web sites. This was because neither Ciudadanos nor the Vox web sites contained worthwhile updates. The respective readerships of the two newspapers were 197,000 and 101,000, as estimated by Estudios General de Medios (Media Studies group) in its second 2019 edition. The period analysed covered the two weeks of the election campaign. Specifically, we reviewed both newspapers' coverage of the Right-Wing parties from Saturday the 13th of April (the day before the campaign began) to Saturday the 27th of April (the day after it ended). One should note that there were no newspapers on the 19th of April — Good Friday — something that is traditionally the case in Spain. We therefore confined the analysis to 14 days (that is to say, 28 newspaper issues in all).

The 'run-of-the-mill' journalistic coverage found in election campaigns included at least one article a day on the main parties and the campaign events they had held. There was not an article on any given party every single day. On a given day, there might be no article on one or more parties, and on others more than one article. In total, we compiled 77 units of analysis, covering news, reports, and interviews. Twenty-nine of these were from *Levante-EMV* newspaper and the other forty-eight were from *Las Provincias* (Table 1). The

difference in number of articles taken from the two newspapers is explained by the fact that *Levante-EMV* practically gave no coverage of Vox (save for a report of the 26th of April, on the party's main rally in The City of Valencia). Meanwhile, *Las Provincias* had much more coverage of Vox, with no fewer than 14 articles.

Table 1 Corpus Composition

	<i>Levante-EMV</i>	<i>Las Provincias</i>	Total
Partido Popular	15	18	33
Ciudadanos	13	16	29
Vox	1	14	15
Total	29	48	77

Source: The Authors.

Our study tested four hypotheses covering the analysis of the materials. First, as was confirmed by earlier studies (Valentino, Beckmann and Buhr, 2001; De Vreese and Semetko, 2002) and bearing in mind the three parties' competition for the same electorate, we hypothesised that:

H1: The main *frame* for information on the Right-Wing parties was of a strategic nature and was linked to leadership style, given each party's need to position itself as the first choice for this part of the political spectrum.

Second, as we showed in the study on the impact of Far-Right parties in the rest of Europe, most of the Centre-Right parties ended up incorporating themes highlighted by Far-Right parties in their discourses, such as immigration and public safety (Bale, 2003; Van der Brug and Mughan, 2007). We envisaged that:

H2: The themes stressed by Far-Right European parties over the last few years would predominate in coverage on Vox, even though they would also be present in news on PP and Cs.

Banging the drum of anti-Catalanism paid handsome electoral dividends for Valencia's Right-Wing during Spain's painful transition from dictatorship to democracy in the late 1970s and in the 1980s (Sanz, 1982; Flor, 2010). Furthermore, some recent studies (Ridaura Martínez, 2016) reveal that rejection of independence-seeking nationalism has been a *leitmotiv* in Valencian Country elections from the moment that Catalan independence began to dominate the Spanish news scene. Taking both these things into account, it is reasonable to think that:

H3: Conservative parties would exploit the supposed 'pan-Catalanist threat', fully aware of the symbolic legacy of the so-called 'Battle of Valencia', and how Catalonia's independence process could be weaponised and to garner votes.

Last, in the campaign context, the most likely post-election scenario (according to the polls) was one of a pact among the Centre-Right parties. The reason was that such an accord offered the only option of forming a Right-Wing government. This suggested that the coverage of these parties would be based on a strategy of political bipolarisation — something already seen in other European countries with the growth of the Far-Right (De Lange, 2012). Accordingly, we hypothesised that:

H4: Right-Wing parties will set clearer limits among themselves regarding the Left, except Vox, which will also attack Partido Popular and Ciudadanos because it needs to gain its first ever seats in the Valencian Parliament.

To test these hypotheses, the 77 items making up the corpus were analysed using combined quantitative and qualitative techniques. Identification of the framing of the information on these parties was based on analysis of the headlines — an approach that has already proven useful in other studies (Palau Sampio *et al.*, 2017; Carratalá and Palau Sampio, 2019), which distinguished three frames, namely: political dynamics (manifestos); mediatisation (tactics, strategy); collective action (forecast).

With regard to the other dimensions (themes, cultural resonance, identities), we took all of the journalistic text into account because this let us identify some of the key elements in greater detail. We considered six topics to discover the themes tackled in the election coverage of the three Conservative parties in our study. These topics were ones that recent studies had suggested as being of key importance in the European Far-Right's political discourse, to wit: (1) immigration; (2) gender/equality; (3) the elites; (4) security; (5) identity; (6) the economy/Welfare State (Hernández Carr, 2011; Krasteva and Lazaridis, 2016; Mayer, Šori and Sauer 2016; Staykova, Otova and Ivanova, 2016). Quantitative analysis was used to both identify: (1) the preferred frames used in headlines for each of the units making up the corpus; (2) the formulas parties employed in presenting and questioning other parties. This approach furnished data on both the presence and frequency of the phenomena studied.

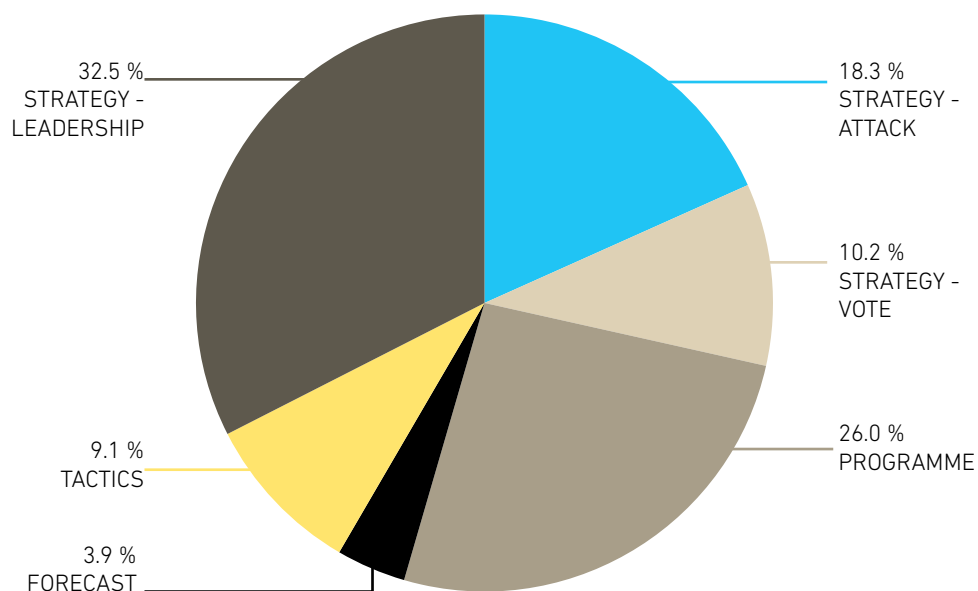
In a complementary fashion, we applied qualitative techniques of our own to the discourse analysis. Such

an approach has proved fruitful in recent research on the discourse of Europe's Far Right (Sauer and Pingaud, 2016), allowing examination of cultural resonances (Gamson, 1988), and reconstruction of each party's ideological framework. One should note that this framework reveals the party's self-image and how it projects itself to the electorate, highlighting the party's virtues and downplaying its vices (while doing precisely the opposite in characterising other parties) (Van Dijk and Rodrigo Mendizábal, 1999). Such a framework fosters political polarisation which, as we have seen, is growing throughout Europe.

RESULTS

The results are set out in four sections, one for each of the four research hypotheses. The first describes the data gleaned from the quantitative analysis of the main frames for the examined headlines. The second quantitatively studies the themes appearing in the information. The presence of these themes is

Figure 1 The main frames in coverage of Central-Right parties (in %)



Source: The Authors.

analysed, depending which of the three parties is the protagonist of the news report. The third sets out observations bearing on the symbolic incorporation of ‘The Battle of Valencia’ in the present electoral discourse of the three parties. The fourth and last section sets out the observations bearing on the present electoral discourses of the three parties to identify each party’s political communication throughout the campaign.

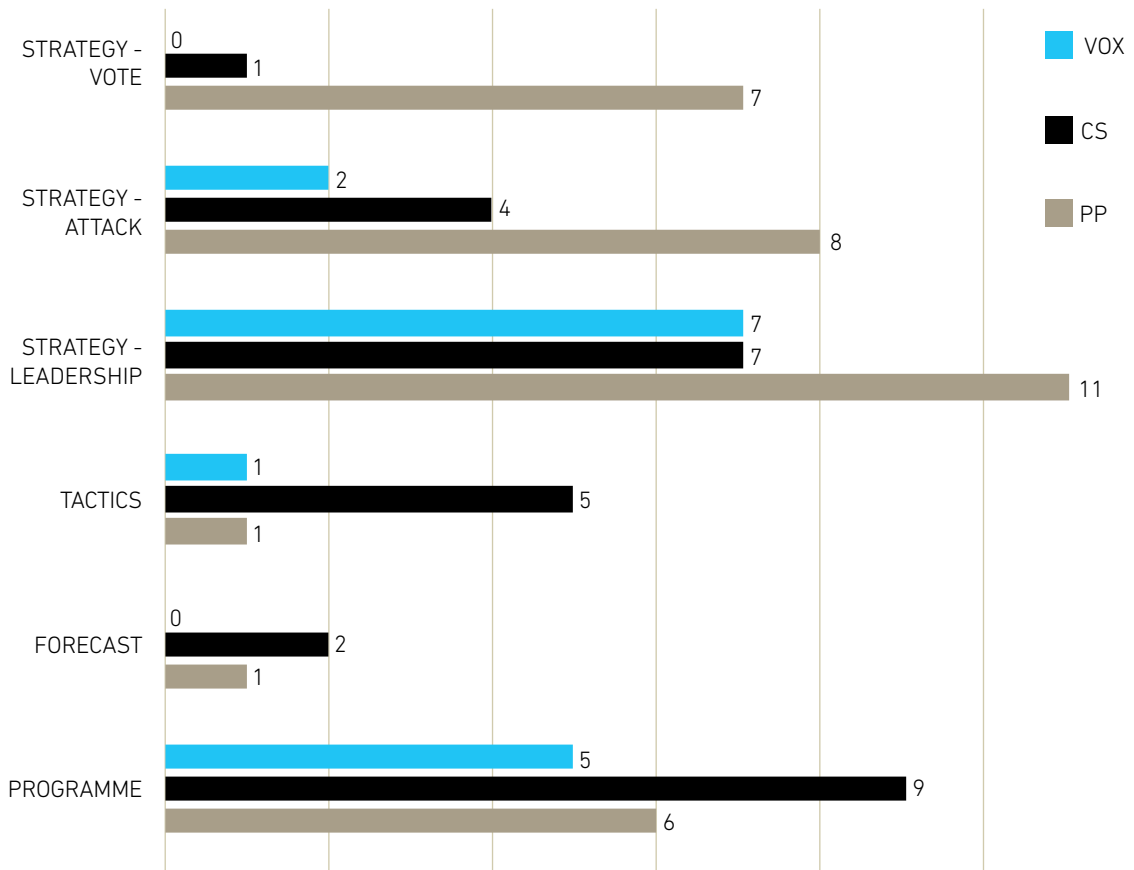
Preferred frames

The dominant frame for information on Right-Wing parties during the campaign was the strategic nature of six out of the ten items analysed. As Figure 1 shows, the frame bearing on leadership styles pre-

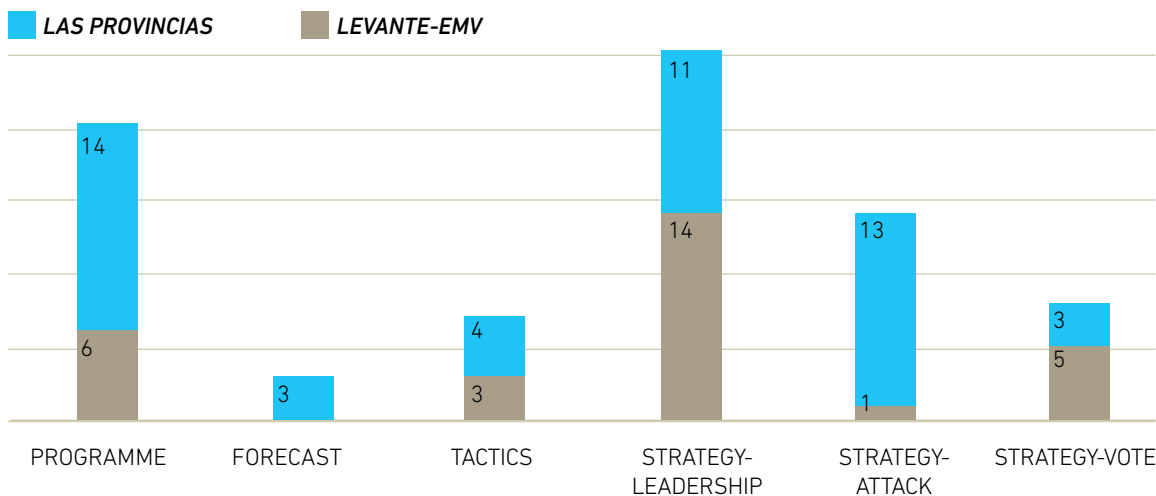
dominated, underlining how important strategies for wielding power, and candidates’ attitudes and their behaviour can affect future management: “Bonig: “We are the only party that has a head on its shoulders. Our management shows we are up to the job” (LE, 27/04/2019); “Does the Catalan conflict worry The Valencian Country?” (LE, 16/04/2019); and “Vox’s leader is the caped crusader” (LP, 15/04/2019).

Issues linked to leadership style cropped up in almost a third of the reports published during the election campaign, especially in those protagonised by PP (44%), whereas both Cs and Vox made up 28%, as can be seen in Figure 2. Within the strategy frame,

Figure 2 Main frame, depending on the party protagonising the report



Source: The Authors.

Figure 3 Main frame, depending on the communication medium

Source: The Authors.

attacking a rival featured in 18% of the news reports. Here, reports protagonised by PP made up over half of these items (57%), with examples such as: “PP criticised Puig’s ‘cowardice’ for refusing a one-to-one debate with Bonig” (LP, 16/04/2019) and “PP lashes out against Catalanist education of Valencian children” (LP, 21/04/2019). Here, one should note that most of the reports falling within this frame were published in the pages of *Las Provincias*. This newspaper also published reports on Vox (14.5% in this frame): “Vox: Rajoy ‘had to resign’ and left it to Sánchez” (LP, 25/04/2019), and on Cs (28.5% in this frame): “Cantó slates The Botanic Pact for failing to put an end to school huts” (LP, 16/04/2019). By contrast, *Levante-EMV* only carried one report of an attack on another party, as can be seen in Figure 3.

The strategic frame for voting implies a direct appeal for support or for tactical voting, the latter being an option that appeared in one in ten reports published during the campaign by The City of Valencia’s two main newspapers. As in the previous section, PP was

the party that again stood out. In fact, it featured in no less than 87.5% of the reports falling within this frame, and in particular in those featuring the party leader for the whole of Spain (Pablo Casado), with a key message to stop the other two Right-Wing parties (Cs and Vox) from taking PP’s electoral turf: “Casado tries to lessen PP’s electoral losses by asking Right-Wing voters to concentrate their votes in his party” (LE, 21/04/2019), “Casado calls on the electorate to vote for PP instead of for unreliable, pop-up parties” (LP, 26/04/2019), “Casado demands the vote to stop political fragmentation of the Right-Wing” (LE, 27/04/2019).

The programme frame, which was linked to party manifesto proposals, accounted for 26% of the reports analysed. Reports on Cs predominated in this frame, making up almost half of all reports (45%), followed by Partido Popular (30%) and Vox (25%). These proposals included news items highlighting the measures on which the party would legislate — “Cs plans a law to stop favouritism in the awarding of public contracts”

Figure 4 The predominant frame during the first and second weeks of the campaign

Source: The Authors.

(LE, 23/04/2019); “Bonig announces plans for a law to give tax breaks to those looking after the home” (LP, 13/04/2019) — and proposals they would act upon if they got into government — “Cantó makes plans to keep school canteens open the whole year round” (LP, 17/04/2019) — or highlighting manifesto points: “Montáñez promises his party will not lower taxes but rather axe €4,000 million in spending” (LP, 17/04/2019). As in the case of the attack-strategy frame, seven out of every ten of the items appeared in *Las Provincias* newspaper.

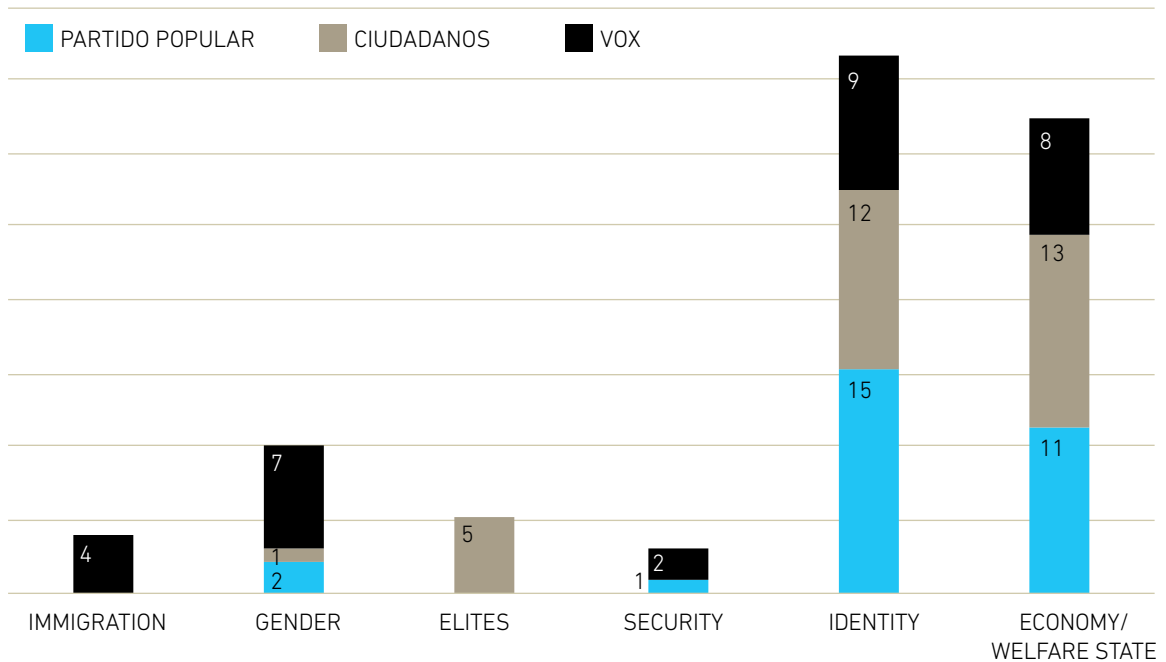
The tactics frame accounted for 9.1% of the newspaper reports — a lower figure than that found in other studies. The frame was shaped by the way the campaign battle unfolded, and by support and possible alliances. Cs clearly led in these reports. In an election that was an open field and without any one party capable of winning an absolute majority, the frame was dominated by discussion of potential pacts: “Arrimadas offers an alliance with PP” (LE, 21/04/2019) and “Cantó insists that he will not ally with Puig

even if Rivera asks him to do so” (LP, 13/04/2019). By contrast, the forecast frame (which included symbolic references to the main themes of the political debate and the action plan) cropped up little in the sample (3.8%) and was linked to Cs and PP.

As can be seen in Figure 4, the strategy frames strongly stood out during the second week of the campaign (almost double that in the first few days), while the news items linked to the programme were the only ones carrying more weight during the first week.

Dominant themes

Examination of the themes dealt with in each of the analytical units (the same article might deal with more than one matter) revealed that PP, Ciudadanos, and Vox stressed the usual subjects found in Conservative discourses but without highlighting the topics the European Far Right has made its own over the last few years. Thus, as can be seen in Figure 5, two subjects that took pride of place were identity (47% of the units analysed) and the economy/The Welfare State,

Figure 5 Themes in which a given party mainly featured in connection with an accord

Source: The Authors.

which appeared in 42% of cases. The identity theme was especially important in news on Vox (60% of news on Vox), and less so for PP (45%) and Cs (41%).

Nevertheless, there are some differences in the way each party tackles the identity issue. Vox pushes the theme by stressing its Spanish nature through its explicit affirmation of loyalty to Spain (LE, 26/04/2019) and more subtly, through its references to bull-fighting (LP, 15/04/2019). Language also plays a key role in how Conservative parties tackle the identity issue. Thus Cs constantly harps on the theme of the Valencian language (a member of the Catalan ‘family’) being imposed on Castilian speakers, especially in schools: “There are 205 nursery schools in which children are not taught for a single hour in Spanish” (LE, 16/04/2019). On other occasions, identity seems

to be linked to the unique features of Valencian and the supposed threat posed by Catalan to The Valencian Country’s traditions — a tack often taken by PP: “Bonig promises to re-enact the Act on Symbols of Valencia’s Identity” (LP, 20/04/2019).

The economy and The Welfare State ranked second as themes. Vox, once again, was the party that stood out, using these arguments most often (53%), followed by Cs (45%) and PP (33%). In general, two messages were put across. One was the need to cut taxes (given that these parties think Valencians are overburdened by taxation). Vox sought “a major cut in taxes” (LP, 13/04/2019). So did Cs: “We are drowning in taxes” — a reference to the tax burden borne by small businesses (LP, 18/04/2019). On the same lines, PP promised that if it won, there would

be “a huge fall in taxes, including the scrapping of death duties and taxation on donations and wealth” (LP, 23/04/2019). Another well-worn theme was the link between the economy and The Welfare State, specifically the latter’s institutional structure and the expenses it involved — an argument that was virtually monopolised by Vox, which argued the need for “absolute austerity” and that “public administration needed to be a lot smaller” (LP, 13/04/2019), “Spain needs a radical overhaul of its public administration” (LP, 21/04/2019), and “dismantling of the regional government system because it is so wasteful” (LE, 26/04/2019), these being just some examples of this line of reasoning.

The other themes found in Far Right election rhetoric were less evident and were linked to Vox’s public discourse. This was the only party tackling the subject of immigration, even though it only made up one out of every four items (27%), for example, when the party referred to “the growing Muslim invasion as a result of Europe’s wrong-headed frontier control policies” (LP, 13/04/2019). Vox also referred to public safety in its campaign, speaking of Spaniards “right to self-defence” (LP, 13/04/2019; LP, 26/04/2019). PP also spoke on public safety, albeit to a lesser extent, when it alluded to reviewable life sentencing (LP, 18/04/2019). On the issue of gender equality, all three parties raised the theme but only Vox did so often (47%), arguing the need to abolish the LGTBI Act (LP, 13/04/2019) and ‘gender violence’ legislation (LP, 21/04/2019), denouncing that the latter “tells our children which sex they ought to be” (LP, 25/04/2019). PP and Cs, by contrast, defended gender equality at one moment or another, and some of its representatives called themselves feminists, such as the PP’s Belén Hoyo: “I am a feminist because I believe that feminism is the battle for equality between men and women” (LE, 18/04/2019). Last, with regard to the elites and the establishment, our analysis revealed that only Ciudadanos mentioned the subject (17%), in connection with journalistic coverage on the party’s defence of a Public Administration “with fewer politicians and hangers-on” (LE, 14/04/2019). The party proposed an “anti-corruption law” stipulating that public contracts

would be awarded on the basis of merit and that “showing one’s Compromís or Valencian PSC party card would not be enough to clinch a contract” (LE, 23/04/2019). It also stressed that politics is often far removed from society’s concerns (LE, 24/04/2019).

Recovery of identity symbols in the electoral battle

Our analysis of the two newspapers’ coverage of the three right-wing parties during the election campaign shows that references to national identity and symbols were strongly present, with echoes of the so-called ‘Battle of Valencia’ several decades earlier. Incendiary allusions to ‘the Catalan threat’ and the imposition of a language other than Castilian were tossed around with the same wild abandon in the 1990s as had the *Blaverists’* Molotov Cocktails a decade and a half earlier. These ideas were key to the victory of Unión Valenciana, the heir of *Blaverism*. Exactly the same arguments resurfaced in the 2019 Regional Election in the context of a fierce battle for right-wing votes among the three parties. This cultural echo came over loud and clear in almost a third (32.4%) of the items analysed, this time with PP and Cs playing the role of political arsonists.

The situation stemming from Catalonia’s frustrated ‘independence process’ provided the pretext for dusting off the spectre of Catalanism — “Cs is worried about the Catalan conflict in The Valencian Country” (LE, 16/04/2019) — in all its diverse forms, including linguistic aspects” [that is, questioning the unity of the language and its (supposed) ‘Pan-Catalanist expansion’] (LP, 13/04/2019). This thesis was especially marked in PP’s discourse. Bonig stated that nationalism “seeks to annex this land” (LE, 27/04/2019) and Casado spoke of taking action so that “The Valencian Country does not end up as an appendage of The Catalan Lands” (LE, 27/04/2019), arguing that the regional government which emerged from The Botanic Pact was seeking to turn The Valencian Country into a ‘colony’ of Catalonia (LE, 23/04/2019) and Valencians into “second-class Catalan citizens” (LP, 23/04/2019). Such fiery statements were more common during the middle and the end of the campaign. Following the same line, Vox dragged the discourse towards the ground of

Spanish nationalism — “We shall act strongly for Spain and for The Kingdom of Valencia” (LP, 25/04/2019), stressing the party’s wish to be “loyal to Spain and never to The Valencian Country” (LE, 26/04/2019).

Catalanism was presented as “a real threat” by the Vox leader in The Valencian Country in an interview (LP, 13/04/2019). A PP candidate spoke of “a real risk” (LP, 14/04/2019). Metaphors on the same lines rained thick and fast, with Catalan nationalism being characterised as “a threatening plague” (LP, 13/04/2019) and arguing the need to “stop it spreading like the ‘flu in The Valencian Country after four years of the tripartite government” (LP and LE, 21/04/2019), as Cs’ leaders put it. The party’s leader in the Valencian Region spoke of ideological imposition (LE, 22/04/2019) that used “school classrooms to advance Catalanism in Valencia” (LE, 24/04/2019), an argument that PP also used, stating that the party would fight “to ensure that nobody brain-washes Valencian children through Pan-Catalanist education” (LP, 21/04/2019).

The ideological frame of Valencia’s right-wing

First, one should note that the newspapers analysed almost always referred to the political parties by their official names, save on a few exceptions. The only 11 cases alluding to Centre-Right parties without using the official name are concentrated in references to Ciudadanos and to Vox. In most cases, however, this does not imply an ideological or political characterisation of the party but rather just offers stylistic variety by resorting to expressions such as “the orange party” (LE, 14/04/2019; LP, 22/04/2019) (LE, 23/04/2019; LP, 23/04/2019), in the case of Ciudadanos, or “the party led by Abascal” (LP, 17/04/2019; LP, 22/04/2019) (LP, 18/04/2019), in the case of Vox. The only case in which a newspaper ideologically labelled a party occurred in a news item in *Levante-EMV* in which the paper referred to Vox as the “Far-Right party” (LE, 26/04/2019).

Thus name-calling based on one or other attributes fell to the parties themselves during the election campaign. Here, it is worth noting how each of these three parties used the campaign to define itself

and thus delimit the ‘us’ that it wished to identify in its mobilisation of voters. Analysis of the news indicated that this discursive effort strongly shaped PP’s public utterances (70% of the items included self-definitions of the party). It was followed by Vox (40%), and by Ciudadanos (17%), the last being least interested in defining itself through its electoral messages. By contrast, PP often adopted this approach, especially to stress its experience in running institutions — a common idea in the framing of PP campaigns (Valera Ordaz *et al.*, 2017) and that Bonig repeated endlessly in interviews, of which the one published in *Las Provincias* on the 23rd of April was just one more example (“We can be relied upon. We are the party of management and we have shown our mettle by twice getting Spain out of a crisis”), as well as at election rallies: “This party has a head on its shoulders and its management proves it” (LE, 27/04/2019). Vox, in contrast, opted to put itself over as a courageous, rising force with which ordinary people could identify: “Our voice is strong, clear, firm and proudly represents the Spaniards who work and pay their taxes” (LP, 14/04/2019) and “We are here to change politics and to render true public service” (LP, 16/04/2019).

In addition to defining “us”, the parties also spent much of their campaign discourse on identifying “others” — which is to say their political opponents. Logically, on many occasions all three Centre-Right parties set themselves apart from the Left, which they usually referred to as “The Tripartite Coalition”, “The Botanic Pact”, “The Sánchez Coalition” (a formula often used by Bonig to refer to the PSPV-Compromís Government) or “The Valencian PSC” (the expression used by Cantó). These references to the Left (as one would expect) were always unflattering and were found in 73% of the news in which PP was the protagonist, in 62% of items bearing on Cs, and in only three items on Vox.

Nevertheless, one should note how Centre-Right parties construct “others” based on one of the parties with which they share an electoral niche. This discursive operation can be seen in many of

the items examined. It is present in news on the parties in 45% of the items on PP and Cs, and in 40% of the items on Vox. In Partido Popular's case, the party most commonly referred to Cs and Vox, which occurred in 10 items: "A vote for Vox could end up being a vote for Pedro Sánchez. A vote for Ciudadanos could be a vote for anyone because they are a bunch of turncoats — one never knows which way they will jump" (LP, 14/04/2019) and "The 'orange' brigade is holding the candle but 'The Greens' are holding a gun" (LP, 23/04/2019). Sometimes the reference was only to Cs, as was the case with five news items, where they were defined as "the political hinge" (LP, 24/04/2019) or as a party willing to form an alliance with the Socialists (LE, 20/04/2019; LP, 23/04/2019).

Ciudadanos, focused on PP as the benchmark Right-Wing party — as can be seen in nine items in which it went so far as to identify PP with PSOE: "It is hard to strike a deal with PSOE or PP because they are parties that have always given ground to nationalism" (LE, 22/04/2019) — or underlined PP's links with corruption — "PP besmirched the Valencian Region's good name, they stole from us and racked up unbearable debt" (LP, 13/04/2019). C's also alluded to PP and Vox in ways to put voters for those parties on the spot rather than the parties themselves: "I can understand Vox voters because they are angry, tired, and fed up with the political class but they should realise that there is another Centre-Right Wing option they can vote for" (LP, 22/04/2019); "I grasp the anger of many Vox voters because they were betrayed by the PP, which robbed them blind, mismanaged our money, and besmirched the Valencian Community's image" (LP, 24/04/2019).

On the other hand, Vox regularly alluded only to the PP — "Voting for them is sticking with a Welfare State for the political class and its corruption and hypocrisy" (LP, 13/04/2019) and to a lesser extent, it labelled PP and Cs as: "The Cowardly Right", "They haven't an ounce of courage"", "The 'orange' Right" and "Quo Vadis? Which way is the wind blowing today? What do the polls say?" (LP, 26/04/2019).

Only on five occasions did the Centre-Right parties seem to tone down their political arguments and try to forge a political bloc featuring two or three parties under the banner of a common "us". This was especially true in the closing stages of the campaign and the main party taking this tack was Ciudadanos. An instance of this was Arrimadas during a rally in Valencia — "I hold out my hand to PP... and ask Pablo Casado to buck up and start thinking about how he can join us to throw out Sánchez" (LE, 21/04/2019). Another was Cantó, who in an interview praised the pact reached in Andalusia: "I hope I do not have to strike a deal with a party other than PP so that we can come up with an Andalusian-style pact" (LE, 22/04/2019).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results from our analysis lead us to conclude that the election discourses of the three main Valencian Centre-Right parties in the Regional Election were shaped by strong competition and, to a lesser extent, the scope for a future alliance. This scenario seems to have had a much more direct impact on the way Partido Popular and Vox framed their public messages during the 15-day campaign, as the coverage of the two newspapers in our study shows.

As with findings in many earlier studies, journalistic coverage of this campaign gave priority to the media framing of issues, which were present in up to 70% of the units of analysis making up our sample. Specifically, the strategic frame dominating news treatment of the three parties in our study was the leadership style of the candidates, corroborating our first research hypothesis. The urge to show leadership in the election message stood out in the information on PP and this was likely due to: (1) the party's need to challenge the Left-Wing government and, (2) the polls cast doubt on the PP's hegemony on the Right for the first time in decades. This would also explain the stress the party put on tactical voting, appealing to voters to cast their votes for PP to avoid dispersion of the Right-Wing vote among three parties — something

that would only boost the chances of the Left-Wing parties forming another coalition government.

With regard to the themes found in the information we analysed, one can say that the subjects most strongly pushed by Europe's Far-Right over recent years have still not made much of an impact on the message put over by Valencia's Centre-Right parties. That said, news on Vox (a Far-Right party) clearly referred to immigration and gender equality issues. Our second hypothesis is therefore only partially confirmed. The most repeated themes (identity, and economy/The Welfare State) cropped up frequently in news on Vox, although they were also important in news on the other two parties. In this respect, despite PP and Cs not having adopted part of the Far-Right discourse on immigration and gender equality, there were similarities in their approaches on economic matters (Vox-Cs) and identity (PP-Vox). They also adopted a similar stance on security. Another significant finding was that one of the themes plugged by Europe's new Far-Right (Hernández Carr, 2011) — the anti-establishment *leitmotiv* — was only explicitly present in news featuring Ciudadanos, probably because although the party already has several years of political life under its belt, it is still considered an upstart challenging the old two-party monopoly of power. A further explanation is that Ciudadanos has many young professionals in its ranks who are eager to make their mark. This anti-establishment leaning is something that Ciudadano's campaign message had in common with European Far-Right parties.

Our third hypothesis, which covers the weight given to the so-called 'Battle of Valencia' discussed earlier, is only confirmed in the cases of PP and Cs — a theme that we identified in one out of every three items linked to these parties. PP thus resorted to one of the old election ruses used by the Conservative Right in The Valencian Country (Ridaura Martínez, 2016), while Cs drew on its symbolic value because it saw this as in keeping with its firm opposition to Catalan nationalism. In fact, this anti-Catalan stance was one of the principles that led to the founding of Cs, and was likely one of the main reasons why the

party has picked up votes in both Catalonia and the rest of Spain over the last few years. As one can see from the results, the warning that Valencian identity was threatened (a discourse ruthlessly exploited by the region's Right-Wingers during Spain's turbulent transition to democracy in the late 70s and early 80s) emerged again in this election thanks to events in Catalonia and discussion of independence from Spain. This anti-Catalanist positioning is supported by newspapers such as *Las Provincias*, which played a key role in 'The Battle of Valencia'. Over the last few years, the newspaper has been unrelenting in its fierce opposition to and criticism of Catalan nationalism (Xicoy, Perales García and Xambó, 2017). However, the notion of 'the Catalan threat' did not feature in Vox's election message given that use of this rhetoric would suppose defence of Valencia's symbols and traditions — something that would be at odds with the party's Ultra-Spanish Nationalist positioning. Here, one should note that Europe's new Far-Right parties adopt similar stances in their respective countries.

With regard to the ideological framework built by these parties, it is worth highlighting three points. The first is that, unlike PP and Cs, Vox concentrated on constructing 'the other' around the other two competing Right-Wing parties. Thus Vox painted PP and Cs as more Left-Wing than was the case. The second point is that PP and Vox stressed party characters in their messages to the electorate whereas Cs spent much less effort on this task. This can be seen as a tactic to tempt voters away from their direct competitors. It was thus on this subject that PP and Vox dwelt most in their respective discourses. The third point was that messages showing most willingness to entertain political alliances emanated from Ciudadanos, which despite its criticism of PP, appealed to the latter party to form a common front. At the same time, Ciudadanos showed empathy towards Vox voters though not towards Vox itself, which Ciudadanos practically ignored in its discourses. Our fourth and final hypothesis was thus confirmed, with Vox distancing itself from both PP and Cs, giving Vox an advantage in passing itself off as the true antithesis of 'The Left'.

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A Valencian-style Coalition Government: *el Botànic**

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ABSTRACT

Coalition governments are common in the European political landscape in various tiers of government. However, such coalitions were an exception in the history of the Valencian Autonomy until 2015, which marked a new stage with the so-called *El Botànic* governments. Which factors explain this change in the Valencian political system? What are the features of such coalition governments? Can this model be applied to other political systems? This paper addresses these and other issues. First, it looks at what led to coalition governments in both 2015 and 2019. Second, it studies the model of coalition government. The hypothesis tested is this: *El Botànic* is a coalition government whose success in terms of stability and governmental action is framed within a specific Valencian political context.

Keywords: Governmental coalition, Valencian Region, Coalition politics, Spain of the autonomies, Government formation.

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THE PATH TOWARDS A COALITION GOVERNMENT

Ever since the end of the 20th Century, debates have been held in Valencia's Regional Parliament on the need to change the Electoral Act, especially the 5% threshold to win seats. Revoking this provision would open the way for parties much smaller than the Partido Popular and the Socialists, which alternately held power of over thirty years. Nevertheless, a much wider political spectrum was represented after the 2015 Regional Election despite the Electoral Act remaining unchanged. The political context shifted from a two-party system to a five-party system with the incorporation of two new parties: Ciudadanos and Podem. The number of choices rose to six in 2019 with the entry of a new party: Vox. The party fragmentation index stood at around 2.5 in 1993 but by 2019, it had reached 5.24 (Table 2). This created a new scenario for the Valencian Regional Government, which had been run by a coalition since 2015. What were the factors shaping these new interaction dynamics among the parties and that yielded a coalition government? To answer this question, we first look at the judicial and institutional framework. We then go on to analyse the electoral system and the system of Valencian political parties. The ideology of the coalition members is a further aspect that is examined. Last but not least, we focus on the historical context.

Theories on the formation of coalition governments tend to fall under one of two heads: formal theories, and multi-dimensional theories. In general, formal theories are based on rational choice theories and on game theory, in which political parties are seen as simply power machines seeking ministerial posts (Budge and Laver, 1986; Matas, 2015; Reniu, 2010; Strøm, 1985 and 1990). From this standpoint, parties emerge as rational actors that decide to form part a 'minimal winning coalition' — a term coined by Riker (1975) to define those coalitions in which the sum of the parties furnishes an absolute majority of parliamentary seats. As Reniu (2010) noted, this approach to the formation of coalition governments does not explain minority governments, such as the first *Botànic* one in 2015 (so called because the coalition pact was signed in Valencia's Botanic Garden).

Multi-dimensional theories, as their name suggests, incorporate other variables such as the institutional framework and the party system (among others) to grasp what brings a coalition about. This paper takes the multi-dimensional approach. Specifically, it adapts the analytical approach developed by Prof. Matas (2015) for the study of coalition governments. It identifies three main groups of determining variables in the process, to wit: (1) the judicial and institutional framework; (2) the electoral system and the party system; (3) the ideology of the political parties and the historical context. Taking this approach, we analyse the region's *Botànic* coalition in connection with the Valencian Autonomous Community's coalition governments since 2015.

THE JUDICIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

"The starting point for negotiations is first, the desire to form a coalition government, and second, having sufficient parliamentary support to make such a government work" (Matas, 2015: 25). Depending on the way a parliamentary system works and the election results, political parties express a wish to either form a coalition government or not. From this standpoint, the judicial and institutional framework is a decisive factor in such negotiations.

Under the terms of Valencia's Statute of Autonomy, a candidate must win a parliamentary vote to be invested President of the Valencian Government. He has two opportunities to do so. In the first round, he must win an absolute number of votes in the chamber. If that attempt fails, there is a second chance, in which a simple majority of the votes suffices. That said, running a minority government requires great negotiating skills, given that one needs to reach an understanding with the Opposition either through *ad hoc* agreements or through one covering the whole legislature. Failure to reach such an agreement runs the risk that the Opposition may block legislation or even bring the government down through a vote of 'No Confidence'. In other words, the quest for an absolute parliamentary majority not only focuses

Table 1 Valencian Regional Elections: Parliamentary Representation (percentages)

Electoral candidacies	Valencian Regional Elections									
	1983	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
CDS	-	11.36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12.66	17.45
CC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.07	18.71	16.44
EU	7.51**	8.03****	7.6	11.7	6.15	6.45	8.13	5.8	--	-
PP	32.11*	23.96***	28.1	43.3	48.63	47.9	53.22	48.6	26.98	18.85
Podem	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.57	7.98*****
PSPV-PSOE	51.77	41.72	43.3	34.3	34.45	36.52	35.02	27.57	20.95	23.87
UV	-	9.24	10.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vox	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10.44

* In this election, the alliance AP-PDP-UL-UV is considered as PP.

** In this EU election, this refers to the PCE-PCPV electoral candidacy.

*** In this election, what today is the PP entered the election as AP.

**** In this EU election, this refers to the EU-UPV electoral alliance.

***** In this election, Podem refers to the Unides Podem-EU electoral candidacy.

Source: Corts Valencianes, <http://www.cortsvalencianes.es>. Author.

on the investiture but also on the political stability of the new government and the ease with which it governs. This is especially important given that law-making requires a minimum of one more than half of all MPs to vote for it. In the case of the Bill to reform the Valencian Electoral Act, first presented years ago, requires the support of at least two thirds of all MPs — a hurdle that has yet to be overcome since none of the proposals to date has commanded sufficient support.

Within this judicial framework, the make-up of the Valencian Parliament following the 2015 and 2019 elections (in which no party had an absolute majority) (Table 1) meant that parties had no option but to form alliances if they wished to govern. It is possible to overcome the hurdle of the investiture of the President with a simple majority (at the second attempt) as noted earlier. Yet a government lacking sufficient parliamentary support will soon run into trouble when it comes to enacting legislation. Getting

annual budgets passed is an object lesson in what can go wrong.

Laakso and Taagepera's NEPP formula (1979):¹

$$N = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2}$$

The rise in the effective number of political parties from 2.16 in 1983 to 5.24 in 2019 reveals a highly-fragmented parliament, leading parliamentary parties

1 The NEPP index measures the effective number of political parties — that is to say, how far the party system is fractured. This formula is attributed to Laakso and Taagepera (1979), who calculated it bearing in mind the electoral support gained by each party and how this is turned into seats. It provides information on the number of parties making up the party system, and their relative weights, n is the number of political parties, P_i is the electoral support obtained by parties (only valid votes are counted).

Table 2 Fragmentation Index of the Valencian Party System: NEPP (Number of Effective Political Parties)

Year marking start of legislature	1983	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	
NEPP	2.16	3.09	2.5	2.72	2.17	2.22	2.22	2.35	4.48	5.24

Source: Corts Valencianes, <http://www.cortsvalecianes.es>. Author.

to come up with new behaviour patterns. Among new parliamentary parties such as Ciudadanos, Unides Podem, and Vox, there was a two-fold increase in the weight of the Valencian nationalist parties, which stood in the elections under the joint Compromís platform together with the ecologists (Verds Equo) and the Communists (IPV). This created new dynamics when it came to dialogue and co-operation. It seemed likely that no party could govern without first reaching agreements with other parties. An effort was therefore made to compromise in an attempt to marshal the support needed to govern. In our study, it was the Left-Wing parties that strove most to strike a deal. This was seen in both the investiture of the President of the Valencian Government and in coming up with a political manifesto for implementation by the new government. In effect, the *Botànic* agreements between Compromís, PSPV-PSOE and Unides Podem-EU constituted a political programme that was to guide the government's actions. The programme's implementation was guaranteed by virtue of the fact that it enjoyed the support of three parliamentary parties which taken together commanded an absolute majority.

This absolute majority played in the decision point — a concept enshrined in the formal theories put forward by Strøm (1985) and which, as Reniu (2010) notes, is very useful in understanding the first step in the process. The decision point refers to the minimum support required for a government or parliamentary Bill to be passed and become an Act. The number of parliamentary votes needed for this purpose depends on the nature of the parliamentary procedure — Or-

dinary or Special — in each case. It boils down to the parliamentary support The Executive needs to govern.

Put baldly, the judicial and institutional framework is a determining factor in the formation of a coalition government, whether it concerns investing the President, Cabinet Ministers, or in putting public policies into action. Coalition negotiations are thorny because they cover a wide range of goals. Here one should note that the share of power wielded by each member of the coalition is usually a big bone of contention with top-rank and second-rank posts being hard fought over. As we shall see later on, another factor is the wish to carry out policies that satisfy citizens' interests so that the coalition parties can boost their electoral support.

THE ELECTORAL AND PARTY SYSTEMS

The electoral system is another element explaining the beginning of negotiations to form a coalition. This mechanism transforms citizens' political preferences in parliamentary seats through the right to vote. This means that the electoral system determines parliament's composition and thus the Valencian party system.

We briefly summarise the Valencian electoral regulations because these have an impact on parties' strategies when it comes to forming coalitions. Martínez Sospedra (1996) noted that the Valencian Electoral Act (LEV) was lifted from Spain's Constitutional Act on the General Electoral System (LOREG), save that

a seat threshold of 5% was adopted instead of 3% in the Spanish legislation. Both Acts sought to create a roughly bi-partisan system to avoid excessive political fragmentation, giving the two major parties the best chances of governing and creating a small Opposition incapable of providing a realistic alternative government (Martínez Sospedra, 2007; Pallarés, 1991; Sartori, 1994). This party system was the fruit of a given combination of the three main planks in any electoral system, namely: the electoral formula; the circumscription; the electoral threshold. Table 3 shows the extent to which the vote was concentrated in the two main parties (Partido Popular, and the Socialists) in both Spain's National Parliament (*el Congreso*) and Valencia's Regional Parliament (*les Corts*). It clearly shows the 'imperfect bi-partisanship' of Spain's and Valencia's party system from the 1980s up until 2015.

Table 3 Concentration of the vote in PP and PSOE parties by percentage

Combined share of vote (%): PP+PSOE		
Elections	Spanish Parliament	Valencian Regional Parliament
1979 *	58.8	-
1983**	68.64	83.88
1987***	57.46	65.68
1991	63.68	71.4
1995	66.11	77.6
1999	68.7	83.03
2003	69.12	84.42
2007	70.54	88.24
2011	65.3	76.17
2015	52.07	47.83
2019	41.57	42.72

* In this election, the UCD is considered as the precursor of today's PP.

** In this election, the AP-PDP-UL-UV alliance is considered as PP.

*** In this election, PP appeared as AP.

Source: Corts Valencianes, <http://www.cortsvalencianes.es>.
Ministerio del Interior, <http://www.mir.es>. Author.

The Valencian electoral system introduced the D'Hondt proportional representation formula. Nevertheless, the formula's ability to proportionally reflect votes is blunted by the electoral circumscription and the threshold. By choosing the provincial level for delimiting the circumscription, it gives geographical criteria (the principle on which political representation is based) primacy over demographic criteria (the basis of proportional representation). The Valencian Country is Split into three large circumscriptions that are equivalent to provinces, independently of population size. The Valencian Electoral Act thus gives different values to votes depending on the province in which they are cast (Garrido Mayol *et al.*, 2001; Martín Cubas, 2017). "Just like LOREG, Valencia's LEV over-represents the Conservative vote. Less populous rural areas — which are tend to be more Conservative ones — are over-represented" (Roig, 2019: 493). This is true of Castellón province. By contrast, urban and coastal areas, such as Valencia, where Left-Wing parties command most support, are under-represented (Calvet, 2010).

This imbalance in the weight given to votes from different areas of The Valencian Country and the 5% threshold to gain a seat in parliament (the highest threshold in Spain) set a higher electoral barrier than that found in Spain's parliamentary election, or the election to the Catalan and Basque regional parliaments. The threshold establishes the minimum percentage of votes a party must gain in order to get any parliamentary seats and to form part of the party system. Franch i Ferrer (1995, 1996) noted that the 5% threshold means closing the doors of Valencia's parliament to minority parties such as the Valencian nationalists — the so-called PANE (*Partidos de Ambito No Estatal* or Non-Spain-wide Parties) — which are present at the regional level. The threshold thus limits pluralism in the parliament and strengthens the weight of the two major parties that operate Spain-wide (termed PAE) (Calvet, 2014). In other words, it creates a regional version of the two-party system found at the Spanish level.

Table 4 Trends in aggregate electoral volatility

Elections	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019	2019
Volatility	19,05	9,99	15,8	9,015	1,55	4,25	10,73	34,95	16,07	5,24

Source: Corts Valencianes, <http://www.cortsvalecianas.es>. Author.

Nevertheless, this political system underwent a radical change in 2015 as part of the fall-out from the Spain's economic and political crisis. Since 2009, these crises had affected Spain in general and The Valencian Country in particular (Méndez Gutiérrez del Valle, 2015). New political parties such as Ciudadanos and Podemos popped up in Spain, and a new electoral coalition — Compromís — appeared in Valencia. Compromís brought together the Valencian nationalists (BNV), the Communists (ICP), and 'The Greens' (Verds Equo) in a coalition that broke the mould with a new message and young, charismatic leaders. The three parties garnered the votes of citizens unhappy with the two big parties that had alternated in office hitherto (Roig, 2017).

After three decades of the two big parties taking turns in government, The Valencian Country shifted towards a six-party system in 2019. Votes were spread to the point where Valencia's present regional parliament has no fewer than six parties whereas in the past it was dominated by the two main parties, with one other much smaller party (Legislatures I, V, VI and VII out of a total of 10 legislatures). Using Laakso and Taagepera's fragmentation index, one can see a rise of over 40% in the number of parties with parliamentary seats (see Table 2). The effective number of parties rose from 2.35 in 2011 to 4.48 in 2015. By contrast, the growth in the number of parties between 2015 and 2019 was much less, with just one new party being added to those existing in 2015 (with the indeed rising from 4.48 to 5.24).

Pedersen Formula (19790):²

$$V = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n |P_{i,t} - P_{i,t-1}|$$

The electoral volatility index shows the change in the party system. The shift in voting patterns can be seen in the fact that many voters switched allegiance from the two tradition main parties — PP and PSPV-PSOE — to the new political parties — Ciudadanos, Podem, and the new Compromís coalition. The indicator reveals whether voters as a whole were happy or unhappy with the outcome of the previous election. The shift in votes reveals the punishment citizens meted out to the Socialists and the PP — especially the latter, which had been in government for over thirty years.

2 The aggregate electoral volatility index measures the net percentage of voters who changed their vote between one election and another. A value of 0 indicates that no party has won or lost votes between two elections. By contrast, a value of 100 shows that all voters cast their votes for a different party. Nobody voted for some of the parties that gained seats previous elections. The index provides information on the size of changes within the system of parties.

The elements in the formula are as follows: n is the number of parties taken into account in the two elections; P_{it} refers to the percentage electoral support received by party i in the elections; P_{it+1} is the electoral support as a percentage obtained by party i in the following election. One should bear in mind that the differences are expressed in absolute terms.

From a historical perspective, the volatility index's changes reveal the transformation of the Valencian party system. The initial two-party system began with the Socialists in power and ended up with PP in the saddle. A moderate multi-party system followed the 2015 Regional Election — a pattern that was consolidated in 2019. The greatest voter volatility (around the 35% mark) was seen in the 2015 election, which revealed both the depth of citizens' distrust of the traditional parties and their willingness to try out new ones. This shift in loyalties led to much greater dispersion of votes, shattering Valencia's old two-party system. In so doing, it mirrored what was happening in the rest of Spain.

While the shift in voting patterns drew a new political map, PP and PSPV-PSOE continued to be the two main parties, albeit now within a much more plural party system. They were still the two biggest parties, each within its own ideological bloc (Right and Left, respectively). The number of seats won by a given party is important when it comes to the role it plays in negotiations to form a coalition government.

IDEOLOGY AND THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The ideological variable also affects the forming of a coalition government. This variable can either attract other parties or repel them during the negotiations. Clearly, its repercussion depends on the need to forge a coalition. If a party wins an absolute majority, it is highly likely that it will choose to govern on its own without asking for the support of other parties. However, this was not the case following the 2015 and 2019

elections in The Valencian Country, where no single party was in a position to form a viable government.

The cumulative volatility index (see Table 4) shows vote dispersal. This dispersion led Valencia's parliamentary parties to negotiate to form a coalition government. Logically, the parties tried to reach agreement with those with which they had the greatest ideological affinity, distinguishing between 'Left' and 'Right'. In the Valencian Parliament emerging from the election, the Left-Wing was made up by Compromís, Podem, and PSPV-PSOE, while the Right-Wing comprised Ciudadanos, PP, and Vox.

From this standpoint, there were various options for opening the negotiations to form a coalition government (see Table 5) based on the electoral results. Both Ciudadanos and PSPV-PSOE appeared as the parties heading a Right-Wing or a Left-Wing coalition, respectively. This was because each had the most seats at its end of the political spectrum. The party that positioned itself closest to the centre had the most chances of reaching agreement and of forming a coalition government (whether a Left-Wing one or a Right-Wing one). In this process, the number of seats won by a party and its negotiating experience and skill also make a difference (Robles Egea, 2004).

In a parliament with 99 seats, 50 seats yields an absolute majority. In this case, the most attractive option was to form a Left-Wing government. That was because it would both enjoy an absolute majority and bring together parties with similar ideologies. None of the other options met the 50-seat criterion. This ruled out a successful Vote of No-Confidence by the par-

Table 5 Possible coalition governments, depending on ideology

Elections	Left		Centre		Right	
	Parties	Seats	Parties	Seats	Parties	Seats
2015	PSPV-PSOE+Comp+Podem	55	PSPV-PSOE + Cs	36	PP+Cs	44
2019	PSPV-PSOE+Comp+Podem	52	PSPV-PSOE+Cs	45	PP+Cs+Vox	47

Source: Corts Valencianes, <http://www.cortsvalencianes.es>. Author.

ties that would find themselves in Opposition, thus ensuring the new Left-Wing government the stability it needed to govern.

As mentioned earlier, the process of forming a coalition government is not limited to deciding who sits in Cabinet. That is because it also covers how the government should act. From this perspective, at the very least the negotiating parties need to agree on the government's legislative programme. This means that the parties must seek points of agreement when drawing up the government's programme. In Robles Egea's words (2000: 47): "The actors try to reach an ideologically more consistent outcome with a view to drawing up future political programmes".

Here, one should recall that a key goal of any political party is to boost its electoral support in the following elections, winning more votes each time round. That is why the party's negotiating position is shaped by its manifesto (since this is the tool used to win over the hearts of the target electorate). The point of departure is one where parties find it easier to find a minimum common denominator with others in drawing up a government programme.

The context in which negotiations are conducted influences the role played by the 'ideology' variable. The 2015 regional and municipal elections marked the beginning of a new political cycle in Spain (Llera, 2015; Orriols and Cordero, 2016). Citizens punished the two big Spanish parties, which had managed the country in the aftermath of the 2008 Financial Crisis. The Socialists lost power in 2011. In 2015, it was the PP's turn to feel the voters' wrath. Voters rejected the PP's response to the crisis, which was to slash Welfare State benefits and raise taxes while bailing out financial institutions. The PP had also been involved in a host of corruption cases, including the Gürtel scandal, in which the Valencian PP party was heavily involved. When the scandal broke, the PP was the governing party in The Valencian Country.

The 2015 Valencian Regional Election thus took place against a background in which voters sought change.

This explains why many who had formerly voted PP or Socialist cast their vote instead for other parties whose discourse was based on the need for change. Furthermore, the leaders of the new parties stressed the need to break with the cosy two-party system that had operated hitherto (López García *et al.*, 2016). Given this setting, one needs to analyse the post-election strategies pursued by Valencia's parliamentary parties (with the exception of PP). All those parties touted the idea of change, highlighting their differences from PP, which had been mired in the corruption that had been rife in Valencia both before and during the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). As a result, the PP was something of a pariah and Ciudadanos, Compromís, Podem, and PSPV-PSOE shunned the idea of governing with a party that had become a byword for sleaze. The PP had been in government for over three decades and 'change' meant kicking this party out of office.

The idea of 'change' became a driving force in the negotiations. The parties were keen to open a new chapter in Valencian politics and that meant eschewing a deal with PP — the party that had been in power in the region for over thirty years. As a result, PP was left on the sidelines in the efforts to form a coalition. Furthermore, given the anger many voters felt towards the PP, there was little political incentive to have any truck with it. The Socialists opened the negotiations yet played their hand with a certain ambiguity. Given that the Socialist Party was a Centre-Left one, it could entertain the idea of partners on the Right (such as Ciudadanos), or on the Left (such as Compromís and Podem). The Socialists quickly realised that their party should stick to the Left. That was because this option not only delivered the absolute majority needed to form a stable government but also drew on ideological affinities when it came to Social Policies, Education, and Health. The fact that this first step was taken by PSPV-PSOE made the party the key player in the coalition. The reward was that the Socialists bagged the presidency.

Compromís, despite initially being rejected as a coalition partners, was keen to form part of the government, not least because the party had never been

in The Executive. Podem, by contrast, took a rather stand-offish position, which only changed after the 2019 elections. Podem initially sought a new Left-Wing Valencian Government but without occupying Cabinet posts. The party's support for change was in parliament and through its signing of the 'Botànic' Agreement (which got its name from the fact it was signed in Valencia's Botanical Garden). Yet the party did not occupy government posts. In the 2015 'Botànic' Agreement and its later versions — including the 2019 one — Podem explicitly supported the coalition government's programme covering public policies.

The consensus on the policy guidelines the new government should follow also helped in reaching agreement on how power should be shared out among the parties. Here, one should recall that during the election campaign, Compromís and Podem presented themselves as agents of change. To do so, they highlighted their differences with the Socialists and distanced their parties from PSPV-PSOE and its discourses. Nevertheless, the agreement on ideological points fostered a climate of trust and eagerness. Both the two new Left-Wing parties and their voters were keen to changing the face of Valencian politics. This commitment overcame their reservations about working with one of Spain's two traditional parties. A blended approach (something that was fairly new in coalition power-sharing arrangements) was introduced as a further trust-building measure.

BLENDING

The coalition government arising from the *Botànic* Agreement was not only based on negotiations but also on internal arrangements. One of its unusual features was the power-sharing mechanism in both Cabinet and other parts of the government. As in any coalition, each party sought to maximise its share of power. However, the mechanism chosen was a fairly new one: blending. This method had been applied for the first time in a coalition government between Socialists and nationalists in Galicia's Regional Government in 2005. However, it proved something of a

failure in Galicia, and PP regained power in the next regional election and has held it ever since. One of the problems in Galicia was the lack of co-ordination among the coalition partners, leading to a loss of public confidence and a feeble government. The approach was abandoned by regional governments until it was taken up anew in The Valencian Country following the 2015 election.

The blending approach incorporated a special formula for sharing political posts among the partners and extended to the second tier of The Executive, which is to say: Deputy Secretaries, Regional Secretaries, and Directorates-General. Under these arrangements, the Regional Secretary working under each Minister would be chosen by another party. The idea was to ensure that departments did not become party fiefdoms and thus a source of friction among the coalition partners. In theory, this would lead to a more cohesive Executive and a system of checks and balances within the Government.

Yet at the beginning of the first *Botànic* Agreement, this arrangement led to personal clashes in some fields, such as those between The President's Office and the Economics Ministry. As a result, power-sharing was ditched in this particular case and the President ended up holding the reins, with the Socialists appointing all the staff in the President's Office. Meanwhile, Compromís ran the Vice-President's Office and the Ministry for Equality and Inclusive Policies, under Mónica Oltra, save in the case of the Directorate-General for Women, which was run by PSPV-PSOE. The ring-fencing of the President's Office and the Vice-President's Office from the general power-sharing arrangement was repeated in the second edition of the *Botànic* Agreement after the 2019 Regional Election, marked by the entry of Unides Podem-EU in the coalition. This means that all the staff in the Second Vice-President's Office and in the Ministry of Housing and Bio-climatic Architecture are chosen by the post-holder, Martínez Dalmau.

The power-sharing model sets Valencia's government apart from other Spanish coalitions. It requires a

Table 6 Distribution of power in the Valencian Regional Government

Year	Compromís				Unides Podem-EU				PSPV-PSOE			
	Number of seats		Cabinet participation		Number of seats		Cabinet participation		Number of seats		Cabinet participation	
	Seats	Seats in Cabinet	Executive Members	Executive weight	Seats	Seats in Cabinet	Executive Members	Executive weight	Seats	Seats in Cabinet	Executive Members	Executive weight
2015	19	34.54 %	5	50 %	13	23.63 %	0	0 %	23	41.81 %	5	50 %
2019	17	32.69 %	4	33.33 %	8	15.38 %	2	16.67 %	27	51.92 %	6	50 %

Source: Corts Valencianes, <http://www.cortsvalecianes.es>, y Generalitat, <http://www.gva.es>. Author.

Minister to include staff from other coalition parties. These staff members are thus in a position to monitor the government's activities from within. The model is based on dialogue, negotiation, and transparency among the coalition partners at all times and before the citizenry. Co-ordination among the parties is vital in constructing the government spokesman's discourse. At the same time, this approach gives rise to a much more democratic approach to politics from the institutional standpoint.

Podem (one of the parties signing the *Botànic* Agreement in 2015) decided not to enter the coalition government and instead opted to offer its parliamentary support for the government's programme and power-sharing arrangements. Thus negotiations on forming a coalition government after the 2015 election involved just two parties. By contrast, after the 2019 election, there were three. Unides Podem-EU's decision to form part of the government in 2019 added another actor to the scene and more complex power-sharing arrangements. The political map following the 2019 election changed with: (1) the addition of another coalition partner in the second *Botànic* Agreement; (2) the fact that the votes won by the Socialists had risen while those won by Compromís and Unides Podem-EU had fallen. The changed political scene led to a new interpretation of the 'blending' approach to power-sharing. First, the mechanism no longer only excluded the President's and the two Vice-Presidents' Offices but was also extended to the Ministry for

Participation, Transparency, Co-operation and Democratic Quality, now in the hands of Unides Podem-EU. Second, Unides Podem-EU staff were not incorporated in those ministries that their politicians did not lead. The 'blending' in this case was thus much more limited in scope. It was only applied in seven out of the eleven ministries and here one should bear in mind that two of those were off limits because they were led by the Vice-President and Deputy Vice-President. Furthermore, the blending arrangements only affected Compromís and PSPV-PSOE staff, given that Unides Podem-EU was left out of the mechanism.

An analysis of the Government's make-up reveals the importance of the co-operation prevailing during the formation of the 2015 coalition. Generosity and trust were key success factors in forming the government. The two coalition partners agreed to share their power equally when it came to Ministries. Here, the Presidency went to the party that had won the most votes. Meanwhile, the Vice-President/Spokesman's Office, and the Ministry for Equality and Inclusive Policies went to the other party. The Executive comprised the nine Ministries and the Presidency. Five were held by Compromís and the other five by PSPV-PSOE. This equal share-out did not take account of the votes won by each political party. In the second-tier of Government posts, power was shared in accordance with the 'blending' formula described earlier. By contrast, in 2019 each party's presence in the Government reflected the number of parliamentary seats it had (see Table 6).

The reading of the data shown in Table 6 indicates that to form a coalition government through the second *Botànic* Agreement, all three parties had to be generous with their partners when it came to power-sharing. The Socialists decided to put themselves on the same footing as the Valencian nationalists when it came to forming a government, even though they had more parliamentary seats. In 2019, PSPV-PSOE showed the same negotiating skill in incorporating a third party into the coalition. The 2019 negotiations were trilateral instead of bilateral. Power now had to be shared out among three parties, making reaching agreement that much harder. The Valencian nationalists' unwillingness to lose political ground in the government by giving in to Podem's demands to be put on an equal footing with Compromís was a hurdle to signing a second *Botànic* Agreement. Squaring the parties' diverse interests proved tricky. Indeed, right up until the day of the investiture debate, there was still no agreement on sharing out the Ministries and Vice-Presidencies. A last-minute meeting of the three leaders finally broke the log-jam. Settling on the government's organisational structure was also hard. It was solved by boosting staff members — something that was at odds with the austerity message of the first *Botànic* Agreement but that gave each of the coalition parties what it wanted. On the one hand, compared with 2015, there was a jump from 9 to 11 ministries, affecting the Valencian Government's overall structure. The number of Under-Secretaries rose from 10 to 11. The 22 Regional Secretaries rose to 29. Meanwhile, the number of Directorates-General leapt from 56 to 85. The biggest leap of all was in the number of advisors, which rose to 116. Here, one should note that there were 'just' 70 advisors in the previous legislature, a little below the maximum of 74 established by the Government Decree 185/2015 of the 16th of October. This naturally begged questions as to whether there was proper control over staffing levels. In percentage terms, both the nationalists and the Socialists made concessions. The Socialists, who had gained four more seats in the 2019 election, kept the same share of power as in 2015. Meanwhile, the nationalists (who had lost three seats) had to give

up a ministry to Unides Podem-EU. This was despite the fact that the latter party had lost five seats in the 2019 election. The expansion of political posts gave the Socialists one more Minister and thus the same political weight as the nationalists in absolute terms, thanks to the rise in the number of Regional Secretaries and Directorates-General. Unides Podem-EU came away with two Ministries, one of which was headed by the Second Vice-President. To sum up, the formation of a coalition government is only possible if the outcome of the political horse-trading satisfies all parties both at the top tier and second tiers of government.

There were basically three factors making such an arrangement possible. The first was that the Socialists had been out of power in The Valencian Country since 1995 and had lost all the Regional Elections ever since. Regaining the Presidency gave the party a boost and the chance to show that it was capable of governing. The second was that Compromís had never been in government and lacked the electoral muscle needed to get in by itself. The coalition offered Compromís a golden opportunity to step on to the regional stage (hitherto, it had been confined to the municipal realm). Third, the pact between the parties was not limited to the Regional Government but also involved agreements to govern together at the municipal level. Here, the broader goal was to offer a viable political alternative to the Right-Wing. Valencian nationalists and Socialists reached agreements in those town councils where they had a good chance of governing. The pact involved lending each other mutual support and for the party winning the most votes to choose the Mayor. An effort was made to extend the *Botànic* model to the local sphere, election results permitting. That said, there are always exceptions. Thus, while the Socialists held the Valencian Government presidency with Ximo Puig, in The City of Valencia, it was the nationalists who held the Mayor's Office with Joan Ribó. Running Valencia's City Hall highlighted Compromís' role and made the party happy with the outcome of the negotiations (Barón, 1991; Laver and Schofeld, 1991).

FINAL REFLECTIONS

The Valencian coalition model based on the *Botànic* Agreement came to fruition because the election results drove the parties to strike a deal. This logic stemmed from political fragmentation. First, it was not only parliamentary arithmetic that drove efforts to form a coalition but also a strong wish to push through a political programme. This goal could only be achieved with an absolute majority. Second, the ideological affinity among the parties made it that much easier to draw up a government programme. Third, aware of the need for power-sharing arrangements that kept all sides happy, three new posts were created to ensure each party got a chance to shine.

These posts were: The President's Office, and the two Vice-President's Offices. Each party needed its 'pay-off', namely: (a) the chance to incorporate its proposals in government policies; (b) holding both first-tier and second-tier posts government posts (in addition to having its own bevy of advisors). Fourth, the parties showed a conciliatory streak during the constant negotiations on both the government's legislative programme and on how political posts would be shared out. It was a regional coalition government that sprang from: a desire for change; the aftermath of the 2008 Financial Crisis; citizens' wrath at the PP's corruption spree during its three-decade long spell in government.

ANNEX 1

Table 7 Political party acronyms

ACRONYM	NAME
AP	Alianza Popular
CC	Coalició Compromís pel País Valencià
BNV	Bloc Nacionalista Valencià
CDS	Centro Democrático y Social
Cs	Ciudadanos
IPV	Iniciativa de Poble Valencià
EU	Esquerra Unida
PCE	Partido Comunista de España
PDP	Partido Demócrata Popular
PODEM	Podem
PP	Partido Popular
PSPV-PSOE	Partit Socialista del País Valencià –
UL	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
Unides Podem-EU	Unión Liberal
UPV	Unides Podem-Esquerra Unida
UV	Unitat del Poble Valencià
Verds Equo	Unió Valenciana

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The 2019 Local Elections in Valencia's Metropolitan Area*

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ABSTRACT

Voting behaviour in Valencia's Metropolitan Area can be split into four periods: (1) During the early years of democracy (1979-1991) following the Franco dictatorship, the area was a stronghold of the Left; (2) In 1991, the City of Valencia switched and was governed by the Right; (3) In 2011, the Right extended its control to the whole of the Metropolitan Area; (4) In the May 2015 elections, the Left won not only in the 'red' metropolitan belt but also in the City of Valencia. This study looks at what happened in the last set of local elections in 2019. To this end, we begin with a brief review of the election results, voting trends, and the institutional performance of each party since the first post-dictatorship local elections in 1979. We then go on to analyse the electoral behaviour of each of the parties, breaking this down by geographical variables: town/village size, *comarcas* ('counties'), and the so-called 'red belt' before drawing our conclusions.

Keywords: elections, voting behaviour, Local Government, Metropolitan Area, Local Politics.

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Electoral behaviour in the Valencia Metropolitan Area is marked by four key features: (1) During the early years of Spain's restoration of democracy (1979-1991), both the centre of Valencia and its 'Red Belt' were seen as Left-Wing strongholds; (2) In 1991, the City of Valencia became governed by the Right-Wing for the first time, first as a coalition government, and then under PP alone with an absolute majority; (3) In 2011, the Right-Wing victory spread to the municipalities ringing the Capital to take in what up until then had been 'The Red Belt', which fell to the Right during this legislature; (4) The May 2015 elections saw a shift back to the Left, which won not only in 'The Red Belt' but also in The City of Valencia.

In this study, we shall examine what happened in the last local elections, which were held in 2019. To this end, after setting out the election results in the Metropolitan Area on polling day (the 26th of May 2019), we shall briefly examine voting trends and the institutional value of votes for each party. We shall also analyse the election behaviour of each of the parties, broken down by geographic variables — population size, counties, and 'The Red Belt'. The final section sets out our conclusions.

THE 2019 LOCAL ELECTIONS AND THE VALENCIAN METROPOLITAN AREA: POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RELEVANCE

Local elections were held throughout Spain on the 26th of May 2019. These were affected by the State and Regional elections that were to be held little over a month later on the 28th of April. This was something wholly new in Spain's short modern democratic history. Furthermore, it was the first time in The Valencian Country that local elections had not been held on the same day as the Regional Election. While the local elections came first, their results were influenced by the looming General Election. From an institutional standpoint, preparations for the General Election were held in abeyance until the local and regional elections in other parts of Spain were over. They were also affected by the

results of the Valencian Regional Election in which the Left, although fragmented, had won by a comfortable margin. The uncertainties of the new electoral scenario were added to the traditional explanations given for the way citizens voted, to wit, structural factors (social class, education, age, gender, etc.) and other factors (management record, programmes and discourses, corruption, leadership, etc.). That is why what happened on the 26th of May in Valencia (one of Spain's most dynamic metropolitan areas) was of great importance. The metropolitan area not only has a great deal of institutional clout, in the form of the Mayorship of Valencia, and the Valencia Metropolitan Board but also bears on citizens' attitudes following the political fragmentation in the wake of the 2008 Financial Crisis. In many cases, electoral behaviour in the area has been a harbinger of electoral events and trends in the rest of Spain.

The Valencia Metropolitan Area constitutes "A socio-spatial system that emerges from the spread of a central settlement" (Martínez and Martínez, 2002). Our working hypothesis is that Valencia is an urban nucleus that ended up spreading many of its features further afield, although these become less marked the farther away one gets from the Capital. The same thing can also be seen when it comes to the electoral dimension. It must be said that the criteria for delimiting this area are both diverse and hotly debated. For the purposes of this study, our point of departure was that metropolitan areas comprise a central municipality which meets certain conditions in terms of population size. In this case, the central municipal is The City of Valencia and those areas that are strongly linked to it by residence-work relations. It includes municipalities of over 100,000 inhabitants, or of between 50,000 and 100,000 ringed by bordering localities with a population of at least 50,000. The criteria for deciding whether a locality forms part of the metropolitan area are: 20% or more of travel to or from the central municipality by over a 100 workers or 15% of travel to or from the central municipality of over a 100 workers for linked localities. The algorithm used follows conventional criteria, adapted to the special features of Spanish urban systems. Annex

1 of this papers lists the 74 municipalities meeting such criteria and which we have therefore defined as Valencia's Metropolitan Area.

The Valencia Metropolitan Area is the third largest built-up area in Spain. Under our definition, it has a population of over two million inhabitants. In Valencia's case, the intricate web of interrelationships found in this area is even more important than the population size. As we have already noted, the metropolitan area is one that hosts a large number of industrial, economic, social, and cultural nodes (Castells, 2010; Rozenblat, 2010; Salom and Fajardo, 2018). From this relational perspective, Salom and Fajardo argue that while Valencia's Metropolitan Area does not occupy key strategic positions in international trade, it nevertheless links countries and regions with the wider world economy. Its trade links extend to European, Latin American, and other Mediterranean countries. From this standpoint, Valencia occupies a second-tier position after Madrid and Barcelona as a city with major international functions (trade and industry). That said, it punches beneath its population weight when it comes to advanced services (Halbert, Cicille, Pumain and Rozenblat, 2012). The region's economic potential stems from decades of economic development which began in the 1970s, forging thriving industries that set up on the coast near the The City of Valencia. This economic growth attracted many migrants from Spain's rural, inland areas. These combination of these processes led to rapid infrastructural development — motorways, dual carriageways, the port and airport — and finally to a strong service economy based on swift digitalisation, supported by a wide network of universities and science parks. In a nutshell, the importance of the Valencia Metropolitan Area and its socio-economic dynamics underpins the region's key political role. This is particularly so in a Europe racked by tensions and issues, including the rise of nationalism and populism, Brexit, migratory crises, and an incipient trade war between the worlds biggest powers. Against this background, the electoral behaviour of these big metropolitan areas can be seen as a litmus test, revealing political trends in advanced societies and where these might lead.

THE RESULTS OF THE 2019 LOCAL ELECTIONS

The results of the May 2019 local elections in the Valencia Metropolitan Area are shown in Table 1. PSPV-PSOE won nearly 30% of the votes, the most of any party, followed by PP with 22%. Compromís came a close third with almost 20% of the votes. Ciudadanos trailed some way behind in fourth place with a little under 13%. EUPV won 5.84% of the votes, with Vox a little way behind with 4.88%.

Table 1 Election results of the main parties in the 2019 municipal elections in the Valencia Metropolitan Area

	Number of votes	Percentage of votes
PSPV-PSOE	265 546	29.01%
PP	201 201	21.98%
COMPROMIS	181 416	19.82%
CIUDADANOS	118 078	12.90%
EUPV-PODEM	53 442	5.84%
VOX	44 725	4.88%
OTROS	50 669	5.53%
TOTAL	915 077	100.00%

Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

IU and Podemos' results are grouped for the 2019 election, given that in many municipalities, the parties offered a joint candidate.

In general, we can say that although PP and PSPV-PSOE were the parties winning the most votes, they failed to win big majorities. Taken together, the two main parties scarcely accounted for over 50% of the votes cast. Compromís came in as a close third, followed some way behind by Ciudadanos in fourth place. Despite coming third and fourth respectively, Compromís and Ciudadanos between them accounted for no less than 32% of the votes cast.

Table 2 Electoral results in the Valencia Metropolitan Area in the 2019 local, regional, and general elections

		LOCAL	REGIONAL	GENERAL
PP	Nº	201 201	182 359	181 774
	%	21.98%	17.18%	16.94%
PSPV-PSOE	Nº	265 546	233 728	285 397
	%	29.01%	22.03%	26.60%
COMPROMÍS	Nº	181 416	205 993	78 337
	%	19.82%	19.41%	7.30%
CIUDADANOS	Nº	118 078	193 903	195 549
	%	12.90%	18.27%	18.23%
EUPV-PODEM	Nº	53 442	81 414	159 929
	%	5.84%	7.67%	14.90%
VOX	Nº	44 725	111 557	128 628
	%	4.88%	10.51%	11.99%
OTHERS	Nº	50 669	51 995	43 024
	%	5.53%	4.93%	4.04%

Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

One should also note that taken together, Left-Wing parties accounted for 54.67% of the vote — significantly more than that polled by Right-Wing parties 39.76%. These results led to the formation of progressive councils in most of the municipalities in the metropolitan area. The Left therefore scored a notable victory over the Right in one of Spain's most economically dynamic areas by a margin of almost 15 percentage points.

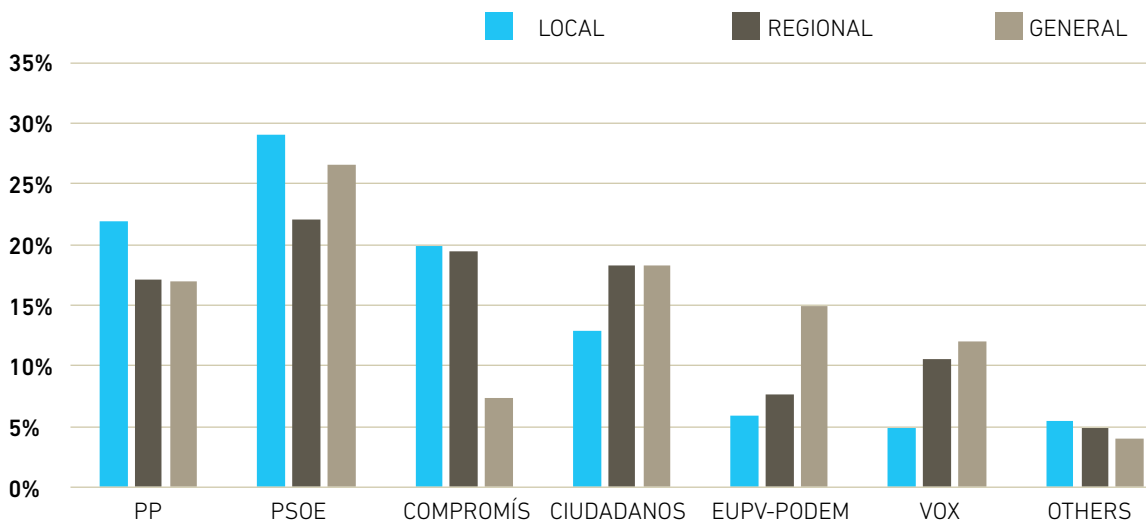
That said, the results of the local, regional, and general elections in the Valencia Metropolitan Area showed significant differences (Table 2). On the one hand, PSPV-PSOE was the most voted for party in all three elections, the local elections being the ones in which it gained the highest percentage of votes cast (29.01%). This fell to 26.60% in the Spanish General Election, and to 22.03% in the Regional Election. The PP also did best in the local elections (21.92%), less well in the Regional Election (17.18%), and worst in the General Election (16.94%). The two parties'

local consolidation over the years may help explain these results.

By contrast, Compromís won almost the same share of the vote in the local and regional elections (19.82% and 19.41%, respectively) but only a paltry 7.30% in the General Election. The make-up of the vote among the potential electors of this coalition of parties is worth examining in detail. The fact that Compromís' much worse result in the General Election (12% behind the other elections) only seems explicable through a transfer of votes between Compromís and EUPV-Podem. While the latter party won low percentages of the vote in the local and regional elections (5.84% and 7.67%, respectively), in the General Elections its share rose to 14.9%.

Although it falls outside the scope of our study, one should mention that Compromís, as the second biggest party in the regional election, and the third in the local ones, nevertheless drops to sixth place in the General

Figure 1 2019 results in the local, regional, and general elections in the Valencia Metropolitan Area



Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

Election — trailing a long way behind other parties such as Ciudadanos, EUPV-Podem, and even Vox.

From this standpoint, one should note that Ciudadanos' worst results were in the local elections (12.90%), compared with 18.27% and 18.23%, in the regional and local elections, respectively. The difference of almost five percentage points matches the five points PP gained in the local elections compared with the regional and general elections.

Coming at the back of the pack, Vox's poor performance in the local elections can be attributed to its lack of branches throughout the Valencia Metropolitan Area municipalities. Thus, while the party won 10.51% in the Regional Election and 11.99% in the General Election, it only got 4.88% of the votes cast in the local elections.

With regard to voting and abstention in local, regional, and general elections, contrary to what one might think, abstention was greatest in the local elections at roughly 35%. This was ten percentage points above

the abstention rate in the 2019 regional and general elections in The Valencian Country. This may have been because the general and regional elections were held on the same day. Here, one should note that Valencians take most interest in the General Election. Another factor was the need to ensure a legitimate, stable government at a time of political crisis. This would explain why voters were more eager to cast their ballot papers — an enthusiasm that may have spilled over to the regional election.

HISTORICAL TRENDS IN VOTES CAST IN THE VALENCIA METROPOLITAN AREA

The results of the elections held on the 26th of May 2019 can only be understood if one looks at the historical trends showing voter behaviour over time. Here, it is worth looking at the history of election results in the Valencia Metropolitan Area.

The first local elections held in 1979 were marked by a high abstention rate of 32.89%. PSPV-PSOE was the

party winning most support: 251 106 votes (36.84%); UCD was the second biggest party with 222 697 votes (32.67%). PCE came third with 118 995 votes (17.46%). Alianza Popular (now the PP) stood in the elections as Coalición Democrática (CD) and only got 811 votes (0.12%) given that it only presented candidates in three municipalities in Valencia's Metropolitan Area.

In 1983, the abstention rate was 28.03%, less than in earlier elections. PSPV-PSOE won 387 954 votes (50.66%), which gave it an absolute majority in the metropolitan area. Given that the UCD had vanished from the scene, the AP-PDP-UL-UV obtained better results with 235 264 votes (30.72%), becoming the second biggest party. PCE suffered a major setback, winning only 70 271 votes (9.17%). Other parties such as Centro Democrático y Social (CDS) and Unitat del Poble Valencià (UPV) formed part of the Opposition in some areas.

In 1987, the number of votes cast grew to 800 262 votes. PSPV-PSOE got 317 2256 votes (39.64%),

losing their absolute majority. The second-biggest party was Unió Valenciana (UV), with 121 612 votes (15.20%). CDS won 75 184 votes (9.4%), followed by IU-UPV with 67 537 votes (9.12%). In some municipalities EUPV stood in a coalition with UPV. This time round, AP stood on its own and only won 58 065 votes (7.26%).

The 1991 elections seem to be more of the same but there were some important changes. The percentage of votes cast fell to 66.1%. PSPV-PSOE won 321 003 votes (41.7%), while PP (formerly, AP), obtained 172 179 (22.37%), a step up that was mainly at the expense of CDS, which only won 18 225 votes (2.37%) this time round. UV votes grew slightly to 131 956 votes (17.14%). EUPV, which stood alone in this election, got 65 102 votes (8.56%); meanwhile UPV, its former partners in some municipalities, won 12 071 votes (1.57%), mainly gleaned in The City of Valencia. One should add that this election marked the beginning of a major change in the political landscape with more votes being cast for the Right Wing, especially for

Partido Popular, in The City of Valencia. There, the Right Wing parties taken together won more votes than the Left Wing parties did.

The 1995 local elections were a watershed. The total number of votes cast rose greatly to 932 151 votes (74.47%). The PP made the biggest leap forward, doubling its votes to 376 586 (40.4%). At the same time, support for PSPV-PSOE waned to 282 992 votes (30.35%). EUPV made major gains, albeit in coalition with Esquerra Valenciana (EV): 123 850 votes (13.29%). UV began its decline, winning only 84 950 votes (9.11%). UPV, allied with Bloc Nacionalista, also did badly: 15 677 votes (1.68%), falling below the threshold needed to win seats.

The 1999 elections, unlike those in some other regions, brought few changes. The votes cast fell to 867 340 (65%). PP once again gained a majority with 353 071 votes (40.7%), followed by PSPV-PSOE, with 288 679 votes (33.28%). The reason these elections were seen as a watershed was mainly because of the large numbers of votes lost by EUPV, which only got 53 555 votes (6.17%), and the waning support for Unió Valenciana (UV), with 61 103 votes (7.04%).

Voting recovered somewhat in 2003, with almost 70% of the electorate casting their ballot, to reach 948 616 votes. Partido Popular kept its majority with 404 160 votes (42.61%), followed by PSPV-PSOE, with 330 872 votes (34.88%). The two main parties gained roughly another 50 000 votes. EUPV, together with Izquierda Republicana (IR), Esquerra Valenciana (EV) and Els Verds formed a coalition under the 'Entesa' banner, winning 67 315 votes (7.1%). These elections marked the UV's swan-song: 44 712 votes (4.71%). Last but not least, a new party — Bloc Nacionalista Valencià (Bloc), whose support had grown in earlier elections — won almost 37 000 votes (4.35%).

In 2007, the total number of votes cast was similar to that in earlier elections: 937 781 votes. Partido Popular won 456 416 votes (48.67%). It was followed by PSPV-PSOE, with 324 083 votes (34.56%). By contrast, EUPV suffered a big reverse despite having allied with

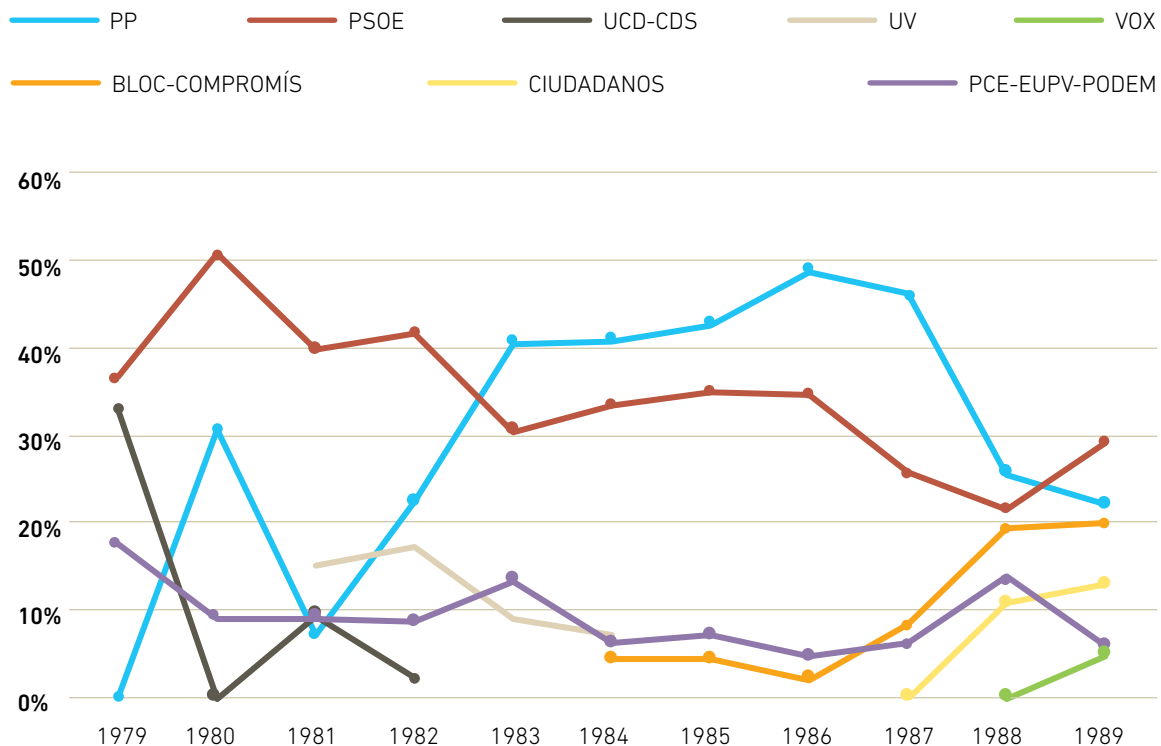
local progressive parties (Els Verds and IR) in some municipalities, winning 44 178 votes (4.71%). El Bloc, which joined with Els Verds, in some places, won 20 162 votes (2.14%).

In 2011, even though the two big parties lost votes both in absolute and percentage terms, they still made up the majority of the votes cast. PP won 454 136 votes (46.18%). It was followed by PSPV-PSOE, which suffered a big drop in support with 253 351 votes (25.76%). Compromís appeared on the scene as a coalition, including parties such as El Bloc, Els Verds-Esquerra Ecologista del País Valencià (EV-EE) and Iniciativa del Poble Valencià. This coalition won

83 573 votes (8.50%). EUPV made big gains, winning 62 784 votes (6.38%).

Last, in the the 2015 elections, the two big parties lost much of the support that they had built up since the 1980s. PP won 253 498 votes (25.56%) — losing almost half of its support compared with the 2011 election; PSPV-PSOE won 212 067 votes (21.38%), forty-one thousand votes less than in the 2011 election. By contrast, other political parties made gains: Compromís, 193 017 votes (19.46%); Ciudadanos, 106 143 votes (10.70%), and parties close to Podemos making up roughly 80 361 votes (8.10%). Although support for EU weakened slightly, its vote generally

Figure 2 The trend of parties' votes in the Valencia Metropolitan Area (1979 – 2019)



Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

bore up in the area's municipalities with 56 029 votes (5.65%).

Figure 2 shows the trends in the main parties' votes spanning the period from the first local elections held in 1979 (shortly after the Franco dictatorship) to the last ones in 2019. The Figure clearly shows PSPV-PSOE's dominance in the 1980s, PP's dominance in the 1990s and the 2000s, and the strong emergence of Compromís in the 2015 election, in which the last party practically equalled the votes of the first two. Ciudadanos and Podemos also gained a significant number of votes in 2015, as did Vox in 2019, confirming a new, highly fragmented political landscape with no single party commanding an absolute majority.

Over this forty-year period, the votes cast for the sundry political parties have gone through ups and downs, some of them dramatic. PSPV-PSOE was the party winning the most votes in elections between 1979 and 1991, reaching its zenith (50%) in the 1983 election. In the period from 1995 to 2007 its share of the vote swung between 30% and 35%, falling to a little over 25% in 2011, before dropping further to almost 20% in 2015. Even so, the party recovered many of the mayorships lost in earlier elections thanks to the rise of other Left-Wing parties, allowing PSPV-PSOE to form coalition governments. Finally, the party boosted its vote to 30% in 2019, once again becoming the most voted for party in the metropolitan area after 28 years on the slide.

With regard to PP (up until 1989, Alianza Popular), the party went from having virtually no votes in 1979 to winning almost 30% in 1983, before dropping almost 7% in 1987 before gradually rising to 40% in 1995. The last figure was maintained in the following three elections, PP being the party winning the most votes. It gained almost 50% of votes in the 2007 and 2011 elections. In 2015, even though it still got more votes than any other party, its share of the total vote plummeted by twenty percentage points, leaving it only a little way ahead of the second most voted for party, (PSOE) and the third party (Compromís). This meant that PP lost most of the mayorships in the area, which were picked up by the Left. In this last

election, PP's support dropped yet again, this time to almost 22% of the vote. From 1995 to 2011, PP and PSPV-PSOE were the two main parties by a long chalk. It was from 2015 onwards that the two-party system began to fall apart. This decáde for both parties (especially for PP) stemmed from the social and economic crisis beginning in 2008 and the way they had dealt with it. The aftermath of the crisis gave wings to other parties such as Compromís, Ciudadanos, and Podemos (Martín, Bodoque, Rochina and Clemente, 2017). This was particularly true of, Compromís since becoming a coalition in 2010, with its share of vote rising — especially from 2011 to 2015, when it put on ten percentage points to become the third-largest party (19.46%), close on the heels of PSPV-PSOE (21.38%) and PP (25.56%). In the latest election, Compromís' share stayed steady (19.82%), close behind PP (21.98%), but trailing almost ten points behind PSPV-PSOE (29.01%).

Ciudadanos, which produced one of biggest upsets in the 2015 election (10.70%), failed to greatly boost its results in 2019 (12.90%). Even so, one can say that the party consolidated its presence in the Valencia Metropolitan Area during the last election.

The EUPV-Podem coalition, after a surge in the 2015 local election (13.75%) (which combined two parties that until then had stood separately), saw its share more than halve to just 5.84%.

Vox, together with PSPV-PSOE, is the party that has grown most. It has gone from having no seats at all (its votes previously hardly reached 1% of those in the metropolitan area) to almost 5% (4.88%, to be exact) and to have councillors in some of the Town Councils in the Metropolitan Area, especially in The City of Valencia.

THE ELECTORATE'S LOCAL BEHAVIOUR WITHIN THE METROPOLITAN AREA

In the foregoing sections, we have seen how electoral behaviour in the Valencia Metropolitan Area is

Table 3 Votes cast for parties in 2019 in relation to population size

		PSOE	PP	COMPRO- MÍS	CS	EUPV- PODEM	VOX
Valencia	Nº	74 597	84 328	106 395	68 283	16 158	28 126
	%	19.17%	21.67%	27.34%	17.54%	4.15%	7.22%
Over 50 000	Nº	35 479	17 547	11 621	9666	8328	6257
	%	36.96%	18.28%	12.10%	10.07%	8.67%	6.51%
Between 10 000 and 50 000	Nº	116 154	71 699	48 517	31 116	23 512	8919
	%	36.08%	22.27%	15.07%	9.66%	7.30%	2.77%
Under 10 000	Nº	39 316	27 627	14 883	9013	5444	1423
	%	36.36%	25.55%	13.76%	8.33%	5.03%	1.31%

Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

markedly different from those in other areas. Yet this behaviour is far from being homogeneous within the area. We shall now examine the electoral behaviour of each of the parties, breaking it down by sundry variables: population size, counties, and 'The Red Belt' before drawing our conclusions.

Votes by the population size of municipalities

There are marked differences in the results obtained by the political parties in the 2019 local elections, depending on the population size of the municipalities (Table 3 and Figure 3).

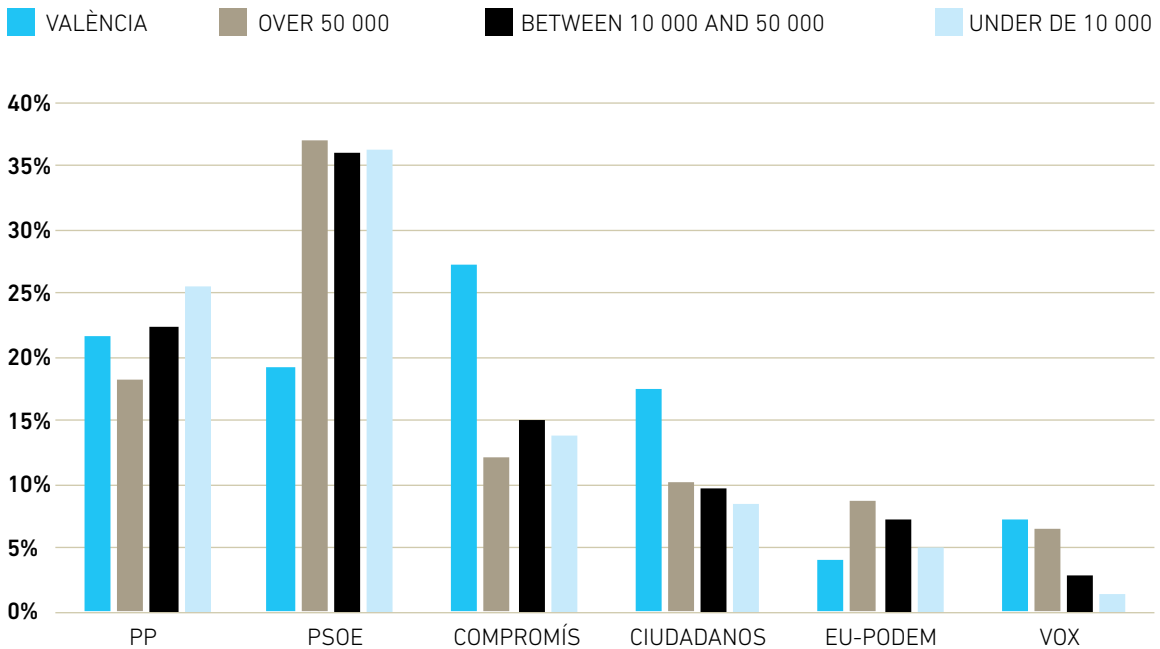
First, one should note that voters in The City of Valencia show different behaviour from those in the other municipalities. Compromís had a lead in The City of Valencia of almost seven percentage points over the runner-up, which in this case was PP. This allowed the Mayor, Joan Ribó, to have a second term of office (with the support of PSPV-PSOE). Vox's rise was also marked in The City of Valencia, winning over 7% of votes and leaving EUPV-Podem in sixth place without a seat on the City Council.

In the rest of the municipal population bands, PSPV-PSOE was the party that got the most votes with a

36% share, followed by PP with got more support the smaller the municipality. The reverse was true for Ciudadanos and Vox, which received fewer votes the smaller the municipality. Something similar occurred with EUPV-Podem, even though its worst results were in The City of Valencia. With regard to another Left-Wing party, Compromís, even though it won by a decent margin in The City of Valencia, it did less well in the other municipalities, where it generally got between 10 and 15% of the vote: a little over 12% in municipalities with over 50 000 inhabitants; 15.07% in municipalities between 10 000 and 50 000 inhabitants; and under 14% in municipalities of under 10 000 inhabitants. Nevertheless, it was the party that got most votes in most municipalities and with, together with PSPV-PSOE, would end up governing the most municipal councils, whether or not it held the mayorship.

Figure 3 shows that Compromís and Ciudadanos gleaned most of their support in The City of Valencia. By contrast, PSPV-PSOE and EU-Podem received many fewer votes in the Metropolis. With the exception of The City of Valencia, the smaller the municipality's population, the greater the support for PP. Vox followed the opposite pattern, to wit: the smaller the municipality,

Figure 3 The main parties' 2019 Local Election by groups of municipalities in relation to population size



Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

the smaller its share of the votes. This voting behaviour in terms of population bands is highly significant in political terms, if we start from the hypothesis that vote transfers from Left to Right or *vice versa* were negligible (see the CIS post-election surveys. Here:

It is relatively easy to see how votes shifted between PSPV-PSOE, Compromís, and EU-Podem. In The City of Valencia, the party gaining most from Left-Wing votes was Compromís, with 27.34% of the votes. Nevertheless, almost 15% of the votes in smaller municipalities were cast for PSPV-PSOE, whose overall support grew by fifteen points, and even a little more in the smallest municipalities (precisely where EUPV-Podem got their worst results).

Likewise, we can see how Right-Wing voters behaved with regard to PP, Ciudadanos and Vox. PP won around

22% of votes in The City of Valencia and in municipalities of between 10 000 and 15 000 inhabitants, no doubt among other reason because PP has a strong branch network throughout the region. The reverse occurred with Ciudadanos and Vox, which got better results in The City of Valencia and whose votes steadily dropped the smaller the municipality.

Table 4 Voting/abstention by population size in 2019

	Voting	Abstaining
Valencia	66.32%	33.68%
Over 50 000	59.91%	40.09%
Between 10 000 and 50 000	64.06%	35.94%
Under 10 000	68.78%	31.22%

Source: ARGOS (Authors).

With regard to voter participation and abstention in relation a municipality's population size, one should note that municipalities with under 10 000 inhabitants had the lowest abstentions rate — 31.22% — followed by The City of Valencia with a little under 34%. It was highly significant that the abstention rate in municipalities with over 50 000 inhabitants exceeded 40%, which is precisely where PP got its worst results.

One also needs to take account of the variation in abstention since the previous local election. If we compare the abstention rate in 2015 with that in 2019, in the latest election, abstention rose by no less than 8% in municipalities of over 50 000 inhabitants. Two factors might explain this rise: (1) there was no Valencian regional election on the same date in 2015; (2) Right-Wing voters may have lost heart after seeing the results of the General and Regional elections (the latter elsewhere in Spain) a couple of months earlier.

Votes by counties within the Metropolitan Area

Like in the previous case, there were differences in electoral behaviour in the 2019 local election at the county scale. Looking at Table 5 and Figure 4, PP got similar results in Horta Oest and Nord counties — 20-

21% of votes — but in Horta Sud support for the party rose significantly, to reach a vote share of almost 26%. PSPV-PSOE was the party that got the most votes in all the Horta counties. This result was highly significant in Horta Oest, where the party won almost 45% of votes, to the detriment of Compromís which barely got 11% and did little better than Ciudadanos, which got similar results of between 9% and 11%. EUPV-Podem came next, just a little way behind with votes shares of between 6% and 7.5%, except in The City of Valencia. One should also note that in Horta Sud county, Vox only got a 0.63% share of votes — much less than that in Horta Oest and Nord, where the party got between 3.5% and 4.5%. Vox's very poor showing in Horta Sud seems to be linked to the good results obtained by PP in this county, as we have just seen.

It is worth focusing on the greater or lesser homogeneity of the electoral results depending on counties and political parties. PP's results were fairly even in each of the counties, with a range of about 5 points between 19.94% in Horta Oest and 25.73% in Horta Sud,. By contrast, PSPV-PSOE showed a much greater range — over twenty points — between 19.17% in The City of Valencia, and 44.90% in Horta Oest. That said, PSPV-PSOE's good results in Horta Nord, 35.07%, and

Table 5 Results of the 2019 elections by counties in the Horta area

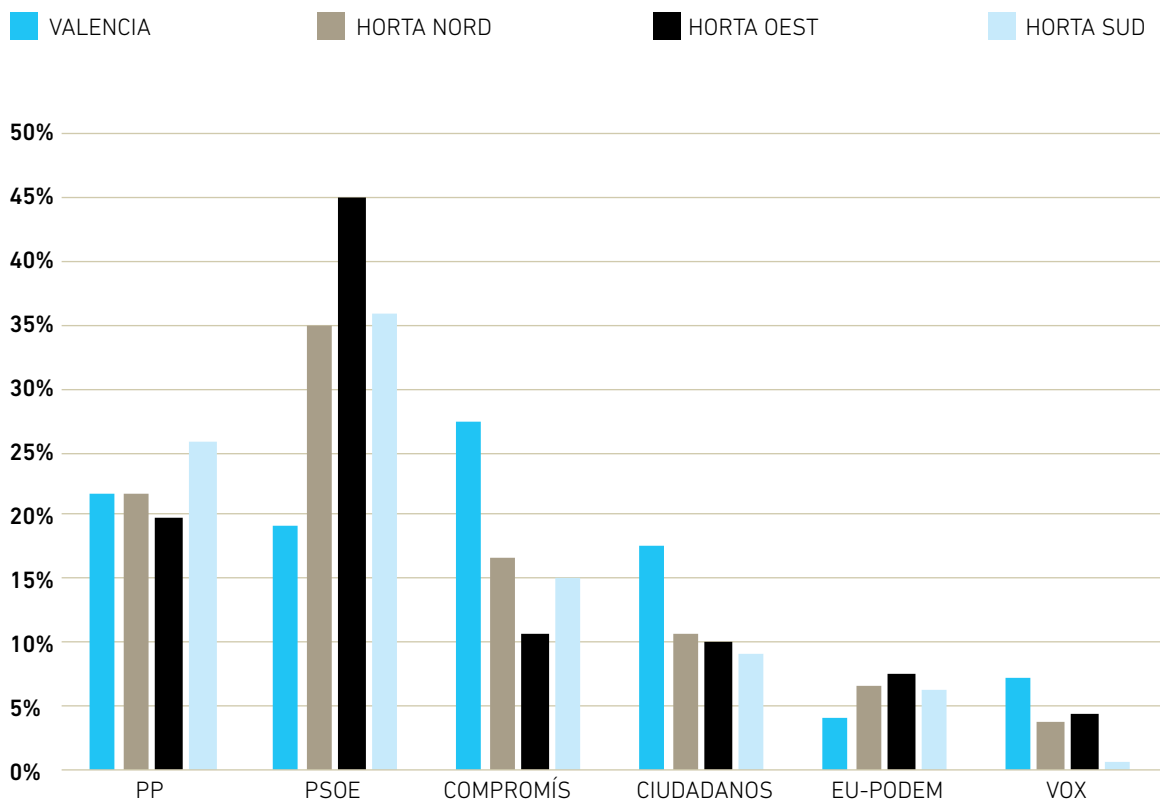
		PP	PSOE	COMPRO- MÍS	CS	EUPV- PODEM	VOX
Valencia	Nº	84 328	74 597	106 395	68 283	16 158	28 126
	%	21.67%	19.17%	27.34%	17.54%	4.15%	7.22%
Horta Nord	Nº	24 810	40 044	18 945	12 199	7683	4342
	%	21.73%	35.07%	16.59%	10.68%	6.72%	3.80%
Horta Oest	Nº	32 531	73 243	17 659	16 313	12311	7327
	%	19.94%	44.90%	10.82%	10.00%	7.54%	4.49%
Horta Sud	Nº	22 288	31 119	13 214	7871	5529	546
	%	25.73%	35.93%	15.25%	9.08%	6.38%	0.63%

Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

in Horta Sud, 35.93%, lay within a much narrower nine-point range. The range of results in Compromís' case was also wide, spanning from 10.82% of the votes in Horta Oest to 27.34% in The City of Valencia — a seventeen-point difference. However, EUPV-Podem's results were fairly even, with between 4.15% in The City of Valencia (a percentage below the 5% threshold, leaving the party without seats) and 7.54% in Horta Oest — a difference of roughly three points. Last, Vox showed wide variation, with a very poor showing in Horta Sud (just 0.63% of votes) to a more worthwhile 7.22%, achieved in The City of Valencia, with almost 7 points difference, reflecting the geographic concentration of Vox's incipient party network.

Figure 4 clearly reflects these differences in voting behaviour. In PP's case, the purple bar for Horta Sud stands out, while the rest are pretty much the same. In the case of PSPV-PSOE and Compromís, their respective blue bars (The City of Valencia) show different voter behaviour, revealing that Left-Wing voters chose to back Compromís rather than PSOE. Meanwhile, the picture in the Horta counties was the other way round, especially in Horta Oest (green bars), where Left-Wing voters backed PSPV-PSOE rather than Compromís. In Ciudadanos' case, its support in The City of Valencia stands out against a fairly even but much less impressive performance in the Horta counties. EUPV-Podem's results are also fairly even in the Horta counties but

Figure 4 Party results in The City of Valencia and the three counties in the Horta area



Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

unlike Ciudadanos, are better than its results in The City of Valencia (blue bars). Finally, Vox did much better in The City of Valencia (blue bar) than in the Horta counties (and with an almost negligible result in Horta Sud, shown by the purple bar).

The area's 'Red Belt' vote

Voting trends in what used to be known as Valencia's 'Red Belt' shows how the PSPV-PSOE and PP two-party pattern is stronger than in other parts of the Valencia Metropolitan Area. This was especially so in the last local election, where votes for PSPV-PSOE surged by over

ten per cent, putting the party almost twenty points ahead of PP, the second-biggest party. PP, together with Compromís saw their support shrink in The Red Belt, albeit not markedly. Ciudadanos' support rose slightly, while votes for EUPV-Podem plunged from 13.63% in 2015, when the two parties stood separately, to just 7.08% in the 2019 local election, where they both stood on a joint ticket.

Table 6 reveals the main trends in voting behaviour in The City of Valencia's 'Red Belt'. The 2007 and 2011 elections (Martín, Escribano, Jiménez and

Table 6 Election result trends in Valencia's Red Belt (1999 – 2019)

		1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
PP	Nº	93 932	103 781	127 022	144 269	81 357	62 897
	%	34.48%	35.00%	42.75%	45.56%	24.85%	21.37%
PSPV-PSOE	Nº	113 919	130 295	115 032	101 089	94 997	111 205
	%	41.82%	43.95%	38.71%	31.92%	29.01%	40.51%
UV	Nº	21 082	15 374	5890			
	%	7.74%	5.19%	1.92%			
Entesa/ EUPV	Nº	19 934	20 388	13 564	20 858	20.336	
	%	7.32%	6.88%	4.56%	6.59%	6.21%	
BLOC/ Compromís	Nº	12 079	15 344	18 709	24 939	52 869	39 504
	%	4.43%	5.18%	6.30%	7.88%	16.14%	13.42%
Ciudadanos	Nº					26 847	28 858
	%					8.20%	9.80%
Podemos (2015) EUPV- Podem (2019)	Nº					24 319	20 855
	%					7.42%	7.08%
VOX	Nº						11 129
	%						3.78%
Others	Nº	11 479	11 256	19 927	25 477	26 649	11 804
	%	4.21%	3.80%	5.70%	8.05%	8.14%	4.01%

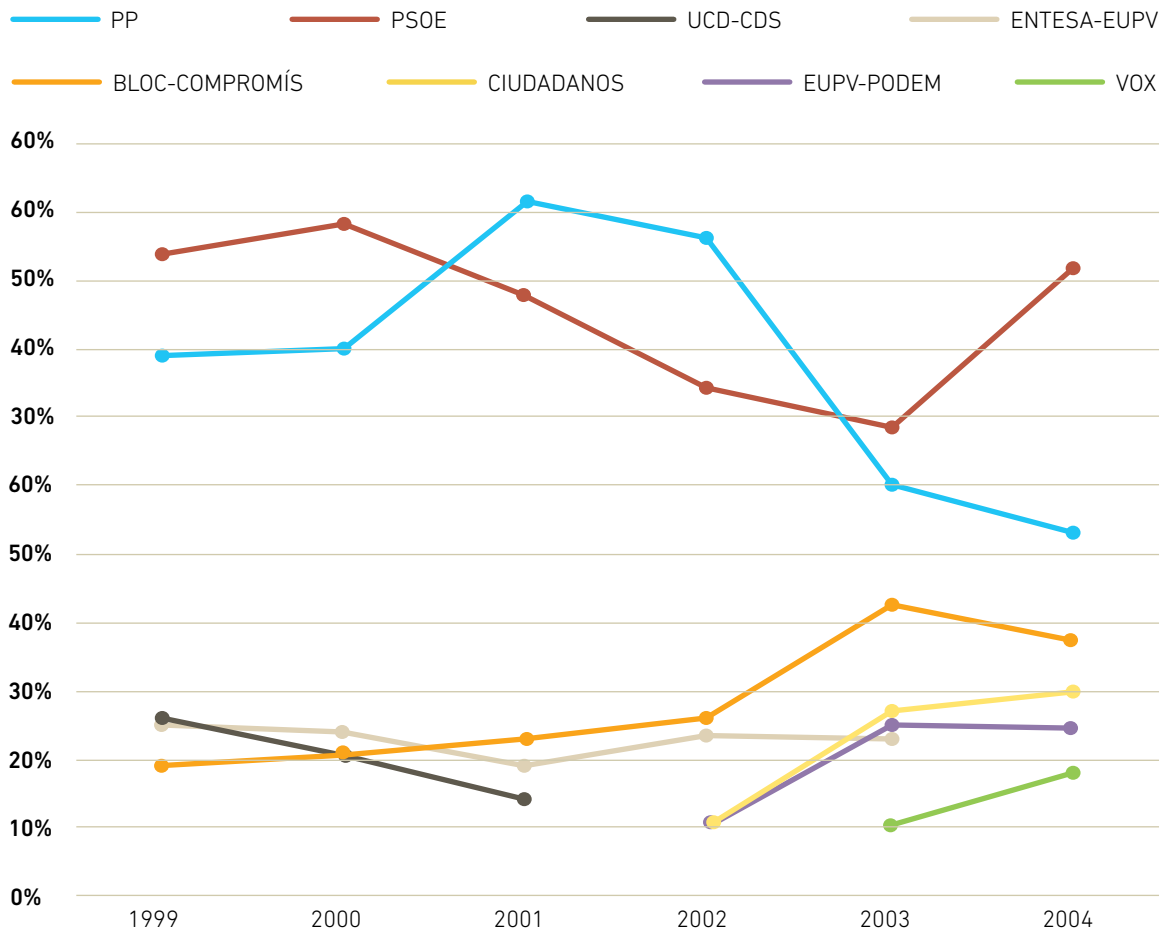
Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

Ramis, 2011) here are something of an exception, given that PP won over 40% of votes — 42.75% and 45.56%, respectively. In earlier elections, PP’s support lay around the 35% mark. The party’s management of the 2008 Financial Crisis (GFC) and its involvement in a host of corruption cases led this to fall to a little over 20% of votes. By contrast, PSPV-PSOE, after also sharing the blame for the 2008 Financial Crisis, rebounded to around 30% of votes in the 2011 and 2015 elections and once

again seems to have regained the traditional support it enjoyed in ‘The Red Belt’, passing the 40% mark in the 2019 election.

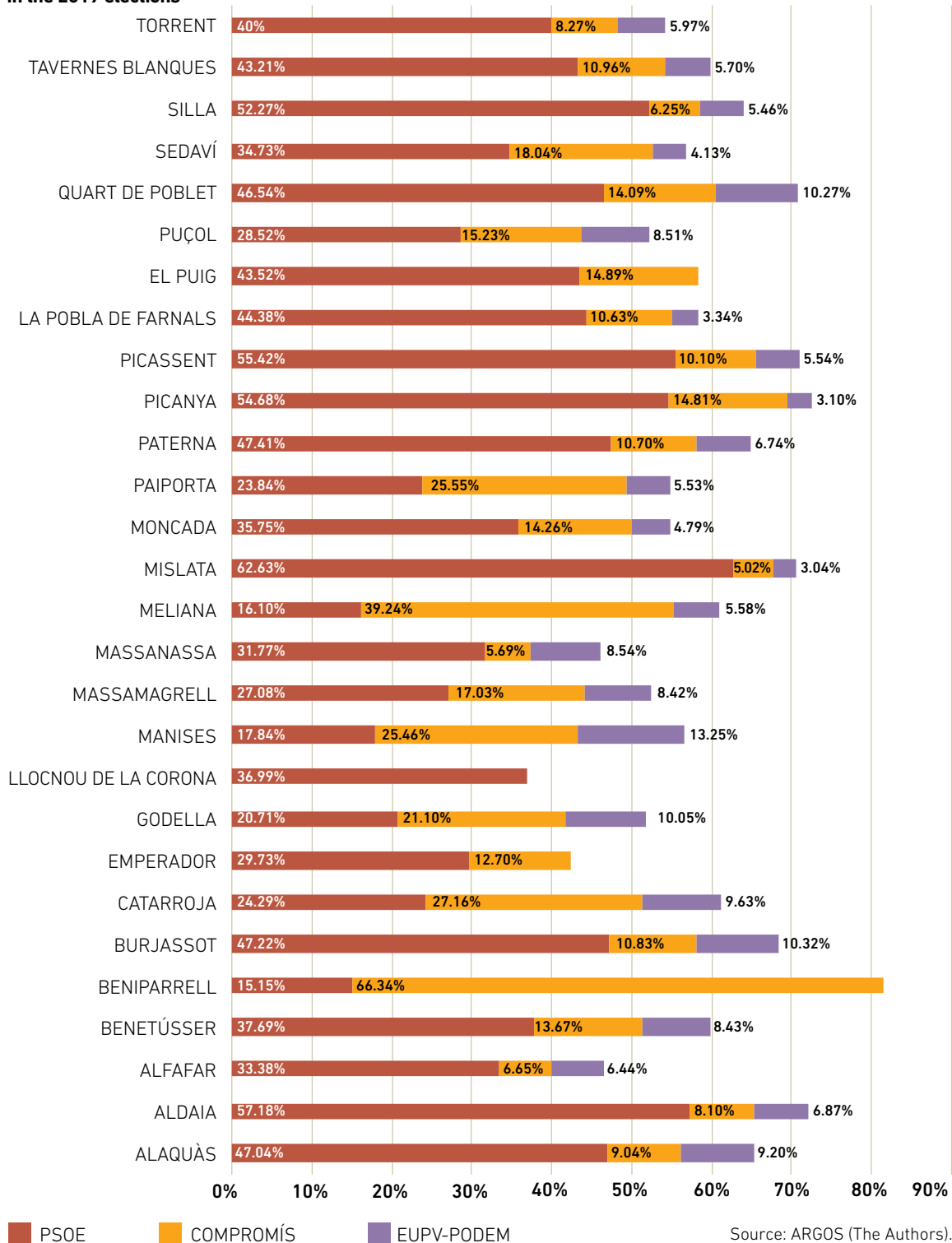
PP’s loss of ten percentage points in the 2019 election also stands out compared with its performance in elections before 2011. The Right-Wing party that seems to be picking up these votes is Ciudadanos — a new political force emerging in 2015. Here, it should be noted that Ciudadanos’ 2015 and 2019

Figure 5 Eoting trends in The City of Valencia’s ‘Red Belt’ (1999 – 2019)



Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

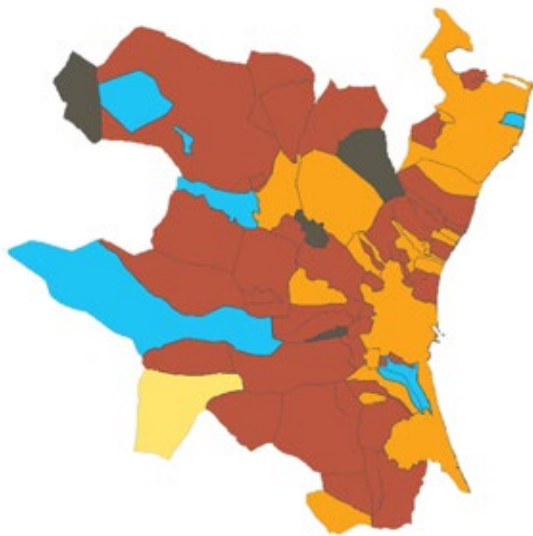
Figure 6 The Left-Wing's results in the various municipalities making up the 'red belt' of Valencia's municipalities in the 2019 elections



Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

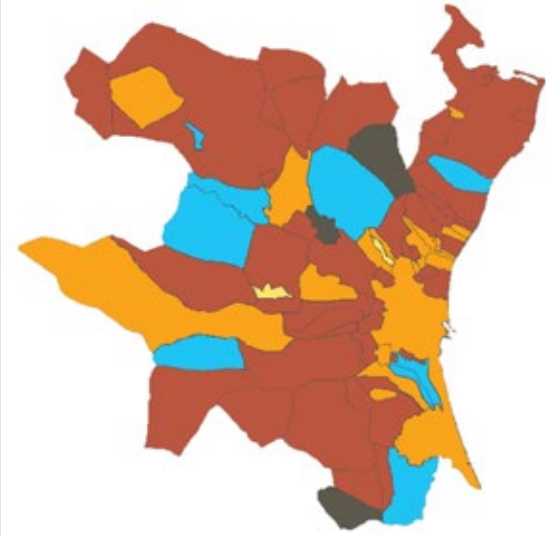
Map 1 Comparison of the governing parties at the beginning of the local elections in 2015 and in 2019 in the Valencian Metropolitan Area

GOVERNING PARTY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 2015 ELECTION IN THE VALENCIA METROPOLITAN AREA



■ PSOE ■ COMPROMÍS ■ PP

GOVERNING PARTY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 2019 ELECTION IN THE VALENCIA METROPOLITAN AREA



■ CS ■ EUPV-PODEM ■ OTHERS

Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

won close on 10% of votes. Finally, it is significant that votes cast for EUPV-Podem in The Red Belt in the 2019 election returned to the level traditionally achieved by the Entesa/EUPV coalition before the GFC (that is to say, somewhere around the 7% mark), recovering after a dangerous dip to 4.56% in 2007.

Figure 6 shows the results of the various Left-Wing parties in Valencia's 'Red Belt' municipalities. Analysing the figure shows that PSPV-PSOE is generally the party that wins most vote, far ahead of Compromís and Podemos, getting double their support. Apart from a few small municipalities in The Red Belt, such as Meliana and Beniparrell, where Compromís won votes from PSPV-PSOE, in the remaining municipalities, the Socialists beat Compromís (in some

towns such as Mislata, doing so by a wide margin).

In addition to doing well in most of Valencia's 'Red Belt' municipalities, the Left also got over 50% of total votes and in 12 of the 28 municipalities, 60%. The results in Beniparrell stand out here, where the Left got over 80% of votes. This was a municipality in which Podemos to not stand, and in which Compromís won an absolute majority.

THE INSTITUTIONAL VALUE OF VOTES

Map 1 and Table 7 provide comparative information on the municipalities in which each of the parties governed (holding the mayorship) in the

2015 legislature. Nevertheless, one should note that in some municipalities, various parties 'shared' the mayorship by holding it for longer or shorter periods during the legislature. Accordingly, this means that the party beginning in government in 2019 did not necessarily do so for the whole of the council legislature. One thing that jumps out from the map is that most of it is coloured red, showing that PSPV-PSOE was in the riding seat, followed by orange (the colour used to indicate *Compromís*). These two parties worked together to ensure that had the necessary absolute majorities. To these one should add the purple areas (a handful of municipalities governed by EUPV-Podem, whether alone or in coalition with other parties). The whole range of warmer tones (save yellow) reveals the extent of the Left-Wing's landslide victory in the Valencia Metropolitan Area.

The few blue areas on the map show the areas governed by PP, while the yellow areas show where *Ciudadanos* held the mayorship. In general, the Right governed very few municipalities in the area. In most cases, coalition agreements had been cobbled together within either a Left-Wing bloc or within a Right-Wing bloc. Nevertheless, there were some exceptions to this rule, for example pacts between PSPV-PSOE and *Ciudadanos*, and — to a lesser extent — other combinations of parties (see Annex 2).

Table 7 Comparison of Mayorships at the beginning of the legislature (2015 – 2019)

	2015	2019	Variation
PP	8	11	+ 3
PSOE	48	45	- 3
COMPROMÍS	17	15	- 2
EUPV-PODEM	1	0	- 1
CIUDADANOS	0 (Turís, only lasted one month)	2	+ 2
OTHERS	2	3	+1

Source: ARGOS (The Authors).

Last, one should note that the rise in the Left-Wing vote and the shrinking Right-Wing vote compared with previous elections did not result in more municipal governments falling into the Left's hands (Martín, 2015). By contrast, the Right-Wing gained some 5 mayorships compared with the previous legislature, and logically enough, did so at the expense of the Left-Wing (which lost 6 mayorships). Here, one should note that some mayorships are supported by both Left and Right-Wing councillors. A few mayorships are in the hands of parties that we have refrained from labelling 'Left' or 'Right' given their special features.

Nevertheless, these few changes generally affect very small municipalities and the Left continues to govern in much of the Valencia Metropolitan Area (quite apart from conquering the much-prized mayorship of The City of Valencia).

CONCLUSIONS

The electoral behaviour of large urban areas can be seen as a litmus test for new political trends in advanced societies, hence the interest in the Valencia Metropolitan Area's local elections. Here, it is worth recalling that Valencia is Spain's third-largest urban area and is an advanced, dynamic society with strong international links, especially to European nations and Mediterranean countries.

The election results in the Valencia Metropolitan Area on the 26th of May 2019 revealed a highly-fragmented party panorama comprising six parties (or party groupings). Four of these were fairly large: PSPV-PSOE, 29.01%; PP, 21.98%; *Compromís*, 19.82%; *Ciudadanos*, 12.90%. The remaining two were small: EUPV-Podem, 5.84% and Vox, 4.88%.

The short gap between the local elections on the one hand, and the general and regional elections on the other (scarcely a month before) lets one compare the results. The findings reveal that many Valencians' choice of who to vote for is strongly influenced by the kind of election. Although fracturing of the vote affected

all parties, it particularly affected Compromís, whose percentage of the vote was practically the same in both the local and regional elections, 19.82% and 19.41%, respectively but whose vote in the General Election nosedived to just 7.30%. The same is true of EUPV-Podem (albeit in reverse), with the party coalition gleaning relatively few votes in the local and regional elections (5.84% and 7.67%, respectively) but whose performance in the General Election was much stronger, winning 14.90% of votes.

The historical record of local elections since 1979 in the Valencia Metropolitan Area reveals major changes. For instance, there are parties that have disappeared without trace (UCD, UV, etc.). Meanwhile, others that have sprung up (Ciudadanos, Vox, etc.). The long-running parties have also had their ups and downs. Yet there are certain constants when it comes to votes for the Left. Save during the period 2011-15, PSPV-PSOE has been the favourite choice for Left-Wing voters in most elections.

Electoral behaviour in the Valencia Metropolitan Area is markedly different from that in other Spanish regions and, furthermore, is far from homogeneous within the area.

We found a marked differences among municipalities depending on which population range they fell into. Compromís' and PSPV-PSOE's victory in Valencia and in the remaining municipalities stood out. By contrast, support for PP, though it bore up in The City of Valencia, fell off the smaller the municipality. In Vox's case, the smaller the municipality, the greater the support for the party. EUPV-Podem's best results were obtained in middling-sized municipalities.

We also found different voting behaviour by counties. With the exception of The City of Valencia,

PSPV-PSOE's main support came from all the Horta counties, especially Horta Oest, where it won 44.90% of the vote. PP, with a little over a 20% share of the vote got its best results in Horta Sud, where it garnered 25.73% of votes. Compromís won in The City of Valencia with 27.34% of votes, but its performance dropped off in the Horta counties, especially in Horta Oest, where it won a relatively meagre 10.82% share of votes. Ciudadanos, save in The City of Valencia, where it won 17.54% of votes, got roughly a 10% vote share in the Horta counties. By contrast, EUPV-Podem got better results in the counties — roughly 6-7% of votes — than in The City of Valencia (4.15%). Finally, Vox, did well in the Regional Capital with 7.22% but its votes plummeted elsewhere — especially in Horta Sud, where it won a risible 0.63% of votes.

In Valencia's 'Red Belt', the more traditional parties — PSPV-PSOE and PP — made a good showing. This was especially true of PSPV-PSOE, which in these elections boosted its vote share to 40.51% — leaving the second-biggest party (PP) with 21.37% trailing some twenty points behind. Both PP and Compromís (13.42%) lost support, albeit slightly. Support for Ciudadanos rose somewhat (to 9.80%) while EUPV-Podem with 7.08% lost many votes compared with earlier elections in which the two parties won almost twice as many votes standing separately as they did together in 2019. In this case, the adage that 'unity is strength' was not borne out.

Finally, with regard to the institutional reward for votes, the Left-Wing got the best results. Yet this did not translate into greater institutional power given that the Right regained some five mayorships. That said, the election victory did give the Left a broader and more homogeneous political support in those municipal councils it did govern.

ANNEX 1. LIST OF MUNICIPALITIES MAKING UP THE VALENCIAN METROPOLITAN AREA (AMV)

ALQUÀS	DOMENÓ	PICANYA
ALBAL	ELIANA (L')	PICASSENT
ALBALAT DELS SORELLS	EMPERADOR	POBLA DE FARNALS (LA)
ALBORAYA	FAURA	PABLA DE VALLBONA (LA)
ALBUIXECH	FOIOS	PUIG (EL)
ALCÀSSER	GILET	PUÇOL
ALDAIA	GODELLA	QUART DE POBLET
ALFAFAR	GODELLETA	RAFELBUNYOL
ALFARA DEL PATRIARCA	LLÍRIA	RIBA-ROJA DE TÚRIA
ALGINET	LLOCNOU DE LA CORONA	ROCAFORT
ALMÀSSERA	LORIGUILLA	SAGUNT
ALMUSSAFES	MANISES	SAN ANT. DE BENAGÉBER
BENAGUASIL	MARINES	SEDAVÍ
BENETÚSSER	MASSALFASSAR	SERRA
BENIFAIRO DE LES VALLS	MASSAMAGRELL	SILLA
BENIFAIÓ	MASSANASSA	SOLLANA
BENIPARRELL	MELIANA	TAVERNES BLANQUES
BENISANÓ	MISLATA	TORRENT
BÉTERA	MONCADA	TURÍS
BONREPÒS I MIRAMBELL	MONTSERRAT	VALÈNCIA
BURJASSOT	MUSEROS	VILAMARXANT
CANET D'EN BERENGUER	NÁQUERA	VILLAR DEL ARZOBISPO
CASINOS	OLOCAU	VINALESA
CATARROJA	PAIPORTA	XIRIVELLA
CHESTE	PATERNA	
CHIVA	PETRÉS	Total: 76 municipalities

ANNEX 2. POLITICAL PARTIES HOLDING THE MAYOR'S OFFICE IN MUNICIPALITIES IN VALENCIA'S METROPOLITAN AREA FOLLOWING THE ELECTIONS ON THE 26TH OF MAY 2019

- ALQUÀS: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- ALBAL: PSPV-PSOE (Mayor's Office), Compromís and Unidas Podemos (Councillors and support)
- ALBALAT DELS SORELLS: Compromís (Mayor's Office), PSPV-PSOE (Councillors and support)
- ALBORAYA: PSPV-PSOE (Simple majority)
- ALBUIXECH: PSPV-PSOE (Simple majority)
- ALCÀSSER: PSPV-PSOE (Simple majority)
- ALDAIA: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)

- ALFAFAR: PP (Absolute majority)
- ALFARA DEL PATRIARCA: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- ALGINET: Socialistes d'Alginet (Mayor's Office), Compromís (Councillors and support)
- ALMÀSSERA: PSPV-PSOE (Simple majority)
- ALMUSSAFES: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- BENAGUASIL: PP (Absolute majority)
- BENETÚSSER: PSPV-PSOE (Mayor's Office), Compromís, EUPV (Councillors and support)
- BENIFAIÓ DE LES VALLS: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- BENIFAIÓ: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- BENIPARRELL: Compromís (Absolute majority)
- BENISANÓ: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- BÉTERA: PP (Mayor's Office), M.Camarena-T.Conill (Councillors and support)
- BONREPÒS I MIRAMBELL: PSPV-PSOE (Mayor's Office), Compromís (Councillors and support)
- BURJASSOT: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- CANET D'EN BERENGUER: PSPV-PSOE (Simple majority)
- CASINOS: Compromís (Absolute majority)
- CATARROJA: Compromís (Mayor's Office), PSPV-PSOE (Councillors and support)
- CHESTE: PSPV-PSOE (Mayor's Office), EUPV-SA, Compromís (Councillors and support)
- CHIVA: Compromís (Mayor's Office), IU, Vecinos Independientes de Chiva (Councillors and support)
- DOMEÑO: PP (Absolute majority)
- ELIANA (L): PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- EMPERADOR: PP (Absolute majority)
- FAURA: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- FOIOS: Compromís (Mayor's Office), PSPV-PSOE (Councillors and support)
- GILET: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- GODELLA: Compromís (Mayor's Office), PSPV-PSOE (Councillors and support)
- GODELLETA: PP (Mayor's Office), Ciudadanos, PUG (Councillors and support)
- LLÍRIA: PSPV-PSOE (Mayor's Office), Compromís (Councillors and support)
- LLOCNOU DE LA CORONA: PP (Absolute majority)
- LORIGUILLA: Ciudadanos (Mayor's Office); PSPV-PSOE (Councillors and support)
- MANISES: Compromís (Mayor's Office), Podem (Councillors and support)
- MARINES: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- MASSALFASSAR: Compromís (Mayor's Office), PSPV-PSOE (Councillors and support)
- MASSAMAGRELL: Compromís (Mayor's Office), PSPV-PSOE, Empoderem Massamagrell (Councillors and support)
- MASSANASSA: PP (Absolute majority)
- MELIANA: Compromís (Mayor's Office), PSPV-PSOE (Councillors and support)
- MISLATA: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- MONCADA: PSPV-PSOE (Simple majority)
- MONTSERAT: PSPV-PSOE (Mayor's Office), EUPV (Councillors and support)
- MUSEROS: PSPV-PSOE (Simple majority)
- NÁQUERA: UPdN (Simple majority)
- OLOCAU: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- PAIPORTA: Compromís (Mayor's Office), PSPV-PSOE (Councillors and support)
- PATERNA: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- PETRÉS: Compromís (Absolute majority)
- PICANYA: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)

- PICASSENT: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- POBLA DE FARNALS (LA): PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- POBLA DE VALLBONA (LA): Compromís (Mayor's Office), Cupo, Contigo, PSPV-PSOE (Councillors and support)
- PUIG (EL): PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- PUÇOL: PP (Mayor's Office); Ciudadanos, Vox and others (Councillors and support)
- QUART DE POBLET: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- RAFELBUNYOL: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- RIBA-ROJA DE TÚRIA: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- ROCAFORT: PP (Mayor's Office), Ciudadanos (Councillors and support)
- SAGUNT: PSPV-PSOE (Mayor's Office), Compromís (Councillors and support)
- SAN ANT. DE BENAGÉBER: AISAB (Mayor's Office), PSPV-PSOE (Councillors and support)
- SEDAVÍ: Shared mayorship, first Compromís and then PSPV-PSOE
- SERRA: PSPV-PSOE (Mayor's Office), EUPV-Podem (Councillors and support)
- SILLA: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- SOLLANA: PP (Absolute majority)
- TAVERNES BLANQUES: PSPV-PSOE (Simple majority)
- TORRENT: PSPV-PSOE (Simple majority)
- TURÍS: PSPV-PSOE (Absolute majority)
- VALÈNCIA: Compromís (Mayor's Office), PSPV-PSOE (Councillors and support)
- VILAMARXANT: PP (Mayor's Office), Ciudadanos (Councillors and support)
- VILLAR DEL ARZOBISPO: PSPV-PSOE (Mayor's Office), IU and Compromís (Councillors and support)
- VINALESA: PSPV-PSOE (Mayor's Office), Compromís (Councillors and support)
- XIRIVELLA: PSPV-PSOE (Mayor's Office), Podem Xirivella (Councillors and support)

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The Cultural Dimension of Spanish Universities: The state of the issue

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ABSTRACT

The cultural dimension of Spanish universities has changed markedly, especially since the restoration of democracy in Spain in the late 1970s. This study reflects on the terminology and the historical evolution of Spanish universities, comparing their development within a broader world context. It also analyses the present state of affairs through two complementary pieces of field work. The paper concludes by examining the issues and hurdles that until recently were the third dimension of university life after teaching and research.

Keywords: university cultural management, university extension, university missions, sociology of culture, cultural studies.

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Culture is a basic need. It contributes to people's well-being insofar as it gives them the tools to embark on the human adventure. It is a factor that provides greater complexity, enriching experience. Since Montaigne, we know that it is what makes us who we are. Yet culture does not guarantee anything be it good, truth, happiness, or success

(Ramoneda, 2013).

THE TERM *CULTURAL DIMENSION OF UNIVERSITIES*

Back in 2012, we proposed the term *cultural dimension of universities* to the academic community, the cultural management community, and society in general. We commended the term as an umbrella one to describe all those tasks that universities engage in when it comes to university culture and other related disciplines (Ariño Villarroya and González Rueda, 2012). Although the term has not taken root in the professional and social circles that universities operate in, it has been echoed in academe (Penelas, 2013) and in the media (Mejía Arango, 2018).

Clearly, the proposed epistemological use of the Cultural Dimension ('CD' hereinafter) is hard to apply to university management or other activity given that we are dealing with a category incorporating diverse realities under a very broad heading (*dimension*) that is described and specified by the word *cultural*. It is not a question of proposing a different framework but rather of seeing this dimension of university activity as a paradigm that even-handedly defines both the teaching and research dimensions of such institutions.

In addition, CD is something that gives consistency to a historical track record extending back almost 150 years, ever since the *university extension* in Cambridge in 1871 (Palacios Morini, 1908: 126) and running up to recent concerns over Social Responsibility (Ruiz, 2016). Furthermore, it is a term that spans both historical and normative legitimacy in universities' cultural function (Ariño Villarroya, 2007). Culture has been part of the university's functions and missions since the beginning. Nevertheless, it is hard to define and locate this dimension for various reasons:

- University extension was originally thought of as an extra mission at a time when university communities were much smaller than they are today. Now that university communities have grown like Topsy, their members are, as Rowan puts it, both creators and consumers of cultural goods and services (García, 2019).
- Traditionally, the university sphere has created sundry misunderstandings of culture. One of them tends to identify knowledge with culture; another identifies culture with The Arts and The Humanities. If culture is knowledge, universities are thought of as institutions in which all their actors and functions are automatically of a cultural nature. By contrast, if culture is the Arts then only that part of a university's activities are cultural in kind (González Rueda, 2004: 181).
- University extension as a teaching experience had many illustrious promoters, such as Clarín, Aniceto Sela, and Paulo Freire. Yet our pride in this golden past sometimes makes it harder to understand CD's present.
- Unlike in Spain, in the English-speaking world CD's development took place as an experiential complement for students within decentralised faculties or schools. For instance, Harvard currently has an Extension School and a Summer School, which form part of the university's Arts and Sciences Faculty.¹
- In The United States and The United Kingdom, thematic clubs form part of the CD and are strongly supported by students.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW

While we are speaking of university extension (historically, one of CD's main planks), we shall now recall its main achievements and bring these up to date.

The historic concept of university extension is almost as old as universities themselves. That is because university teachers tried to foster so called *popular education* right from the start. For instance, the finan-

¹ Harvard University. Web Online and On-Campus Courses | Harvard Extension School. Accessed 6th April 2019 from <https://www.extension.harvard.edu/academics/online-campus-courses>.

cier Thomas Gresham gave lectures to merchants and craftsmen in 16th-Century London. William Dills undertook similar initiatives at Cains College, Cambridge in 1630 (Melón Fernández, Álvarez Antuña, Frieria Suárez and Ruiz de la Peña, 2002: 130). Nevertheless, it was not until 1871 (against the background of the trouble, politically turbulent 19th-Century and the emerging ‘*social question*’) that a university extension school was created in Cambridge (Palacios Morini, 1908: 126) on a semi-official footing. Oxford and other universities followed in Cambridge’s footsteps. In The United States the *University Extension Journal* was first published in 1890 (Welch, 1973: 201) and the Philadelphia American Society for Extension of University was founded.

Draper argues that the beginning of the university extension programme at Cambridge (and elsewhere) lay in lectures for women, which were later extended to men by popular request:

In this instructive booklet, the Master of The Temple clearly explains the origins and path of a remarkable movement that has benefited universities and the masses alike. Prof. James Stuart’s initiative in Cambridge began when he started giving classes to women in 1867. He soon realised that men were just as keen to attend his talks on important matters. Oxford followed Cambridge’s example in 1878 and since then, London, Manchester and newer universities have followed in his footsteps. (Draper, 1923)

Following Britain’s lead, Germany undertook major extension programmes in large industrial centres. In France though, the idea underpinning university extension programmes was hidden by the growth of popular universities that catered to a narrower segment of the population. In Spain, there are some interesting precedents in this field prior to the University of Zaragoza but the official birth of university extension in this country can be dated to the 11th of October 1898 and took place at Oviedo University. In the words of Professor Aniceto Sela (who was a notary at the time):

In a Faculty Meeting held on the 11th of October 1898, Leopoldo Alas spoke of the important points raised in Mr. Altamira’s speech inaugurating the academic year. He spoke of the work being done abroad to foster popular culture and proposed to the Faculty that Oviedo University take up this invaluable line of work by beginning its own University Extension. (Coronas, 2005)

Sela recalled that “Our universities need more than any other to go out to the people, educate it, and bend themselves to the great task of actively educating the nation. Such an approach would get swifter results than waiting for pure science alone to yield its fruits”. The idealism (not to say a certain naivety) of those backing Spanish universities’ extension programmes led their detractors to label the ideas as “sectarian propaganda shot through with Republican anti-clericalism, and a cheap Socialism that was hypocritical, pedantic, and pointless” (Melón Fernández, 1987: 105).

The purpose of this paper is not to set out the historical path taken by CD (a fascinating subject to be sure but that would require deeper research of the source materials)². Yet we can reasonably conclude that the social and teaching movement enshrined by university extension was one of the many fruits of the ideals spread by The French Revolution. University extension and ‘popular universities’ began by taking the same path but soon there came a parting of the ways given that the former tended to identify more with Reformism whereas the latter broke with the past. Nevertheless, they both tried to address the same dire social problems of the time.

In Latin America, university extension is considered universities’ third function or mission, in addition to teaching and research. That is the case now and it was also true in the past. As in the Spanish case, it is more of an approach to teaching than a function — something that sets it apart from the mainstream

² This work is recommended for the rich detail contained in the chapter on university extension, which Leopoldo Palacios Morini takes up in his work on popular universities (Palacios Morini, 1908).

European model. The Latin American model is not only applied in universities but also in the Health field and in rural areas. The contributions made by Paulo Freire (appointed Director of Recife University's Cultural Extension Department in 1961) provide a good example of the approach taken. The post gave Freire a golden opportunity to put his teaching theories into practice. Among other achievements, he taught 300 workers from the local sugar cane plantations to read in just 45 days (Freire, 1973). The main planks of Latin American university extension are: knowledge and know-how; professional and technical skills; 'outside-in' learning. Like in Spain, local practice went hand-in-hand with theory. That, in our view, is why it has proven impossible to construct a shared concept of university extension.

During the spread of university extension throughout Europe and Latin America, there has been a belief in the emancipating power of culture and in universities' role in making it felt. These notions are where universities' present concept of their present social role spring from. After its birth and consolidation in the second half of the 20th Century, the movement has taken different paths in different countries. That said, there is a general tendency to standardise and institutionalise CD activities against the background of ever larger universities (attended by a burgeoning part of the populace).

Focusing on the Spanish case, the scant literature on the subject fostered the idea that university extension had languished during the Franco dictatorship. Although there is an element of truth in this, partial studies by Cantero (2006) have shown that there was more going on during this period than had been thought. Nevertheless, the fact is that CD in Spain began to wax following the passing of Constitutional Law 11/1983, reforming universities. Article 1, Section 2d of this Act covered and legitimised CD by creating Vice-Rectors for University Extension, Cultural Extension, and Cultural Activities.

This framework was strengthened in 2007 with the passing of Constitutional Act 4/2007 (LOMLOU),

which amended the Constitutional Act for Universities, passed in 2001 (Spain, 2007). The amended Act included sundry new provisions. One covered "the dissemination of knowledge and culture through university extension and lifelong learning (Article 1) as a university function". It also stressed that "universities' missions include imparting the knowledge that the professions need in their respective scientific, technical, and artistic fields and the transmission of culture in general" (Article 33). Last but not least, the amended Act dedicated a complete article covering university culture (Article 93):

Universities have a duty to link students with the ideas of their time. To this end, universities shall find the means needed to boost their commitment to intellectual reflection, and the creation and spreading of culture. Specifically, universities shall seek to narrow the gap between humanistic and scientific cultures, and strive to pass on knowledge of Science to society at large.

Article 46 of LOMLOU refers to "academic recognition of (...) cultural activities (...) and of non-traditional students" (Article 42). When the Act refers to the statutes of each university, the amended Act tends to repeat previously enunciated principles, often word for word, including concepts such as *university culture*, *extension*, and *cultural activities* in various sections of these Statutes but usually framed in terms of 'mission' rather than in regulatory ones. In this respect, CD is set out in long preambles instead of as practical guidelines.

The need for internal and external recognition led Spanish universities to make various attempts to co-ordinate their efforts and to work in a networked fashion following the enactment of the LRU. In general, they tried to emulate the success of the model in other fields within the framework of Spain's Council of University Rectors (hereinafter CRUE)³, but alas to no avail. The following list of these attempts is illustrative rather than exhaustive:

³ Conference of Spanish University Rectors (CRUE) - Sectoral. Accessed 28th March 2019 from <http://www.crue.org/SitePages/Sectoriales.aspx>

- In February 1991, the Vice-Rectors of most public universities met at La Laguna University. This meeting recognised the need to set up professional management teams to ensure Vice-Rectors' Offices had sufficient, stable funding (*Solicitud de creación de la comisión sectorial de extensión universitaria en el seno de la CRUE*, 2003).
- In 1991 and 1992, an informal co-ordination group for university extension was set up and contacts were begun with CRUE to establish sectoral working group. Contacts were also forged with the Ministry of Culture, and departments with responsibilities in this field in Spain's 'Autonomous Communities' (regions) with a view to working together.
- In 1992 and 1993, sundry plenary sessions of University Extension Vice-Rectors were held (in Córdoba, Alicante, and in The Balearic Islands) which culminated in the Barcelona University Management Workshops, held in November 1993.
- In 1998, two more meetings were held, one in Valencia, the other in Oviedo. The one in Valencia reflected the nature of university culture in the 21st Century. The meeting served as the prelude for the International Iber-American Congress (CII) held in Oviedo to mark university extension's centenary. Oddly enough, no Minutes were kept of this meeting which means we can say little about it (García Guatas, 2004). The need to create a special sector for university extension was raised at both meetings.
- In 2002, *The Biar Declaration on University Extension* was drawn up in to mark the International Congress on Rafael Altamira, held in Biar, Alicante. The declaration's impact on CRUE was negligible.
- In 2017, the *University and Culture: The balance of their relationship* (González Rueda, 2017), which was known as *The Declaration of Cadiz*, proposed

the setting up of a working party under CRUE's aegis (Parodi Álvarez, 2017).

In the regional settings, co-ordination proved most successful and long-lasting in the case of the Andalus University Council's Extension Sector, which in 2006 gave rise to *Proyecto Atalaya* [Watchtower Project], which brought together ten Andalus universities and in which the Watchtower Project Cultural Observatory (fostered by Cadiz University and International University of Andalusia (*Red Telescopi*) established best practices.

We shall now turn to the international scene. In the English-speaking world, the term *university extension* continues in widespread use and is familiar to the general public. Proof of this can be found in the fact that the term merits an entry in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In this context, university extension is a division of higher education catering to those who are not full-time students. It thus embraces distance education activities, continued education, and adult education. It is thought to have helped bring women in higher education:

University extension, division of an institution of higher learning that conducts educational activities for persons (usually adults) who are generally not full-time students. These activities are sometimes called extramural studies, continuing education, higher adult education, or university adult education. Since its inception, group instruction in the form of formal lectures, discussion groups, seminars, and workshops has remained the core of extension courses. One important consequence of the extension movement was that it helped to establish higher education for women.

In 1867, a professor at Cambridge University began offering an extension course. In the 1880s, such courses began to bloom in centres throughout England. Then around 1885, university leaders in The United States became aware of the programmes at British universities. The most significant development came at the University of Chicago when extension

was included as an integral part of the design for the new university, incorporating funding for off-campus centres, correspondence instruction, and various other programmes.

At many American universities the number of adults engaged in extension programmes has become greater than the number of full-time students enrolled on campus, and specialised units offering such programmes have grown rapidly. Some universities reorganised themselves to give extension an important place as an all-institutional function paralleling that of resident teaching and research.

Elsewhere in the world, university extension has gone furthest in English-speaking countries. In some instances, following British practice, the term *extramural studies* is used.

DIAGNOSIS OF THE CULTURAL DIMENSION TODAY

So far, we have looked at the CD's history, regulations, and operational aspects, especially with regard to Spain. One of the problems emerging from this review is the lack of focus on internal recognition of the CD. This is a big hurdle when it comes to ranking tables, and national and international awards for university excellence. The main world rankings cover research and knowledge transfer dimensions (in all cases), and teaching and faculty (in some cases) but there is no ranking covering the cultural dimension. Of less importance is the fact that some indicators have weak links to intellectual property and patents. Only the CYD (Knowledge and Development Foundation) ranking includes Artistic Production⁴ in the research field. The CRUE report *Universities in Figures* contains a small set of indicators on university culture. Efforts made by Universitat de València (UV) to include the CD dimension in the U-Ranking BBVA were thwarted. In the case of external acknowledgement and awards, CD's invisibility can be seen in Red Telescopi's review

of best practices in this field at Cadiz University. Only two were mentioned: Observatorio Atalaya, and Herramienta Celama (Red Telescopi).

In a complementary fashion, one way of broadly analysing acceptance of the term *university cultural dimension* is the presence of the word 'culture' in Spanish Vice-Rectors' job titles. During a University Summer Course on culture (2018)⁵, we looked at the titles given to Vice-Rectors working in this field. To this end, we made an exhaustive search of the institutional web sites of 76 public and private universities linked to the CRUE⁶ web site. The analytical⁷ approach was based on searching for the Vice-Rectorate in question in each university and extracting the descriptors and counting the repetition of terms. Our findings are set out as a label cloud (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Label cloud emerging from analysis



Source: The Authors.

4 Number of artistic results based on the Creative Arts and the Scenic Arts, split by TRS (ETC).

5 Cultura en/desde/para la Universidad. (2018). Accessed 28th March 2019 from <https://www.uik.eus/es/cultura-endesdepara-la-universidad>.

6 Conferencia de Rectores de las Universidades Españolas. Accessed 28th March 2019 from <http://www.crue.org/universidades/SitePages/Universidades.aspx>.

7 Analysis carried out by examining institutional web sites on the 4th July 2018.

As Figure 1 shows, the descriptor that appears most is *Culture* (26), followed by *Extension* (19) and *Sports* (11) [*Cultura*, *Extensión* and *Deportes* in the Spanish-labelled diagram]. A nuance here is that *Culture* is easily the most used word (whether directly or indirectly), followed by *Extension* (the latter being historically associated in Spain with university culture and its dissemination).

1. Of the 26 private universities, 20 had no Vice-Rector expressly covering the cultural dimension.
2. Over the years, the cultural dimension increasingly appears in the company of other sub-functions, often tacked on as ‘fellow travellers’ (Sport, Social Projection, Communication, and Quality).
3. Of the 55 universities including the cultural dimension in their organisation charts, 53 did so through a Vice-Rectorate.
4. The number of universities including the cultural dimension in ‘omnibus’ vice-rectorates is on the rise. The upshot is that the cultural element is watered down or is just thrown in as an afterthought to the latest fads (students, projection, responsibility, and so forth).

Cultural dimension is a valuable concept for undertaking broad scholarly analysis. Yet it is hard to find a common framework identifying the cultural dimension from an organic or functional standpoint in university organisation charts. In our view, bodies such as a Vice-Rectorate for University Culture or a Vice-Rectorate of Cultural Extension would be the right places to make up these shortcomings at Spanish universities. The former would link universities with less of a track record in the cultural field. Meanwhile, the latter would incorporate the tradition of those universities that have single-mindedly pursued a cultural mission from the early 20th Century onwards. For Ariño, *university culture* should embody the following traits:

Scientific: A culture of *logos* to fight prejudice; evidence and argument based on the scientific method.

Critical: A culture based on natural scepticism that questions hegemonic visions legitimising ‘the powers that be’.

Creative and innovative: insofar as it fosters new approaches to improving people’s quality of living.

Academic: “operating on the synthesis, interrelationship and co-ordination of knowledge in an age of global, trans-border problems” (Ariño Villarroya, 2016).

We proposed a self-diagnosis approach in a 2018 Summer Course (Culture in and from Universities) that we gave at The University of The Basque Country. At the time, we envisaged that such self-diagnosis would need validation by experts — that is to say, academic managers and professionals drawn from Spanish universities’ Vice-Rectorates for Culture.

Following on from earlier fieldwork on Vice-Rectorate names, we selected 41 universities (39 public ones, 2 private ones) that had a track record in this field and whose web sites contained e-mails of academic managers and technical staff. Eighty-one invitations were sent to individual e-mail addresses, inviting the recipients to answer a questionnaire created by the LimeSurvey platform at Cadiz University to validate the aforementioned diagnosis of the cultural dimension. Fifty-one fully-completed questionnaires were returned — a 63% response rate. Of those completing the survey, 69% were Administrative and Service Staff (hereinafter ‘ASS’) and 31% were Teaching and Research Staff (hereinafter ‘TRS’). These figures were consistent with the higher proportion of admin and technical staff at universities. From the gender angle, 53% of respondents were men, and 47% were women. We shall now see the extent to which the self-diagnosis was supported by examining the following 24 hypotheses on the cultural dimension at universities:

1. **Hypothesis: The university's cultural dimension has vague, poorly-defined goals.** A majority of the respondents agreed with the statement (57%). Maybe one of the reasons for this is that these Vice-Rectorates are given more freedom of action and there is less control over their activities than over the universities' two main missions (teaching and research). From our standpoint, the CD does not have an express, broadly-accepted mission. Unlike in Latin America, in Spain the CD is not incorporated in either teaching or in research to the slightest degree. In Latin America — somewhat confusingly — it “constitutes one of the key functions of universities and is the synthesis of its other functions to achieve social belonging. It thus incorporates both teaching and research” (Cedeño Ferrín, 2012). In this respect, the Latin American concept seems to be fairly close to the Spanish concept of knowledge transfer, albeit with a social and communitarian twist.
2. **Hypothesis: The CD incorporates a set of sub-dimensions that makes it hard to establish its mission.** A sizeable majority of respondents agreed with the statement (61%). The CD, as we have noted, incorporates so many sub-dimensions and states that it is virtually impossible to establish the CD mission: sports, scientific divulgation, university publishing, summer schools, adult education, museums, heritage, and so forth. That is why it is hard to state the mission clearly.
3. **Hypothesis: The CD is peripheral to university governance.** A large majority of respondents agreed with the statement (71%), especially among administrative staff. The CD is peripheral to university governance which, as we have noted has both pros (more freedom) and cons (the CD being dismissed as being of little importance).
4. **Hypothesis: The university's CD is led more by collective agents and individuals than by the Vice-Rectorates** (centres, departments, research institutes, colleges, chairs, associations, faculty, and so on). These agents work together rather than compete with the Vice-Rectorates of each university. Once again, 71% of respondents agreed that the CD was not only pursued in the Vice-Rectorates with a special remit in this field but also by all the collective agents just listed, and collaborating/competing individuals (as the case may be). In other words, these Vice-Rectorates only manage part of an institution's CD.
5. **Hypothesis: The staff working in the CD field have improved in both number and qualifications compared with their forebears in the 1990s. On the downside, the aging of today's staff complicates generational renewal.** There was no strong feeling one way or the other on this statement (51% of respondents overall agreed with the statement but more ASS staff concurred). Maybe this was because few respondents knew the situation in the 1980s and 90s when support for the CD was lukewarm.
6. **Hypothesis: The university's cultural facilities are better than they were a few years ago but they are highly dependent on funding for their upkeep and activities.** An overwhelming majority of respondents (92%) agreed with the statement. Here, CD units can be thought of as 'giants with feet of clay', especially in the seemingly endless aftermath of the 2009 Financial Crisis.
7. **Hypothesis: That Vice-Rectorates for the CD hardly share their programmes and projects with those carried out by other Spanish universities in general and with those of other European universities in particular.** An overwhelming majority of respondents (84%) agreed with the statement, albeit with less support from those occupying academic posts.

8. **Hypothesis: The cultural and creative programmes proposed by CD Vice-Rectorates are intermittent.** There was no strong feeling one way or the other on this statement (51% of respondents disagreed with the statement). Nevertheless, a future qualitative study on CD programmes may shed further light on this aspect.
9. **Hypothesis: The CD programmes offered show little innovation.** A majority of respondents agreed with the statement (57%), although it received greater support from ASS staff than TRS staff. The two differing visions of the innovative nature (or lack of it) are noteworthy and may be linked to how those occupying a temporary post (TRS) or a permanent one (ASS) see things. It seems that those briefly in the post look at the issue through rose-coloured glasses while those who are longer in the job take a more jaundiced view of the way things are.
10. **Hypothesis: There is a lack of academic networks and co-ordination techniques in the CD field.** The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with the statement (90%), making it clear just what the shortcomings are. If these are overcome, there is a chance of boosting innovation and bringing things up to date.
11. **Hypothesis: CD programmes mainly focus on the artistic sphere.** A majority of respondents agreed with the statement (59%). That said, only a slender majority of TRS staff agreed with the statement. The emergence of Scientific Culture and Innovation Units [UCC+i is the Spanish acronym] seems to confirm this diagnosis, given that CD Vice-Rectorates and units are no longer seen as the best way of incorporating science and technology in their programmes.
12. **Hypothesis: CD activities are either far removed from or are not linked to students' cultural skills.** A sizeable majority of respondents agreed with the statement (67%) This points to a situation that needs remedying but present syllabuses, the nature of the student body, and their timetables will make this hard. That said, while there is clearly a gap between the CD and universities, to varying degrees the same gap appears in associations, sports, social activities, and even in complementary academic and research activities.
13. **Hypothesis: CD Vice-Rectorates have adapted fairly well (and maybe even better than other university dimensions) to the ever-changing nature of the world around us** (social networks, video platforms, cultural content '3.0', etc.). A sizeable majority of respondents agreed with the statement (63%), revealing that one of the strengths of CD is that it focuses more on communication through social networks than on generating digital cultural content, and media labs.
14. **Hypothesis: CD Vice-Rectorates lack image: the vagueness of the term *university extension* has made things worse and fads in naming Vice-Rectorates have hindered branding.** An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with the statement (90%). In our view, the problem lies more in fostering a sub-sector than in purely branding and marketing issues.
15. **Hypothesis: The mix of sub-dimensions found in CD Vice-Rectorates gives freedom of action and a strong regional presence.** A sizeable majority of respondents agreed with the statement (61%). This is the positive side of the issue identified in Hypothesis 2 (the bewildering number and variety of sub-dimensions making up CD). Here, the very lack of uniformity and consistency in sub-dimensions confers greater flexibility of action.

16. **Hypothesis: CD activities can be seen as permanent ‘Open Days’, letting those taking part learn about the university within a context of non-formal learning.** This is self-evident but is nevertheless a point worth making. A sizeable majority of respondents agreed with the statement (69%). That said, universities do not always make good use of this opportunity.
17. **Hypothesis: The role of CD Vice-Rectors in fostering interchange between cultural creators and producers on the one hand and university institutes and research groups on the other has been poorly developed.** An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with the statement (86%) — something that points to the need to work hard on this aspect of CD programming from the outset, as well as to pool best national and international practices.
18. **Hypothesis: The positive image of the institution projected by CD is one of the strengths of these Vice-Rectorates.** The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with the statement (92%). Although the point does not only concern CD but also applies to cultural services and products in general, the idea that culture and merit lie behind this positive image is something that has not been widely debated (Musgrave, 1968).
19. **Hypothesis: The faculty holding academic posts in these Vice-Rectorates suffer ‘burn-out’, resulting in them not renewing their terms of office. CD Vice-Rectorates are a hurdle to one’s academic career rather than a springboard.** A minority of respondents agreed with the statement (47%) yet it was highly significant that a sizeable majority of TRS staff agreed with it (62%). The different views of the two groups (ASS and TRS) stem from Spanish universities’ chronic inability to create work teams that overcome the split between administrative and academic staff. The University of Cadiz is a case in point. Despite a 40 (the anniversary fell in 2019), no CD Vice-Rector has served more than a four-year term and none of them subsequently opted for the Rector’s post.
20. **Hypothesis: The technical staff in these Vice-Rectorates have little job mobility and do not get the recognition they so richly deserve. When they do get promotion, it tends to be in other public administrations, not within the university.** A sizeable majority of respondents agreed with the statement (69%), although the highest percentage of ‘don’t knows’ was highest among TRS respondents.
21. **Hypothesis: The university in general and CD Vice-Rectorates in particular exercise little civic leadership.** A sizeable majority of respondents agreed with the statement (63%).
22. **Hypothesis: The CD seeks to be an agent of socio-cultural innovation in the sense meant by Lester in debates on future dilemmas (Lester and Piore, 2006) but currently falls a long way short of achieving this lofty goal.** A large majority of respondents agreed with the statement (73%), revealing the need to do more on this score.
23. **Hypothesis: From a training standpoint, the relationship with culture professionals is based heavily on the degree taken, little on post-graduate qualifications, and hardly at all on the university’s ‘in-house’ qualifications.** There was a negligible gap between respondents agreeing with the statement and those disagreeing with it. This was because the percentage of ‘don’t knows’ or who did not answer made up 47% of those surveyed. It seems there is a great deal of ig-

norance among those managing CD when it comes to cultural management of degrees, master's programmes, and universities' own qualifications. This lack of knowledge should make us reflect on the little impact we make as cultural agents on the university itself. For Bonet, when it comes to training in the cultural management field, the challenges facing universities are:

Training teaching teams that: (a) are committed to the professional sector and the communitarian world, thus legitimising their activities; (b) draw upon a trans-disciplinary vision (both intra and extra-varsity) within a cross-cutting approach to culture (...); (c) constitute network nodes and international projects; (d) teach innovatively; (e) are open to rising generations and diverse individuals (to unleash the power of diversity); (f) are part and parcel of the university ethos (Parodi Álvarez 2017: 32–33).

24. **Hypothesis: The training orientation of CD Vice-Rectorates (extension courses, summer courses and schools) requires an updating of subjects and teaching approaches.** An overwhelming majority agreed with the statement (88%). This suggests an urgent need to come up with new subjects and take new approaches to the traditional fare found in extension, summer, and seasonal programmes. Furthermore, over many years extension programmes complemented the skills curriculum imparted to university students with over twenty elective credits. This has been whittled down to just six credits over the last few academic years. Here, maybe we could take a leaf out of Latin America's book, where the term *extensionista* is applied to the rural world and means facilitating learning and pooling of information within the framework of collaboration networks and innovation platforms (Landini, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

We draw on all the elements in this expert-validated self-diagnosis to reflect on whether we really have a university cultural policy that is on a par with the teaching, research, and knowledge transfer policies adopted by other European institutions. Following Martinell (Martinell Sempere, 2013), the requirements for a sound cultural policy are:

- A cultural dissemination strategy (democratisation)
- A strategy for fostering and helping cultural creation
- A strategy for building cultural capabilities, based on the two foregoing points
- A communication strategy

In general, given our knowledge of the CD sector and the study findings, we can say that most Spanish universities meet these four requisites but in many cases in a chaotic, poorly-planned fashion. One can therefore say that in Spain, there is only an incipient, limited university culture policy.

Returning to the CD, our main findings on the state of affairs in 2019 are as follows:

1. The CD is not currently identified as one of the university's missions. In the 1990s, university extension was recognised as the third mission (after teaching and research). Nevertheless, our university today sees knowledge transfer as its third mission.
2. The CD does not appear among the aims in the university's strategic goals and cultural indicators are not included in the rankings, even though such activities are valuable for society.
3. There is no well-established framework for the CD because its mission remains vague. As things now stand, the CD lies somewhere between university extension and what has

- been called ‘university social responsibility’. However, as a multi-dimensional concept, the CD is properly integrated in these two fields. The host of sub-dimensions embraced by the CD in both terms content and nature over-complicate the task of defining it.
4. The CD is deployed in various university spheres (Vice-Rectorate, centres, departments, sections, institutes, groups, and so forth). On the one hand, this can be considered enriching. On the other, it makes it that much harder to draw up strategies and plans.
 5. The CD does not have major infrastructural underpinning within the institution and although it is staffed by professionals, these do not form part of management networks — unlike the case of other university dimensions.
 6. The CD plays a leading role in some of university life but does not feature on the university’s agenda (governance bodies, faculties, social councils). Thus its presence on decision-making bodies is of a token, fringe nature. Paradoxically, despite this CD is present whether directly or indirectly in almost all university management teams.
 7. The CD programmes are remote from students’ cultural skills (Morales Sánchez, 2010), which focus on artistic and creative content. In this respect, success bears no relationship to whether the offerings cater to a majority. Likewise, content catering to a minority does not necessarily mean quality.
 8. The CD is strongly deployed at the national level but it is not one of the sundry agents playing a leading role in cultural policy (State, Autonomous Communities [regions], local councils, regional boards, cultural industries, creative sectors, cultural associations, and so forth). Creating a formal network of cultural universities would make Spanish institutions more effective in their dealings with their opposite numbers abroad. This is because it would demonstrate a link between over 70 Spanish universities working in the cultural field, and might even help make the country a leader in it.
 9. The CD does not form part of a shared agenda in cities, nor does it play the kind of co-ordinating, integrating role that would be well received by society and cultural agents.
 10. The CD has not been able to create its own system of standardised indicators. Instead, people tend to come up with their own evaluation systems (first for comparison purposes, later for improvement ends, and finally to gain recognition).
 11. The CD does not cover curriculum and extra-curriculum areas for TRS (Teaching and Research Staff): TRS receive training to improve teaching and research but not on the CD nor how to relate activities in this field with research. Although there are strategies for bringing on those with teaching and/or research talent, universities have so far made little progress in capturing those with cultural talents.
 12. Neither the CD nor the university itself exercise leadership or have become key agents when it comes to socio-cultural innovation.
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- CODA**
- In our *Culture in/from/for/ the University* seminar (July 2018), we held a game — half personal, half literary — in which the seminar title created a comprehensive system of relationships between the terms *culture* and *university*, depending on the unifying preposition used. We give the list of relationships so generated as a way of posing future challenges in the CD field for Spanish universities:

From culture to the university. Some cultural institutions have not adapted to the realities of universities.

Culture *vis-à-vis* the university. Digital culture and/or collaboration is becoming the norm but we remain blind to it.

Culture under the university. This occurs under official structures that we cannot detect.

Culture with the university. This is what many creators and managers seek in our cities and regions.

Culture against the university. This is something we find in other external cultural agents.

The culture of the university. This is a culture that has yet to be defined and built to give meaning to our mission.

Culture from the university. The universal culture that we have inherited from the university extension pioneers.

Culture in the university. Culture that emerges and grows from our campus (promotion).

Culture — between university and society. This is something that we need more of.

Culture shifting towards the university. Cultural management that is still ‘emerging’ but that has yet to ‘arrive’.

Culture to the university. The geographical limits set by our campuses.

Culture for the university. That which we are still unable to properly define and develop.

Culture by the university. Something that most of us here voluntarily shoulder as part of our mission.

Culture according to the university. The official culture that we convey in one way or another from our Vice-Rectorates in the CD field.

Culture without the university. This is what happens in many Spanish cities and at many Spanish university campuses.

Culture on the university. Something that turns us into subjects of cultural research.

Culture after university. Something that we have yet to dovetail with teaching and research.

Culture during university. How we can boost culture among our students during their time at university.

Culture through university. Something that we can generate through research and innovation processes as part of our socio-cultural fabric.

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The Weakness of Populism in Spain

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses why *Populism* has failed to take root in Spain despite a 'soil' that has favoured its seeding and growth elsewhere. At first sight, Spain seems to provide the conditions in which Populism can thrive: a deep economic crisis (which began with the financial meltdown in 2008) and a succession of corruption scandals affecting all the main political parties. Even so, Populism has failed to gain a hold in Spain. The traditional Far Right is very weak, and new parties such as Podemos and Ciudadanos cannot be considered Populist. While Vox displays all the features of a radical right-wing party, it is one from which Populism is absent. We argue that the lack of Populism in Spain can mainly be explained by the highly fractured nature of the country's politics, with left-right and national fault lines shaping how political competition plays out in the nation.

Keywords: populism, Far Right, Radical Right, Podemos, Ciudadanos, Vox.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most striking recent political happenings worldwide has been the emergence of Populism — something from which few advanced democracies have escaped unscathed. Indeed, Populism has spread to the point where some scholars have even gone so far as say that it is now the norm in Western democracies rather than the exception (Marzouki, McDonnell and Rey, 2016).

This paper shows that Spain is indeed an exception even though many of the conditions needed for the emergence and growth of Populism can be found in

the country (Barrio, 2017a). The global financial crisis hit Spain in 2008 and this was followed six years later in 2014 by a political crisis stemming from wholesale corruption in Spain's main parties. These crises created the conditions for the emergence of new political parties — such as Podemos and Vox — and the expansion of Ciudadanos [Ciutadans] from Catalonia to Spain as a whole. Yet at root, none of these parties can be called 'Populist'. The hurdles to Populism in Spain are the predominance of a Left-Right political division, and 'The National Question' [Spain as a centralised, unitary State, or as an assemblage of nations]. The two factors articulate politics in Spain.

The paper comprises four sections. The first defines Populism and sets out the conditions favouring its birth and growth. The second gives the reasons for the Far Right's limited presence in Spain up until Vox came on the scene. The third explains why Ciudadanos and Podemos — two recently-founded parties — cannot be considered Populist parties. The fourth and final section sets out the reasons why Vox is a Far-Right party but not a Populist one.

DEFINITION, EMERGENCE AND CONSOLIDATION

The word *Populism* is now on everyone's lips and has clearly pejorative connotations. It is used to demonise parties and leaders who seldom consider themselves as such. Furthermore, it has been used to refer to a bewilderingly wide variety of movements and parties in many places and at many times. It is little wonder then that coming up with a satisfactory definition of Populism is no easy task (Canovan, 1982). That said, this has not stopped academics trying to come up with a single unifying theory.

Populism has been approached from many angles and disciplines. They all share the premise that Populism takes a dualistic approach as a result of placing 'The People' (characterised as naturally virtuous) in opposition to the governing elite (corrupt by definition). Going beyond this minimum common denominator, the debate is grounded on the distinction proposed by Moffit and Torney (2014), in which Populism is considered an ideology — a logic if you will — which leads to a kind of discourse and communication style. Some go even further and suggest that it is a strategy and/or an organisational form.

Populism can be seen as an ideology insofar as it gives meaning to a consistent set of ideas on how society should be organised and how power should be wielded. Nevertheless, rather than an ideology in the strict sense, Populism is usually taken to be a *thin ideology* (Stanley, 2008) that needs to be mixed with other ideologies (whether *thick* or *thin* ones), such as Nationalism. By contrast, others see Populism as a logical system,

and instead focus on the phenomenon's ontological dimension. The latter approach is the one taken by Laclau (2005), who considers Populism as a logical system for structuring political life and for framing the struggle for hegemony. Thus, a movement, party, or leader should not be labelled Populist merely on the basis of its policies and ideology but rather because the leader/party articulates them within a given logical system. The idea of Populism as a discursive pattern or as a communication style puts the spotlight on the notion of 'The People' (as the fount of all virtue) cruelly betrayed by corrupt elites who must be overthrown for the good of society. This is Populism's *leitmotiv* and its main argument. That is why another approach sees Populism as a strategy and/or a form of organisation in which charismatic leaders seek direct, immediate, non-institutional support through their followers. With a view to overcoming the limitations of these different approaches, Moffit and Torney (2014) argue that Populism must be seen first and foremost as a political style characterised by an appeal to The People as the bearers of sovereignty, and by opposition to a corrupt elite. Another ingredient of Populism is the idea that there is a national emergency, crisis, or threat that requires a tough 'no-nonsense' response.

There are many ways of approaching Populism. Among them, Mudde's definition (2004: 543) of Populism as a *thin ideology* is one that has gained broad acceptance. According to Mudde, Populism is "an ideology that sees society as split into two homogeneous, opposing groups — 'the good guys' (The People) and 'the bad guys' (the corrupt elite). Populist parties argue that politics should be an expression of *The People's Will*". This definition covers much of the various approaches to the issue and, as Kriesi and Pappas (2015) noted, there are four key elements. These are: (1) acceptance that there are two homogeneous groups — The People and The Elite; (2) the interests of the two groups are diametrically opposed; (3) The People is sovereign; (4) a perspective in which The People is put in a positive light while The Elite is vilified.

Pappas (2014) and Kriesi and Pappas (2015) add that Populism is an illiberal interpretation of democracy

(Zakaria, 1997). That is because Populism is based on a literal interpretation of ‘government by the people’ and eschews classic Liberal checks and balances in the political system. Second, Populism is hostile towards ‘middle-men’ and seeks a direct link between leaders and the masses, with the stress on grass-roots democracy. Last but not least, it stresses the idea of a monolithic ‘Will of The People’ which leaves no room for pluralism. Yet this monolithic interpretation not only creates antagonism towards the elites but also towards other groups that are not seen as belonging to ‘The People’. This is where the issue of *identity* arises, whether in national, cultural or religious terms and linked with a ‘nativist’ outlook. This is the common approach taken by Populist parties belonging to the Far Right in Europe. They argue that The People risks losing its identity in the face of globalisation, immigration, and multi-culturalism (Marzouki, McDonnell and Rey, 2016). These parties see immigrants in general and Muslims in particular as posing a threat to The People’s values and religious traditions, although in many cases the culture they consider to be traditional is most often one based on laicism. By contrast, Left-Wing parties lack this identity element and lean towards laicism, lack of faith, and multiculturalism.

The absence of a general theory of Populism has not hindered broad consensus on what the reasons are for Populism’s recent emergence and growth — especially in The West. Most of the explanations are rooted in various dimensions of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and its aftermath (Shambaugh, 2012). Taking this line, Populism is the result of the anger and frustration arising from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and the austerity policies that followed. However, it might also be a reaction to the perverse effects of globalisation in broad swathes of Western society. Here, some of those who have lost their jobs see mass immigration as a threat, while many Middle Class voters have seen their wages and prospects shrink, giving them a sense of relative privation (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018). Populist leaders have seized upon this seething discontent and have sought to mobilise ordinary people against the political and economic elites whom they

consider to blame for the present state of affairs. By contrast, Populism — argue its exponents — seeks to govern in the name of The People and is the answer to representing it politically. From this standpoint, the rise of Populism is also a political phenomenon (Roberts, 2015).

As a result, Populism is not just a reaction to economic problems and a view of globalisation as a threat but is rather a political issue that has been simmering for a long while, undermining traditional parties. The shrinking support for traditional parties can be seen in their falling membership rolls and waning share of the vote, as well as in greater volatility in voting patterns. All these things reveal political parties’ woes, and as Mair (2013) has noted, all need to be dealt with at the same time. Parties find themselves both having to pander to the electorate’s demands in opposition but act responsibly when they are in power. The combined impact of the economic and political crises thus explains the surge in Populism.

Nevertheless Populism is not homogeneous but rather is shaped by sundry factors. Some of these are of a cultural nature and are linked to each society’s policies in this field (Norris and Inglehart, 2018). Others are institutional, such as the hurdles placed by each electoral system. Yet other factors are of a political kind such as the fault lines found in traditional politics and, with them, the degree to which parties and party systems are institutionalised. On this last point, one might expect that the persistence of classic political fault lines would hinder the emergence of Populism. Conversely, one would expect the weakening of those fault lines and low institutionalisation of parties and the systems to which they belong to foster Populism’s emergence and growth. This paper argues that the electorate in Spain does not differ from that in other countries where Populism has taken root — especially its Right-Wing variant (Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015). In those countries, the electoral system has not stopped new Populist parties making their mark and altering the party system, making it much more open-ended (Rodríguez-Teruel and Barrio, 2018). In Spain however, the country’s strong political fault lines

seem to be the main factor explaining why Populism has put down very shallow roots.

THE LIMITED PRESENCE OF FAR-RIGHT POPULIST PARTIES

After many years of fixed political fault lines and stability in the party system, the first Populist parties to shake up politics in Western Europe in the early 1980s were ones on the Far Right. This family of parties is characterised by its 'nativism', seen in its anti-immigration discourse, and its fierce opposition to multi-culturalism, globalisation, and EU integration (Mudde, 2007). Populism has been the political current that has waxed most in Europe since then but this is not the case in Spain, where political discontent and opposition to immigration is broadly on a par with those found in other European countries where Populist parties have sprung up.

Plataforma per Catalunya (PxC) meets all the criteria for being considered a Right-Wing Populist Party and was the first of its kind in Spain to win seats. The party was opposed to mass immigration, which it saw as a threat to both Catalan and Spanish identities and to traditional family values. It was highly critical when it came to crime and terrorism, arguing that natives should be given preference in assigning social benefits. Here, the party made efforts to overcome traditional political divisions. Under the leadership of Josep Anglada (who had a Far Right background), the party made a big impact on the media and was able to build a modern Populist discourse with strong local roots (Hernández-Carr, 2011). This strategy yielded modest results. PxC had a presence in Catalan municipalities with a high concentration of foreign immigrants but never won seats in either the Catalan Parliament or in the Spanish Parliament (Casals, 2011; Hernández-Carr, 2012). The party was dissolved in February 2019 but continued its activity as a foundation, forming part of Vox.

The traditional Far Right linked to Francoism has also been very weak since Spain's transition from dictator-

ship to democracy, obtaining scarcely any institutional representation. Only Fuerza Nueva in 1979 was able to pass the electoral threshold to win just one seat in Spain's Parliament. The seat was held by the party's leader Blas Piñar. Since then, this 'political family' has failed to gain a foothold in any tier of government in Spain (Casals, 1998). There are many reasons for this: inability to come up with an attractive discourse; its nostalgia for Spain's Fascist past; its dalliance with violence; strong internal rifts and lack of leadership; Spaniards' show an overwhelming preference for moderate political parties. Together, these factors explain why Spain's classic Far Right has been politically irrelevant since the restoration of democracy.

The failure of Far-Right parties (notwithstanding their potential electoral appeal) has been ascribed by Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser (2015) to three political hurdles. The first of these is that Spain's electoral system makes it hard for small parties to break into the political scene. The second is that Spanish politics has two very strong fault lines: Left-Right, and Centre-Periphery. These fault lines are so marked that it is well-nigh impossible to come up with new lines of conflict, especially if they have an 'exclusivist' or 'nativist' component. That is why the few parties that have tried to exploit immigration or religion as political issues have had so little success at the local level, as PxC's case shows. PP's presence is the third factor explaining the absence of the Far-Right in Spain. PP is Spain's main Centre-Right party and it has long opted for a competition strategy that lets it fill the whole of the Right of the political spectrum, running from the Centre-Right to the Far-Right. Thus PP mobilises voters that might otherwise vote for Far-Right Populist parties.

Even so, Esteban and Martín (2017) have recently questioned these explanations. With regard to the electoral system, they argue that although it did not traditionally favour the entry of new parties, the advances made by Ciudadanos and Podemos during the 2014-2016 electoral cycle shed doubt on this argument. The system of parties was therefore not the result of the electoral system (the classic institutional explanation given by the Duvergerian matrix) but

rather the result of political alignments reflecting rifts in society — which raise issues of a sociological nature. In relation to the structure of these political fault lines, it has been argued that in other countries where there is a split between the centre and the periphery (such as in Italy, Belgium, and The United Kingdom) Right-Wing Populist parties have been able to overcome the voting threshold to gain seats. They have done so by linking link immigration with the clash between centre and periphery, stressing worries about identity, recalling similar linkages seen in Spain (Pardos Prado, 2012). Finally, Esteban and Martín concluded that in some key respects, PP votes are no different from voters for Far Right Populist parties elsewhere in Europe, especially when it comes to their views on immigrants' religion and culture, and the 'threat' they pose to jobs. Nevertheless, they differ in the following respects: (1) their tendency to support the governing party; (2) they are less belligerent towards immigrants because many of the latter are of Hispanic origin, with whom they share cultural roots; (3) a more pro-EU outlook; (4) greater respect for Law and Order. Thus there are PP voters who might identify with Far Right supporters but that have remained hidden among the heterogeneous mass of the party's share of the electorate. The PP is a highly institutionalised party that has lacked Right-Wing rivals until recently. It has proved capable of attracting both potential Far-Right voters and moderate Right-Wing voters. However, the spell was broken when a host of corruption scandals undermined the PP government. The upshot was that PP lost power in 2018 after a successful 'No Confidence' motion in Spain's Congress. This put a new PSOE government (led by Pedro Sánchez) in the riding seat. From that point on, the Right began to fracture, with Ciudadanos and its competitive strategy being wrong-footed by the major electoral gains made by Vox.

THE NEW PARTIES: PODEMOS AND CIUDADANOS

The rise of new parties in Spain coincided with the waves of Populism identified by Casals (2013). The first wave spanned from 1989 to 2000 and was led

by José María Ruiz-Mateos, who won two seats in the European Parliament in 1989, and by Jesús Gil, whose Grupo Independiente Liberal (GIL) won seats in several Andalusian municipalities, including that of Marbella. Gil was elected Mayor of Marbella, and as President of Ceuta (a small Spanish outpost and autonomous region in North Africa). As Álvarez Tardío (2017) noted, both Ruiz-Mateos and Gil were businessmen who went into politics. Their political pitch was that they would put a stop to the arbitrariness and corruption that had been inflicted on them by the two main parties. Both initiatives exploited the opportunities offered by multi-tier governance structures, with Gil focusing on local and regional government, and Ruiz-Mateos on the EU parliament. Yet both found that extending their reach to other tiers of government was no easy task. In the end, both of them failed to expand their respective political toeholds. The last exponent of this first Populist wave was another businessman, Mario Conde, who failed to win a seat in Spain's Parliament (Congreso de los Diputados) in 2000. The two major parties (PSOE and PP) were strong and had a finger in every institutional pie whether they were in government or out. Against them, the Populist parties (based as they were on a single person and with few roots in society) did not stand a chance and soon ran into the sand.

The second wave began in 2003 in Catalonia with the emergence of Plataforma por Cataluña and Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP), the latter a regional Left-Wing Party with a pro-Catalan independence agenda. Later on, more initiatives were launched to exploit the endless clashes between Catalonia and Spain, one such being Solidaritat Catalana. Yet neither Plataforma por Cataluña, nor Solidaritat had much success, only fleetingly holding seats in the Catalan Parliament (2010-2012). By contrast, CUP won its first seats in the Catalan Parliament in 2012. Since 2015, CUP has not only held seats in every legislature but has also played a key role in forming coalition governments. This helps explain the Populist drift taken by Catalan nationalism over the last few years (Barrio, Barberà, Rodríguez Teruel, 2018). It also reveals why both the party system and the national rift have become more

important than the Left-Right rift (Rodríguez Teruel and Barrio, 2018).

The third wave of Populism began in 2008. As we noted earlier, from this year onwards, many of the factors giving wings to Populism were now to be found in Spain. These factors were: (1) a deep economic crisis fuelling mass unemployment (25%-plus); (2) aggressive austerity measures by successive PSOE and PP governments involving deep cuts in social spending and a bail-out of much of Spain's banking sector; (3) a host of corruption scandals affecting the two main parties — especially PP, which had governed with an absolute majority since 2011. Statistics from Spain's CIS (sociological research centre) reveal that citizens' wrath at the political state of affairs was so great that from 2013 onwards, Spaniards considered politicians and their parties as the main source of corruption and of the economic problems plaguing the country. In this scenario, one might expect the emergence of Populist parties (whether Left or Right) in Spain given that this is what happened in other Western European nations. The slump and voters' loss of trust in politicians from the two main contenders opened the door to new parties (Medina and Correa, 2016; Cordero and Montero, 2015; Orriols and Cordero, 2016; Rodon and Hierro, 2016; Bosch and Durán, 2017). Even so, although all parties had picked up some Populist tricks, one cannot say that Populism had put down roots in Spain. As we shall see, the Left-Right split in Spanish politics and the 'nationalist' split stopped Populism from gaining a foothold.

Podemos came into being in 2014 and sought from the outset to impose a Populist approach of the kind meant by Ernesto Laclau (2005). It was the only Spanish party that defined itself as Populist, which is why various authors have treated it as such (Zarzalejos, 2017; Sanders *et al.*, 2017; Solà and Rendueles, 2017; Ivaldi *et al.*, 2017). Podemos tried to overcome the Left-Right dialectic in Spanish politics — the biggest rift in the Spanish political system — and to replace it with the dualism of The People versus the elites (Rodríguez-Teruel, Barrio and Barberà, 2016; Barrio, Barberà, Rodríguez-Teruel, 2018). In keeping with the

classic Populist scheme, Podemos sought to champion the rights of ordinary people against the interests of the elite, adopting the classic Italian concept of *casta* (caste) — an idea that spread like wildfire after being used on television by the party's leading lights, such as Pablo Iglesias. The concept underlying the party was strongly shaped by the work *La Razón Populista* by Laclau (2005), which raised the idea of the Nation-State as a construct to serve The People. Podemos' conception of the *nation* was based on three planks (Torreblanca, 2015: 139). The first was that the elites did not represent The People, expressed in the slogan "They do not speak for us", lifted from the 15-M movement. Here, Podemos positioned itself as that movement's heir. The second concerned sovereignty, which Podemos took in its traditional sense, referring to the State's autonomy from foreign influences — a clear allusion to supra-national bodies, especially The European Union which had shamelessly dictated Spanish economic policy since the outbreak of the financial crisis. The third plank drew on the same concept of the nation to guarantee social rights. Podemos' aim was to build on social and national planks to build a broad political platform capable of mobilising broad swathes of the electorate in the same way the 15-M movement had. Nevertheless, Podemos tripped over two hurdles to its political ambitions, both stemming from the old political fault lines found in Spain.

One of these hurdles was the Left-Right split and its historic importance in Spanish politics. The appearance of another new political party — Ciudadanos — considered by some to be the *Right-Wing's version of Podemos* (as the famous banker Josep Oliu put it) forced Podemos to politically position itself in the Left-Right battle. Later on, with a view to beating PSOE, it opted for a *catch-all* strategy which sought to put Podemos "at the centre of the political chessboard". That is why it became more Populist. Podemos can be considered a radical Left-Wing party if one takes Mudde and March's criteria (2005). It is radical because it rejects the socio-economic structure underlying contemporary Capitalism and its values and practices. Here, the party proposes alternative economic and power structures that imply radical wealth redistribu-

tion from the haves to the have-nots. It is Left-Wing because of its commitment to collective economic and social rights. Nevertheless, its radicalism has waned over time, especially since its entry into the coalition government in January 2020.

Podemos' first election manifesto (for the 2014 European Elections) clearly expressed this radical Left-Wing ethos. The programme was drawn up through open assemblies in which over 30,000 members took part, many of whom had been involved in the organisation of the 15M protests. This explains the adoption of maximalist positions on economic matters, such as retirement at sixty, the refusal to repay Spain's National Debt, a basic income for everyone, and nationalisation of Spain's key economic sectors — all measures that the party subsequently rejected as impractical. Later on, the party commissioned an economic programme from two renowned experts, Vicenç Navarro (Full Professor of Politics and Social Sciences at Universitat Pompeu Fabra - UPF) and Juan Torres (Full Professor of Economics at Universidad de Sevilla — US). This programme shifted the party into a social-democratic frame, giving it a better chance of fighting PSOE on equal terms. This move towards the Centre stopped Podemos following the path to political extinction taken by Izquierda Unida, a tiny party that was the heir of Spain's Communist Party. Later on, its alliance with PSOE from the 2016 General Election onwards strengthened its positioning in this part of the political spectrum. The move also helped consolidate Podemos' growth at the expense of the internally-riven PSOE. Even though Podemos and PSOE were competitors, the former supported the latter in 2018 in a Motion of No-Confidence against the then PP-led government. The motion was passed, and Pedro Sánchez — the PSOE's leader — became President. After the 2019 General Election, the two parties formed a coalition in which Podemos held one of the Vice-Presidencies (exercised by Pablo Iglesias), with the latter party being given four ministerial posts.

The second hurdle to Podemos' Populist ambitions stemmed from the political fault line between Spain's

centre and periphery. As we noted earlier, Podemos' concept of *nation* was linked to the idea of democracy and sovereignty, understood in the classic sense. It thus referred to the State's autonomy and the social rights guaranteed thereby. Nevertheless, Spain's complexity as a Nation-State and the prospects for the party's spread and consolidation made it difficult to establish who: 'The People' was; the party sought to represent; the nation comprised. Podemos and its allies in various regions — including Catalonia — assumed that Spain was a State comprising several nations with diverse aspirations. This was a notion that sat ill with a dialectic based on 'The People against The Elites'. Accepting the principle of sundry *demos* meant also taking it as read that each *demos* had its own demands and aspirations within a system of highly asymmetric relations. Podemos had also faced the challenge of adapting its Populism to the various national identities found within the Spanish State. The party had shown that it was not only willing to give practical recognition of Spain's pluri-national nature but also supported Catalonia's and The Basque Country's secessionist goals. This is why Podemos supported Catalonia's right to a legally-agreed referendum on the country's independence from Spain. That said, the party began to shift position as soon as it became a member of the coalition government. This re-positioning not only gave rise to strong internal tensions in the party but also clearly contradicted the party's Populist stance, putting it in an ambivalent position on the centre-periphery fault line.

Nevertheless, as Vallespín and Bascuñán (2017) note, these hurdles have not stopped Podemos from keeping some of its Populist features, which include: (1) simplification of the language used; (2) mistrust of parliamentary democracy; (3) the rhetoric based on The People as protagonist and with a clearly-defined antagonist; (4) new communication techniques based on emotive appeal and wrapped up in rationality.

Ciudadanos Is a party that sprang to life in 2006 as a response to the demand by some sectors that were unhappy with the way some Left-Wing parties had leapt on the nationalist bandwagon (Rodríguez Teruel and

Barrio, 2016). Despite a short-lived alliance with the Europhobe *Libertas* party in the 2009 European Elections, Ciudadanos cannot be considered a Populist party even if the *Zeitgeist* has rubbed off on it — something that applies to many other European parties (Rooduijn *et al.*, 2012). In this respect, Ciudadanos was one of the first parties in Spain (together with Unión Pueblo y Democracia — UPyD) to systematically denounce the established parties for their corruption. Here, one should note that this denunciation came well before the 2008 and 2014 crises. Indeed, UPyD even went so far as to accuse the two mainstream parties of running a kind of mutual protection racket. That is why Ciudadanos argued the need for a renewal of democracy. This discourse, although it arose in Catalonia and addressed a specific Catalan issue, allowed Ciudadanos to spread its wings to the rest of Spain from 2014 onwards (Barrio, 2017b, 2017c). The party, along with Podemos, was an exponent of a new style of politics. Without going so far as to take on the mantle of Populism's 'The People versus The Elite' dichotomy, Ciudadanos — like Podemos — sought to overcome the Left-Right fault line and break the old political mould. The party even stated that, like some Populist movements, it was neither Left-Wing nor Right-Wing. It then steadily repositioned itself to end up as a Centre-Right party. At its party congress held in February 2018, Ciudadanos (in keeping with its international membership of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe) chose to remove references to Social Democracy in its *credo* and define itself strictly as a Liberal party. This, it hoped, would help it win more seats than PP following the fragmentation of the right of the political spectrum. At the same time, it upped the ante by vociferously attacking peripheral nationalisms, especially that in Catalonia, competing with PP and Vox in defending the unity of Spain. As some observers had foreseen, Ciudadanos shifted from being a middle-of-the-road party to become a Right-Wing version of Podemos. Its support for PP during the Motion of No Confidence and its subsequent refusal to govern as part of a coalition with PSOE after the April 2019 General Election put the seal on this change. Here, one should note that such a coalition with PSOE would have been viable in terms of commanding a parliamentary majority and perhaps

even ideologically. This choice proved unpopular with the party's voters, with Ciudadanos nose-diving from 57 seats in the April 2019 General Election to just 10 seats in the November 2019 General Election.

VOX; A RADICAL RIGHT-WING PARTY, NOT A POPULIST PARTY

The birth of Vox, like that of Podemos and of Ciudadanos, came about as a result of the political opportunities opened up in 2014. It fielded candidates for the European Elections in that year. Unlike the other two Right-Wing parties, Vox obtained no seats in this or in any other European Parliament election. Yet it did win a few seats in the 2015 municipal elections. This situation persisted until 2018 and the Andalusian Regional Election, when Vox made its first breakthrough. The Andalusian election was important because it was the first one since the PP had lost the confidence of Spain's Congress. It was also the first election outside Catalonia after this region's illegal Independence Referendum held on the 1st of October, followed by a Unilateral Declaration of Independence, which was then quashed by the application of Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution (involving a round-up of pro-independence Catalan politicians and a Central Government take-over of the Regional Government). From this moment on, given the threat to Spain's territorial integrity and a greatly weakened PP, Vox positioned itself as 'the country's saviour' and saw a surge in both electoral support and organisational capabilities (Barrio, 2019). Vox made an excellent showing in the Andalusian election. There, the party not only crossed the threshold needed to win seats but also became a vital piece in any coalition government. Vox also won seats in Spain's national parliament following the April 2019 General Election, getting no fewer than 24 deputies in Congress. The party also crossed the vote threshold in some 'autonomous communities' (self-governing regions) such as Madrid and Murcia, and in some municipalities such as Madrid. Vox also won three seats in the European Parliament. After the November 2019 elections, it won 57 seats, becoming Spain's third-strongest political force with 3,656,979 votes.

Vox is above all a Spanish nationalist party whose spectacular growth can be ascribed to the political fall-out from the Catalan crisis. Its gung-ho nationalism stems from concern over the unity of Spain and what it sees as the threat of Catalan nationalism. The party is highly critical of the decentralised political model ushered in by the 1978 Spanish Constitution, which created a ‘State of Autonomies’ [*Estado de las Autonomías*], which is to say a system where the regions enjoy a degree of self-government. Vox seeks to turn Spain into a unitary State that is administratively decentralised. The party recognises Spain’s cultural, linguistic, and institutional diversity but stresses that Spanish (Castilian) must enjoy a hegemonic position throughout the length and breadth of the land. Vox’s extreme defence of Spanish unity is shown by the fact that it has even gone so far as to hint it would outlaw independence parties (for instance, in Catalonia and The Basque Country). Although it does not say so explicitly, it seeks to introduce a militant model of democracy that falls outside the Spanish Constitution. Furthermore, it proposes a wide-reaching plan to disseminate and protect the national identity by fostering Spanish nationalism of the kind last seen under Franco’s Fascist dictatorship.

The party’s nationalism is accompanied by traditionalist, nativist, and xenophobic traits and it is hostile to what it terms *gender ideology*. Its traditionalism is patently clear in its defence of the traditional family as an institution that pre-dates the State. This is why Vox opposes abortion and sex changes. The party also lauds traditions such as bull-fighting and demands the closure of fundamentalist mosques. At the same time, it demands reciprocity in opening places of Christian worship and demands that Islam be excluded from the school curriculum. In addition, Vox advocates the creation of an aid agency for threatened Christian minorities abroad. The party links immigration strictly to the country’s economic needs and is keen to encourage settlement by newcomers from Spanish-speaking Latin America. It also seeks to deport illegal immigrants and those who commit serious crimes. By the same token, Vox opposes giving illegal immigrants the chance to regularise their status or to

receive public aid. Like Donald Trump’s proposal to build a wall between The United States and Mexico, Vox would build a wall between Ceuta and Morocco, and between Melilla and Morocco, which it demands should be paid for by the Moroccan Government. Vox accuses Feminism (as do many other Right-Wing movements) of fostering a *gender ideology* and says that Feminist organisations should be banned. Given half a chance, the party would also scrap gender quotas and abolish Spain’s Gender Violence Act on the grounds that it discriminates against men. Vox would replace the legislation by a ‘Family Violence Act’ in which all family members would be treated the same.

Security is another Vox hobby-horse. In this field, it would toughen sentencing and prison conditions, and would scrap Spain’s membership of The Schengen Area until the EU gave a binding undertaking that nobody would be given safe haven from Spanish justice — a clear allusion to the many Catalan politicians who fled abroad seeking asylum. The party also defends life imprisonment of former members of the ETA terrorist organisation, and barring those who have supported ETA’s political demands from public office. Among Vox’s more colourful proposals is giving citizens the right to bear arms, defend their homes by force, and even to decorate citizens who injure or kill a criminal entering their homes and in self-defence.

On the other hand, Vox supports the idea of democratic renewal and proposes reform of the electoral system. It favours: (1) less party control over drawing up candidate lists; (2) the elimination of gender and other quotas; (3) toughening up the law on political incompatibilities with public office; (4) tightening up control over public posts to stop parties receiving public funding. In the same vein, it seeks to slash the number of municipal and local representatives, and to limit the number of political advisors employed. Vox has raised the idea of appointing members of Spain’s General Council of The Judiciary (CGPJ) and the Supreme Court (TS) on the basis of merit rather than on political affiliation. Further proposals are that the TS assume the functions of the Constitutional Court, and that trial by jury be abolished.

These features place Vox firmly in the orbit of Europe's Far-Right parties, as its participation in the Koblenz Summit in January 2017 clearly revealed. Its political bedfellows at that summit were France's *Front National*, Germany's *AfD*, and Austria's Freedom Party [*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* — FPÖ]. The aim of the summit was for the three parties to co-ordinate their European strategy. Nevertheless, Vox is not fervently anti-EU or particularly Populist. Indeed, after the European elections, it joined the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group, distancing itself from efforts by Steve Bannon to form a group of Far-Right, Euro-sceptic parties under the baton of Marine Le Pen and Matteo Salvini (Barrio, in press).

Vox's position on the EU is ambivalent. Its foundational manifesto contains no references to Europe whatsoever, from which one can assume that the EU is not a key issue for the party. Its manifesto for the 2014 European Elections made vague noises about improving the workings of EU institutions and policies, and to make the EU more democratic. Indeed similar proposals have been on the EU's own wish list for decades without anything ever coming of them. From 2015 onwards, coinciding with The Refugee Crisis, Vox aligned itself with the positions taken by The Visegrad Group on immigration, and began to favour a more inter-governmental approach in the EU and being more explicit in rejecting supra-nationalism and any kind of non-State participation in EU decisions. That said, Vox does not question Spain's membership of the EU but rather seeks to change the organisation from within — a line taken by most Far-Right parties in the 2019 elections. In its manifesto for those elections, it stressed the sovereignty of States, their territorial integrity and the need to maintain Europe's Judao-Christian culture in the face of foreign threats, and to tighten up on immigration, political asylum, and on security and defence matters.

Even so, Vox lacks the Populist component usually found on the Far-Right. It is true that it lambasts the main parties and calls for democratic renewal and the need to carry out institutional reforms. Vox argues that such reforms are needed to stop the rot caused by the

party system in general and by the wholesale corruption of Spain's two biggest parties in particular. Yet it does not meet all of the criteria of a Populist party as set out in the academic literature, and in particular those defined by Mudde (2004). Thus Vox neither thinks that there are two homogeneous groups — a virtuous People on the one hand and a vice-ridden elite on the other — nor does it assume an antagonistic relationship between them. Likewise, it does not see politics as the result of such an antagonistic relationship, nor does it show a preference for direct democracy versus the other instruments in Liberal Democracy's tool-box. It does not even suggest that sovereignty flows from The People but rather sees it as stemming from Spain. While Vox is not wholly free from Populism's reach — a trait shared by most parties in The West (especially those with a yen for political moralisation) — it is not Populist.

Vox is a singular case of a Far-Right party that is not a Populist one. This makes Spain an exception on the European scene. The 2008 political and economic crisis gave birth to the party but that does not explain its success. Rather, it was the political crisis sparked by the possibility of Catalonia's secession at the end of 2017 and the PP's credibility crisis in the Spring of 2018 that gave Vox wings. Vox is a Spanish nationalist party that lies on the Far Right and whose growth stems not from its Populism but rather than from its position in relation to the two main fault lines defining political life in Spain. Both fault lines played a key role in the last election cycle and — as in Spain's Second Republic (1934-1939) — tend to be super-imposed, magnifying the seismic forces reshaping the political landscape.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In Spain, two factors combined that usually favour the emergence of Populism. They were the 2008 economic crisis and the 2014 political crisis. Yet Populism has not taken root in Spain, making the country a rare exception among Western Democracies.

Historically, Far-Right Populist parties have had very little impact in Spain and then only in the local tier

of government. The reasons for this lie in: (a) the country's rejection of Franco's poisoned legacy; (b) the electorate's ideological moderation; (c) the hurdles in the electoral system to winning seats and get institutional representation; (d) PP hegemonic presence in which the party attracted voters who in another context might be labelled radical Populists. Until recently, all these factors presented a well-nigh insuperable barrier to Populist parties' wielding power.

The Populist parties that emerged in the various waves found it hard to take root given the near-monopoly of power exercised by the two main parties. Among the new parties emerging from the crisis, Podemos is one that calls itself Populist in keeping with Laclau's definition. Yet the party failed to get its approach adopted and ended up by fitting in with Spain's framework for political competition and battling it out with PSOE for pride of place on the Left of the political spectrum.

In any event, the presence of a strong national fault line made it hard for Podemos to foist its Populist notions on the country's diverse *demoi*. Ciudadanos, meanwhile, shared Populist criticism of the established parties and stressed its eagerness to foster democratic renewal. Yet it shares no other features that would allow us to label it as 'Populist'. Indeed, Ciudadanos has been forced to stress its position as a Liberal party in relation to the Left-Right fault line, and its opposition to peripheral nationalisms in relation to the centre-periphery fault line.

Finally, the emergence of Vox has shown that Spain is not wholly immune to the Far-Right, disproving a belief that was widely held until recently. Nevertheless, the party's rapid growth was fuelled by Catalonia's attempt to secede and the fragmentation of the Right and, with it, a greatly weakened PP. By contrast, Vox's rising star had little to do with the economic and political crises mentioned earlier. Vox shares various traits with other Far-Right parties: traditionalism; 'nativism'; rejection of Feminism. Yet it still lacks the Populist component. That is because the party does not have a dualistic vision of society ('We The People' versus 'them', the elites). Neither does it pass itself off as 'The Voice of The People' or prefer 'direct democracy' to parliamentary democracy. It is thus a rare example of a Far-Right party that is not a Populist one. Above everything, it stresses Spanish nationalism and the indivisible unity of Spain, revealing the primacy it gives to the traditional fault lines found in Spanish politics.

Despite the deep-seated changes undergone by Spain's system of parties of late, the Left-Right fault line and the national fault line have greatly hindered the birth and growth of Populism in the country. Both faults tend to work in a synergetic fashion, stopping Populism — as defined by Mudde (2004) — from taking hold. This is because the notion of a society split into two homogeneous, antagonist groups (namely, The People versus The Elites) has no traction in Spain and merely elicits voter indifference and incomprehension. Quite simply, there are issues dearer to Spaniards' hearts that shape the political battle lines.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Astrid Barrio is Professor of Politics at Universitat de València (UV). She was awarded a PhD in Politics by Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAE) and a DEA (Diplôme d'Études Approfondies — a first-year PhD diploma) by Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris (Sciences-Po). Her field of research covers parties, political elites, party systems, and nationalism. Astrid Barrio is the author of many books and has published papers in scholarly journals such as *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, *Comparative European Politics*, *South European Society and Politics*, and *Mediterranean Politics*, among others. She regularly writes in newspapers such as *El Periódico* and *La Vanguardia* and is a frequent analyst on TV3, Catalunya Ràdio, La Ser, RAC1, and RTVE. She is the founder of *Agenda Política* and the magazine *Política & Prosa*. Her entire academic output can be consulted at: <https://uv.academia.edu/AstridBarrio>.



Special Issue

Tweeting, Posting, Blogging: Feminist features in the battle against sexist violence and for peace and equality



Presentation of the Monographic Issue. Tweeting, Posting, Blogging: Feminist features in the battle against sexist violence and for peace and equality

Coordinated by

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Digital tools have ushered in a new age for social movements championing Human Rights and equality (Castells, 2012; Rovira, 2017). In the Feminist field, *hacktivism* — a term meaning activism through social networks — tirelessly battles against gender violence and sexual harassment, the victims of which are overwhelmingly women and children. Digital tools link and shape Civil Society, spreading messages that demand attention and remedies (Dean and Aune, 2015; Friedman, 2015; Chamberlain, 2017). We live in a globalised world whose links reveal many commonalities and differences that arise from sundry kinds of structural inequality and violence (Massey, 1994; Sassen, 2007, 2015). In this world, social networks and the way they facilitate communication makes it that much harder to contextualise the concerns, experience, and empathy of those whose lot in life is conditioned by their intersectional relationships (Haraway, 1988; Creswley, 1989; Collins, 2000).

There has been constant international social mobilisation ever since the signing of major international treaties, for instance, The Treaty of Rome, and The Peking Conference. Yet it was not until the dawning of globalisation that such mobilisation took wing. Here, local matters are easier to publicise in a Civil Society in which citizens are made aware of violent incidents wherever they happen in the world. As a result, people can ally with others to stir indignation and to pressure public authorities to put things to rights.

This mobilisation approach has been used often over the last few decades, particularly to defend key Human Rights given the need to organise against structural violence. Such mobilisation can be seen in campaigns ranging from #MeToo to #YoSoy123, #BringBackOurGirls, #OccupyWallStreet, #BlackLivesMatter, to name but a few. Internet and Communication Technologies (ICT) in general and social networks in particular channel the demands of Civil Society and fuel popular revolt.

Intersectionality is a key theoretical and political tool for both building scientific knowledge and for articulating political activism. It does, however, pose an intellectual challenge. That is because it begs the question whether situated experiences (which stem from local socio-cultural settings) can be generalised to the global scale. Are important nuances of the local setting lost when one scales up to international mobilisation? Are some aspects simplified or misinterpreted? Even when mass support is garnered and everyone supports the protest, what results are achieved? What change processes come into play? What consequences may flow from highly-complex political situations — for example, ones in which a society is engaged in armed conflict or other types of extreme violence (Bunch, 2001; Friedman, 2005; Magallón, 2010, 2012; Bloom, 2011; Leatherman, 2014; Anderlini, 2018)? One needs to ask whether cyber-campaigns are led by international agencies or by local leaders. In either case, what impact do the campaigns have on the local political agenda, on resolving the conflict, and on local citizens' everyday lives? One also needs to consider whether these campaigns represent one or other of the pressure groups in a conflict and if they take the complexity of the issue and the population's general feelings on the subject into account (Hooks, 1986; Mohanty 1984; Khoja-Moolji, 2015; Maxfield, 2016).

These questions underpin our research proposal, whose origin lies in a research project titled *Las redes sociales como instrumento de lucha contra las violencias de género* [Social Networks as a Tool for Battling Gender Violence] (2017 RICIP0000), funded by L'Institut Català Internacional per la Pau [The International Catalan Institute for Peace] (ICIP). Some of the papers here are linked to this research, as is the case of the papers by Carmen Magallón, Beatriz Revelles-Benavente, Maite García and that of the editors of the special issue of the *Debats* journal. A seminar — Peace and Human Rights: #enREDadas in the battle against gender violence", with was co-funded by the Women's Institute [*Instituto de la Mujer*]. This Special Issue is the result of the work proposed in the project, which established a research network for people working in this field. In pursuing the work programme, we made a call for papers between February and April 2019 for this Special Issue with a view to disseminating the international work carried out by other researchers in this discipline. The response to the call was very encouraging, letting us include a wide range of papers and viewpoints on cyber-activism from the standpoint of gender and the fostering of a space that is free from gender violence. To this network, the editors added other researchers in the field as external viewers. A 'blind' review of submissions was made but this does not mean that the reviewers should remain in the shadows. We should like to thank the following for their time and outstanding work in conducting these reviews: Patricia Peña (Universidad de Chile); Jessie Bustillo (London Metropolitan University); Lola S. Almendros (Centro Superior

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This Special Issue contains seven papers and two additional documents. The first paper, “Violent Extremism, A Challenge for Pacifist Feminism” by Carmen Magallón looks at violent societies and considers the way these victimise women. She suggests that an international policy agenda is needed to cast women in the role of peace-makers. In Magallón’s words: “Leaders of Pacifist Feminism are shifting from criticism to drawing up new strategies. In doing so, they are guided by women’s views, providing solutions to violence rather than merely analysing its causes”.

The second paper, by Ana M. González Ramos, Beatriz Revelles-Benavente, and Verónica Gisbert-Gracia, presents Nigeria’s internecine conflict and the objectivisation of women’s and girls’ bodies in the war zones. The authors describe the complex role played by women from their intersectional positions in Nigerian society with all its religious and socio-cultural nuances.

The third paper is by Beatriz Revelles-Benavente. In it, she delves into the roles played by girls in the conflict and the way in which the #BringBackOurGirls campaign instrumentalised political mobilisation from an affirmative Feminist standpoint. The author notes the elasticity of the concept of childhood — a category whose acceptance and definition is shaped by each society and by the passage of time itself (in the case of the Chibok kidnapping, the victims were girls when they were kidnapped but several years later, are all now young women).

The fourth paper is by María Teresa García-Catalá, who used the Twitter API to analyse the *hashtag* data spanning the period from the 19th of May 2014 to the 16th of May 2019. She uses this data to shed light on the reasons for the campaign’s international success. Her results point to a truly local campaign with an international impact. That is because most of the tweets were by Nigerians. In addition, many of the events underlying activity on social networks were also of Nigerian origin.

The fifth paper is by Blessing Datiri, which opens the discussion on how the cyber-campaigns contribute to the Feminist cause in eradicating violence against women. Datiri analyses the #BringBackOurGirls, #JusticeforNoura and #JusticeForOchanya campaigns to this end. The paper answers one of the needs raised earlier, to wit: contextualisation of movements in their local settings and noting their results. She analyses the male chauvinism and domestic violence inflicted on African women, which have spurred the African Feminist movement to demand their countries draw up policies to deal with gender discrimination.

The sixth paper, by Macarena Hanash Martínez, takes a different angle, namely the patriarchal violence suffered by Feminist women on the Internet. She uses the case of the *Gamergate* movement in which Anita Sarkeesian and Zoë Quinn were attacked online in August 2019. The author also looks at grassroots movements in which activist users strive to manage cyber-violence “when social media platforms refuse to apply their terms of use and service to protect vulnerable groups from male chauvinist, racist, trans-phobic, and homophobic violence and harassment.”

The papers in this Special Issue are complemented by two further documents. The first document is an interview by Begonya Enguix Grau of the activist and former Minister Obiageli Katryn Ezekwesili. The interview was held on the 20th of September 2019, revealing the viewpoint of one of the people running the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. Obiageli Ezekwesili tells how the international campaign was managed, and evaluates both its success and its impact on Nigeria’s national politics. In the interview, she stresses the campaign’s ability to shape public opinion and to foster gender equality for African girls and women. Ezekwesili ends the interview by alluding to the starting theme of the peace culture and Feminism. The second document is a poem by Maria Antonia García de León, titled: “Nosotras nunca estuvimos allí” [We Were Never There].

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Nosotras nunca estuvimos allí

María Antonia García de León

Leo la historia cruel del Siglo Veinte, su barbarie.
Veo hoy, las imágenes de Egipto, Libia y Siria.
Siempre la misma guerra,
siempre los mismos hombres
brincos, agresivos, vociferantes.
De un bando o de otro, siempre el olvido de la vida,
siempre el adiós a la paz.
Nosotras nunca estuvimos allí,
en aquella locura,
en aquella crueldad,
en aquella sinrazón, en aquel desperdicio,
en aquel odio,
en aquella tremenda destrucción,
en aquella ruindad,
en aquel arrasamiento de vida,
en aquella baldía bancarrota del amor.
Nosotras nunca estuvimos allí.
Nosotras, hiedras fuertes,
inmensas enredaderas, salvamos escollos,
trepamos por paredes imposibles,
agarramos clavos ardientes.
Salvamos la Vida.
¡Oh sagrado posibilismo de las mujeres!
Nosotras no apostamos por el todo o nada,
ni al blanco o negro, ni al jaque mate del poder.
Jugamos a la vida,
creemos en la vida,
y la vida no es dogma.
Nosotras, las valientes,
hacemos la vida posible en un mundo de hombres.



Violent Extremism: A Challenge for Pacifist Feminism

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ABSTRACT

The right of women to participate in peace processes was finally recognised and promoted by the international community in UN Security Council Resolution 1325/2000. This victory for reason was a long time coming. Diverse women thinkers and groups began pondering the issue over a century ago and they followed the path of anti-war initiatives. It is they who sowed the seeds of Pacifist Feminism. This participation has led to various achievements when it comes to: starting negotiations; resuming negotiations after stalemate; extending agreements; broadening the issues addressed; taking gender into account. Over the last few decades, armed violence against the population has widened and shifted in scope: most of the active armed conflicts in the world involve home-grown Violent Extremism (VE), which affects both the Global South and North. The paper discusses what the emergence of VE means for Pacifist Feminism, the challenges it poses and the core of the debate, strategies and action within the context of growing globalised cyber-activism.

Keywords: violent extremism, peace, pacifist feminism.

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FEMINISM WAS BORN OUT OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST VIOLENCE

Feminism was born as a social movement begun by women rebelling against discrimination. It was based on the liberating power of the ideas of equality and universalism enshrined by The Enlightenment, and demanded equal rights for women. The lack of rights enjoyed by women placed them on a material

and symbolic footing that made them easy prey to violence. One can say that Feminism sprang from the need to eradicate the violence women suffered first hand. Although these women did not use the term 'Pacifist' to describe themselves, it was an intrinsic feature of the movement from the outset. As time went by, Feminism became firmly convinced that the system of patriarchal domination was based

on a continuum of violence. The corollary to this was that full equality could only be achieved by embracing diversity that neither ignored people who were different or discriminated against them. The idea was that ‘violence’ must be opposed no matter what form it takes¹ (Galtung, 1996; Magallón, 2005).

Throughout history, one can identify a long line of women who took initiatives against war. In this paper, we limit ourselves to the great international bodies inspired by Feminism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Here, we find lines of development displaying features of the Feminist struggle that became apparent in the creation of successive international organisations. One of these bodies was the International Council of Women (ICW), whose socio-economic ambitions were vast in scope and that was to press for women’s right to vote. It was to add its voice to the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), and later sought to ban war, founding the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). These strands became interwoven in the organisation of an international women’s movement (Rupp, 1997) whose final goal was to end all discrimination and violence.

As a movement and as a way of thinking about the world, Feminism has gradually diversified as it keeps abreast of changes in the forces shaping women’s lives, and in which other factors are superimposed on gender (culture, ethnic group, location, age, beliefs, ideology). The women who called themselves Feminists were of different colours and from many places. The various latent voices at the outset led to many strands of Feminism expressed through a plethora of adjectives: Liberal Feminism; Radical Feminism; Post-Colonial Feminism; Black Feminism; Islamic Feminism, and so forth. The kind of ‘equality’ sought also became more complex. Some women included participation

in decisions on war and peace in their discourses and practices. This gave rise to Pacifist Feminism in the strict sense. The WILPF was founded at The Hague Congress (1915), marking the beginning of an anti-war movement that enshrined the values and commitments of the Pacifist movement at the time. Pacifist Feminism set out to end the war and put forward changes in international politics with a view to creating an institutional and legislative network to tackle conflicts of interest among nations through dialogue and negotiation (Magallón, 2006; Magallón and Blasco, 2015).

Women’s movements spent years battling against the war and for peace. Their efforts were finally rewarded by the international community, which gave Pacifist Feminists a voice in its institutions (now leavened with sundry bodies and leaders approved under Resolution 1325/2000 of the UN Security Council) giving rise to an agenda for Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The Resolution called for a perspective based on women’s lives (agency and protection) in peace negotiations and peace-building measures in international conflicts (Magallón, 2008; Mesa, 2011; Villellas, 2015). The positive impact of this participation led to, among other things, breaking negotiation stalemates, longer-lasting agreements, defence of a gender-based standpoint, and broadening the scope of the issues covered by negotiations (O’Reilly, Ó Súilleabháin and Paffenholz, 2015).

Other governments, aware of women’s potential, decided to invite the fairer sex to broaden the scope of their involvement. This led to new proposals that were incorporated in a series of initiatives that began with Resolution 1325: 2242/2015 of the 9th of October 2015, in which The Security Council called on “The Member States and on the United Nations to ensure women’s participation and leadership in strategies to fight terrorism and in violent extremism that might lead to terrorism”. The Resolution was tabled by Spain and The United Kingdom — two countries in which terrorism had scarred society and caused many deaths. Within the United Nation system, *ONU Mujeres* supported this call and stressed the role

1 Although violence throughout the rest of the paper refers to physical or direct violence, in this paragraph it alludes to the various kinds of violence according to Galtung’s scheme. Applying this scheme to women, violence ranges from feminisation to poverty, gender bias, scientific bias, and social exclusion.

women could play in their respective communities to prevent violent extremism.²

What do Pacifist Feminists think of this call? Can terrorism be considered a new kind of warfare and if so, is it something they should fight against in the battle to make today's world a more peaceful place? Is terrorism the same as violent extremism? What critiques, challenges, and proposals might they offer in eradicating such violence? Might the surge in Feminism denouncing sexual aggression be harnessed to eradicate other kinds of violence against women, such as those spawned by extremist movements?

VIOLENCE, WAR, AND EXTREMISM

War is the greatest form of violence and is an institutionalised practice by which Man kills others to achieve sundry aims: wielding power over a territory; imposing an ideology or creed on the population; secession; overthrowing a regime, and so on. As the women at The Hague Congress (1915) said, war destroys the achievements made by Mankind over the centuries — cities, monuments, symbols — and above all, it destroys the lives of those whom women bring into the world, bring up, and cherish.

Over the last few decades, Communication and Information Technology (ICT) has greatly facilitated the flow of data and information throughout the world, leading to ever stronger political, economic, military, and cultural links. Fierce economic competition on a planetary scale sparks and fuels wars and local conflicts. The converse also holds true given that local violence ends up having global repercussions. Violence rears its head in many contexts, making it harder to see wars for what they are and the harm that they inflict. Here, the forms violence takes become more complex and blur the bounds of war and peace. War has become very different from what we knew

in the past (Kaldor, 2001). That is because violence is now present in settings that used to be safe (for instance, in cities), giving rise to what some authors call “new kinds of wars” (Moura, 2010). The kinds of massacres that typified the wars of yore now take place in places where no war has been declared, or are committed in strange new but no less lethal ways. Over the last few decades, 79% of the world's active armed conflicts (26 out of 33) are internal matters that have been internationalised (Escola de Pau, 2018). In some places, women's bodies have become battlegrounds in struggles in which one or more warring parties slaughter womenfolk to further their economic and political ambitions (Segato, 2016). This host of violent conflicts is facilitated by the proliferation of assault rifles and the like from which arms merchants make a financial killing. Although a treaty regulating arms trafficking was first enacted in 2012, the ‘merchants of death’ can still dodge controls and protocols designed to stop weapons ending up in areas where Human Rights go by the board. There is a clear link between the proliferation of light arms and gender violence (Santos, 2014).

One of these ‘new’ (or not so new) forms of violence is attacks against: communities, buildings full of people; passers-by, discotheque-goers, women walking home at night, and indeed anyone who does not belong to the terrorist group. This new realm of violence is something that is ‘patriarchal’ in nature even though a significant number of perpetrators are women. It is violence underpinned by fanatical ideologies that give rise to extremist movements that believe ‘the ends justify the means’ no matter how abhorrent those means are. One can generically label such behaviour as Violent Extremism (VE).

The international community has not reached agreement on a definition of violent extremism or of terrorism. By the same token, there is no agreement on how to identify terrorist groups and extremists. Here, one man's ‘extremist’ is another man's ‘freedom fighter’. Massacres, terrorist attacks, killing women, kidnappings, and shoot-outs at schools and shopping malls have their origin in terrorist training camps.

² See: <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/preventing-violent-extremism>, accessed 22nd October 2018.

This is why VE and terrorism are terms that are often used interchangeably. In a study commissioned by the European Parliament, VE was spoken of as “the willingness to use violence or to support its use in order to foster given political, social, economic, or ideological beliefs” (De Leede, Hauptfleisch, Korolkova, and Natter, 2017).

The violence used by extremists has grown since 2001, diversifying and affecting ever more places in the world. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) gathers quantitative data and shows trends. The 2017 data showed that Afghanistan had the most deaths from Extremist Violence (4653 victims). Four more countries had over a thousand deaths apiece (Iraq, 4271 victims; Syria, Nigeria, and Somalia). No fewer than 19 countries reported around a hundred dead, and 67 countries suffered at least one death. The death toll from terrorism has fallen since 2014 but its impact has continued to spread, affecting many countries over the last twenty years. The peak year was 2016 with 79 countries affected but 2017 ran it a close second with 67 countries affected (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2018). The situation led the Secretary-General of The United Nations to propose an Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism. The plan was presented to The UN General Assembly in January 2016. In it, Violent Extremism was spoken of as “behaviour leading to terrorism”.

1. Violent extremism is an affront to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. It undermines peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. No country or region is immune from its impacts.
2. The present Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism considers and addresses violent extremism as, and when, conducive to terrorism. Violent extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition. It is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief. Nevertheless, in recent years, terrorist groups such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al-Qaida and Boko Haram have shaped our image of violent extremism and the debate on how to address

this threat. These groups’ message of intolerance — religious, cultural, social — has had drastic consequences for many regions of the world.³

IS THIS THE MOMENT TO RESUME THE CONVERSATION ON WOMEN AND PEACE?

Given the new scenarios for violence and the uses made of it by old and new players, some authors think that it is time to resume and re-think the conversation on “women, conflict, and peace” (Saeedi and Fransen, 2018). They consider that the time is ripe to think about and act in the face of deeds and social phenomena upon which there is disagreement but that — as in wars — lead to death and suffering for people around the world. Among the questions that need to be asked, there is one that bears on violence itself. One needs to ask whether there are differences (and if so what) between say the bombing of Gernika during The Spanish Civil War (or bombing of European cities during The Second World War), killing thousands of people in New York’s World Trade Center (2001), planting bombs in Madrid’s Atocha railway station (2004), running down pedestrians in Barcelona’s *Ramblas* (2017), killing women in Ciudad Juárez and hiding their bodies, raping and enslaving hundreds of girls in Nigeria — to name just a few of the most notorious atrocities carried out by extremist movements.

We start from the need to join in the strategy to fight the violent extremism that leads to terrorism. The issue is a controversial one, especially for women’s organisations rooted in Pacifist Feminism and that seek to advance the agenda for women, peace, and security.

Here, one should note that Pacifist Feminist organisations tend to be wary of co-operating with governments given that the latter may use them for their own ends. Basically, Pacifist Feminists challenge their governments because it is the latter that declare

3 <https://undocs.org/en/A/70/674>

war on others. The notion that “War is politics by other means” [*Der Krieg ist eine bloße Fortsetzung der Politik mit anderen Mitteln*] (Clausewitz, 1999) is anathema to such movements. This is because from the outset these movements avidly proposed the creation of a framework for peacefully solving disputes through law, diplomacy, arbitration, and negotiation, not through force of arms. This is why they opposed the military-industrial complex that fuels conflicts and enriches arms manufacturers and merchants.

The difference today is that international institutions and some States are seeking to enlist women in the battle against extremist violence. It is not surprising that the leap made by UN Security Council Resolution 2242 (which involved women’s agency in preventing VE) is seen with reservations. Is the call to help really framed in terms of gender equality? It would seem not, if one considers the scant funds allocated to women’s organisations committed to eradicating VE. Will women be listened to when it comes to drawing up strategies? What is being done to ensure that these organisations are not co-opted and manipulated by governments seeking to further their own ends?

Women’s organisations criticised the US government’s reaction after the attack on New York’s World Trade Center in 2001, and the French government’s reaction after the attacks in Paris in 2015. In 2001, the US responded by bombing Afghanistan for supposedly giving refuge to the authors of the 9/11 attacks. In France’s case, the government heavily bombed areas held by ISIS in Syria. Such reactions produce a great deal of ‘collateral damage’ (a euphemism for killing civilians). The bombing campaign only gave another twist to the spiral of violence, fuelling even more terrorism. Needless to say, such intervention greatly benefited the military-industrial complex because this thrives on conflict.

Security was stressed to the detriment of peace-making and it is this that Pacifist Feminists lament. For them, such an approach is poorly conceived because while peace offers broad horizons and keeps doors open, security is metaphorically based on building walls.

Maybe this is why Feminist theorists have shown little interest in terrorism to date:

It is noteworthy that terrorism and anti-terrorism have sparked little interest among the main Feminist theorists, who have focused a lot of attention on women, peace, and security. By contrast, they have done little to analyse discourses on terrorism, radicalism, and anti-terrorism (Aoláin, 2016: 277).

Feminists’ lack of interest in the issue seems to stem from six factors. These are: (1) Lack of international agreement on a definition of terrorism; (2) The stress on security (with a strong military component and disdain for Human Rights); (3) dominant masculine traits in States’ strategies for ‘the war on terror’; (4) The interests of political actors in labelling a group as a terrorist one; (5) The fact until lately, gender was not taken into account in the analyses and strategies used; (6) When gender has been considered, it has been in a stereotyped way (women as mothers and wives), without recognising their agency and diverse roles. Feminists worry that joining forces in the war on terror harms women’s agenda for peace and security. At the same time, Fionnuala Ni Aoláin (2016) considers that by not taking part, Feminists are losing the chance to shape decisions and actions that affect millions of women threatened by violent extremism. That is why this author argues that women have a greater role to play in lessening this kind of violence.

THE CHALLENGE OF THINKING ABOUT VIOLENT EXTREMISM FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

Is there continuity between the fight for peace and the fight against VE? What civilising proposals can we make or implement? It is hard to fall in with armed strategies from the standpoint of a critical strand of Feminism seeking both conventional and nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, the challenge is there and it is being tackled through new strategies by groups of women who suffer VE in their daily lives. These groups are coming up with proposals that mark a change in discourse and language to deepen

Figure 1



Source: Anderlini, 2018: 27.

knowledge of VE, putting forward new, practical approaches.

A change of discourse and language

The lack of consensus on a definition of terrorism and violent extremism, and the fact that both terms are used interchangeably makes it harder to deal with these issues in a more holistic context. In speaking about VE, the issue arises before action is taken, is deep-seated, and stems from roots, ideology, and motivations. From a Pacifist Feminist standpoint, it is worth distinguishing between 'VE' and 'terrorism' because doing so reveals what is at stake in each case. The distinction helps one pin down sundry kinds of extremism, their roots, and what drives them. VE is projected through violence and thus reflects the latent powerlessness of ideology and the beliefs that underpin it (personal/group based in the case of killing women; social in the case of religious and/or political fanaticism). Thinking of VE as a movement gives insights into: various kinds of Jihadism; the rise of hate-based ideologies; racist motivations; white supremacy movements; the killing of women and mass shootings. This is why Chikodiri and Ezeibe state that: "Violent extremism refers to the ideology that justifies violent acts to achieve a group's goals whereas terrorism is a violent act to achieve a given end" (Chikodiri y Ezeibe, 2019: 2).

There is a need for "a conceptual change that lets one go beyond the terminology limitations and current discourses" (Anderlini, 2018: 23). There is a firm belief that such change will spawn new, more

effective ways of tackling the issues. This process happened naturally, with lessons being learnt from past failures. Thus Counter-Terrorism (CT) gave way to the Campaign against Violent Extremism (CVE), and Violent Extremism Prevention (VEP). As we shall see later, the most heavily-involved women's network seeks to re-frame the problem in terms of Peace, Resilience, Equality, and Pluralism (PREP), opening the path to new strategies.

Delving deeper into kinds of violent extremism

VE is an umbrella term for many kinds of extremism. One thing they all share is that they see violence as justified. Yet each has its own distinctive ideological, political and/or religious roots. To eradicate these movements, one needs to be aware of these differences. Such movements often seek to force a given actor (State, government, institution) to act or to accept certain policies (for example, introducing Shariah Law, putting women back in 'their natural place'). Their methods involve indiscriminate violence, with evil words and grisly video fantasies on the Internet ending in attacks on both individuals and large groups of people in the real world. Many kinds of Violent Extremism "emerge, driven by a mish-mash of historic, political, economic, cultural, social, and psychological factors" (Schwoebel, 2017: 3). Thus a Jihadist VE is not the same as a White Supremacist VE, or a hyper-male chauvinist VE.

On the other hand, violent extremism is nothing new. That is because there are countless examples throughout history of violence being used to achieve

certain ends. Indeed, one can say that such behaviour is the rule rather than the exception. For instance, in The Yugoslav Civil War in the 1990s, women were systematically raped as part of the 'ethnic cleansing' policy. Feminist activists, such as Stasa Zajovic, of Belgrade's Women in Black, experienced these abuses first hand. In Vienna in 1993, these women managed to get the international community to legally define such rape as a crime against humanity. Again in the 1990s, The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) kidnapped boys and girls, enlisted them as soldiers, forcing them to kill family members and neighbours. During the 2000 invasion of Iraq, death and destruction spread throughout the region. Extremist movements continue to shake up our lives but not all of them are seen as VE. On the international stage, reactions depend largely on who commits the ghastly deeds: "Politicians decide which crimes, which places, and which kinds of violence get labelled 'violent extremism' and that are thus worthy of our attention and of earmarking resources to fight against" (Abu-Nimer, 2018: 22).

Today's violence has two features that distinguish it from that of the past. The first is the weight it gives to 'identity'. The second is Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The identities rooted in homogeneous communities are now more open to change, which also makes them more fragile. As a result, identity has turned into a battleground in our globalised world. Mass migration means we now live in plural societies that shoe-horn us into identities shaped by the intersection of factors such as gender, culture, sexual orientation, race, and body shape/handicap. The present extremist movements are characterised by their manipulation of identities (religion, race, gender, etc.) to create global networks facilitated by ICT. In contemporary multi-cultural societies, there is a tension between weakening bonds of 'belonging' and the enrichment that comes with accepting plurality. Against the background of this tension, VE often springs from defence of an identity that is presented as being better than the rest, whether it be a religion (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism etc.), the colour of one's skin (White), sex (male), rigidly rejecting all others in such a way that it gives followers

a sense of security and binds them more strongly. The fear of losing identity leads to national debate on 'who we are', the content of school curriculums, and so on. This can lead to defensive attitudes and insistence on stasis, tradition, and restrictive practices (something that happens in Diaspora groups, displaced populations, and among White Supremacists and those who miss a past in which men ruled the roost). In Europe, second and third-generation immigrants may feel they are not fully integrated if their schools do not critically review colonialism. If their family origins are not present in art or in the media, they feel they do not belong. If formal education does not give them the resources they need to grasp and accept pluralism, and to debate similarities and differences, the result is a void that other forces are swift to fill, VE being one of them.

In today's Internet Age, the worlds of VE are often virtual ones, with people scattered across the globe but who are linked by ideologies that justify violence as a means to an end. Such violence is considered as a liberating tool. It spreads like the plague in social networks where discourses create a feedback loop and where encryption and anonymity is used to hide the language of hate from public view. Virtual connections can forge communities around strong identities. This is the case of the so-called *mansphere*, a virtual network of blogs, forums, and web sites in which those who reject women's rights and gender equality wallow in anti-Feminist ideas. The same kind of thing happens with White Supremacists who target immigrants and argue that Whites are threatened by the higher birth rates found among racial minority groups. Motivations, radicalisation, recruitment, and propaganda are all key features of VE. The remedy lies in their opposites (prevention, de-radicalisation, re-integration) and of course in in-depth analysis of the problem. Bad government is one of the reasons why people join extremist Jihadist movements, which tend to point to corruption, past grievances, and/or abuses of Human Rights (especially those carried out by the State Security Services) (Holmes, 2017). Other sources confirm that there is a correlation between brutality, Human Rights abuses by the State, the growth of VE, and violent incidents (Institute for Economics & Peace,

2018; Anderlini, 2018). Some studies and models on radicalisation reveal three main strands in the process: (1) emotions or the search for personal meaning; (2) the ideological and social process in building networks; (3) group dynamics (Kruglanski et al., 2014)

Gender and Violent Extremism

Identity has become a key factor in radicalisation. One of these is gender (understood as the normative behaviour and attitudes attributed to men and women). Behaviour patterns and attitudes are shaped by historical, geographical, and cultural factors. They are key to identity, and play a big role in spawning extremist movements. Some men feel threatened by the change in gender roles and the job competition posed by well-trained women. These changes make such men feel insecure, leading them to attack Feminism and to come up with over-the-top chauvinist discourses on the need to send ‘the girls’ back home to do the household chores. At the same time, men attack women’s freedoms, taking a paternalistic attitude towards them. Here, men want to play the role of protector and bread-winner — especially when it comes to White women — and shield them from the attentions of ‘other’ males.

Over the last few years, the gender perspective of VE has gained ground in both academic discourse and in the media. In a review of the literature on women and VE, Becky Carter (2013) finds that while many women fight VE, some support it (something that was underestimated hitherto). With regard to women’s participation in VE, the last twenty years has seen a rise in extremist violence, with women taking part in suicide attacks — something for which the Boko Haram group in Nigeria has become notorious. Of the 434 suicide-bomber attacks made by this group between 2011 and 2017, no fewer than 244 were carried out by women (Chikodiri and Ezeibe, 2019). There are many reasons why these women blew themselves up. Some did so for ideological reasons, some to protect their families, to end a wretched life, and yet others for the same mish-mash of reasons as male suicide bombers. VE is also linked to violence against women and children, kidnapping, sexual slavery, and rape.

These are all tools that VE groups commonly resort to. Gender is also beginning to be taken into account in the strategy against VE — an angle often missing in most anti-terrorist operations. With regard to women’s maternal role, there are various messages but in general the tendency is to explore women as members of the community, educators, activists, policy-makers. In general, there is more literature on women’s involvement in VE than on those women who try to prevent it or fight against it.

The wives of some extremists have other women as slaves. Some of them confess that playing this role improves their lives in the group. Greater knowledge of VE means de-naturing the role that women play in it and the dynamics at work. Such insights help reveal the processes that radicalised them and how these might be prevented.

NEW FOCUSES AND STRATEGIES

Given that VE has many causes, one needs multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional methods to identify them all. Yet all too often, urgency tends to lead to theory and practice that focus on the State and on armed security frameworks. As an alternative, Mary Hope Schwoebel (2017) and other authors call for approaches revealing VE’s roots and challenges. Given that research, politics, and practice in the field are inextricably linked to development, governance, and peace-building issues, such approaches could do a great deal to prevent VE.

The first UN High-Level Conference on Counter-Terrorism was held in June 2018. It was titled “Strengthening International Co-operation to Combat the Changing Terrorism Threat”. As part of its work for peace, freedom, and gender justice, the WILPF (the oldest Feminist Pacifist organisation) attended the Conference and followed its proceedings. Although the WILPF continues to be worried by the over-masculinised approach to the war on terrorism (Khan, 2018), this may be the first step in the organisation making commitments to tackle VE.

Leading Pacifist Feminists are shifting from criticism to proposing new strategies. This is the case of Sanam Naraghi Anderlini⁴, who for years has been committed to the agenda on women, peace, and security. By contrast with States (which fail to look at VE's causes), Anderlini argues that non-violent action and peace should be key components of security strategy. She states that security is achieved by adopting non-violent pacification strategies. Anderlini also argues that it is not enough to adopt CEV and PEV approaches given that these focus on the problem but do not necessarily lead to a solution. In this vein, she proposes a conceptual change that defines what we seek; sowing seeds that make people abandon fanaticism and supremacism. This, change, posits Anderlini, facilitates progress towards recognition and acceptance of pluralism and peaceful co-existence. The keys for achieving the strategy she proposes are: Peace, Resilience, Equality, and Pluralism (PREP) (Anderlini, 2018).

Peace: prioritising social cohesion and development, prevention, and non-violent methods. These priorities are reflected in the allocation of resources and set bounds to the use of violent methods by the security forces.

Resilience: building resilience from many perspectives, including: (a) fostering cultural and religious training so that the rhetoric of extremists and fanatics does not take root; (b) disseminating moderate interpretations of religion; (c) criticising and abandoning the defence of a past 'golden age' to dismantle extremist racist views; (d) helping people see things from several historical perspectives.

Equality: fostering an atmosphere of equality and respect for the 'other' — something that States themselves should do in ways that are not confined to their discourses but are also reflected in practices and in the strictest respect for Human Rights.

Pluralism: defending plural identities and criticising all kinds of supremacist thinking.

This proposal is based on the work of the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), which Anderlini runs from Washington D.C. ICAN has a network of women's organisations. The Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL) is present in 30 countries. The network works to stop VE by promoting rights, peace, and pluralism, following the PREP strategy. The acronym WASL means "to link" in Arabic, Urdu, and Farsi.

Nigeria provides a notable case of women's alternative action in the battle against VE. There, many organisations led by women are rolling out a host of educational, social, political, and economic projects to stop young people becoming radicalised. They also organise initiatives that have a political impact — marches, gatherings, symbolic actions, press conferences, documentaries, and Twitter campaigns. The movement sprang up following the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls in 2014. Its protests and pressure made sure that the national government was not re-elected after its sloth in dealing with the crisis. Furthermore, the movement also made a big impact on the international community, spreading news on the issue through the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag, which was re-tweeted millions of times. It also led to many (but not all of the girls) being released. Other leading women's organisations in the country — notably Women Without Walls Initiative, the Women Interfaith Council, the Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Nigeria, and the National Council of Women Societies (Chikodiri and Ezeibe, 2019) — also played active roles.

VULNERABILITY — A KEY CONCEPT FOR TACKLING THE SECURITY ISSUES

Ann Tickner was the pioneer in tackling international relations from a Feminist standpoint. Back then, she criticised the 'realist paradigms' in this field as falling far short of what was needed to ensure human and

4 Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini founded and runs International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), which is linked to a network of women's organisations that are active in preventing VE. The network covers 30 countries. In 2000 she was one of the Civil Society draftwomen of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

environmental security. From the so-called Feminist Standpoint (FS), she argued that all knowledge is situated and that women's lives provide a benchmark for seeing things that cannot be glimpsed from other standpoints (Harding, 1986; Magallón, 2012). She stated that “ecological, policies based on domination and subordination are wholly incompatible with true security” (Tickner, 1992: 129). Taking an ethical, multi-level approach, Feminism had spent years on developing alternative theories on security, and putting forward more rational directions in the light of the ends sought (Blanchard, 2003).

One of the key concepts proposed by Feminism in the new vision of security is that of ‘human vulnerability’. Through women's lives, one can see that vulnerability is an intrinsic part of the human condition. That is because women's roles historically involved looking after babies and children, the elderly, the sick. This role shaped how women thought about things and their priorities when it came to fostering attitudes and behaviour patterns. The result was a paradigm in which women saw war as the wrong response to aggression.

Women's affirmation of Man's vulnerability was the starting point for Feminist discourse in this field. The idea has been defended by various Feminist authors to critically re-draw disciplines and categories. Vulnerability bears on the fragility of human life both with regard to the individual's life cycle (childhood dependence, sickness and old age) and to threats (especially violence) — things that plague all our lives even if they affect groups in different ways. Scientific advances and improvements in living standards lessen these impacts but one cannot deny their existence. Thus we are all vulnerable, not just groups that are identified as such (Magallón, 2015).

Pacifist Feminists argue the need to accept human vulnerability in fostering thought and policies on the subject of peace. This approach led them to criticise the US Government's reaction to the terrorist attacks on The World Trade Center in New York (Cohn and Ruddick, 2004). They considered that going to war

was a knee-jerk reaction that would produce a spiral of violence and hurt everyone. Far from leading to lasting solutions, they argued that ‘the war on terror’ would merely give terrorism a boost. What happened later bore out their grim warnings on where such war strategies were likely to lead. Carol Cohn again took up Sara Ruddick's (1989) notion of vulnerability in her seminal work *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, as a heuristic tool for thinking about security. Cohn asked what kind of national security policy would be considered rational if we were to admit that vulnerability is inevitable (Cohn, 2013). In calling on the State to do more to achieve a fairer society, Martha Albertson Fineman considered vulnerability to be a more important factor than equality (Fineman, 2008).

There are many ways of responding to vulnerability. One is to pretend that it does not exist, that technical and scientific advances make us all safe. This notion seeks invulnerability through massive re-armament, sealing borders, and using power — and should it prove ‘necessary’ — to attack one's foes (an approach that sparked The Second Iraq War). The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were justified as a way of putting an end to our vulnerability. A very different approach emerges from accepting our intrinsic fragility, and that vulnerability and interdependence are features of our humanity from cradle to grave (Cohn and Ruddick, 2004). That said, vulnerability takes different forms around the world (hunger, pandemics, terrorism, climate change, and so forth). This means accepting the idea that no super-weapon can stop a man or women bent on a suicide bombing. On the other hand, ascribing vulnerability to given groups (among them, women) merely distorts reality because the issue is a social construct inasmuch as it stems from exclusion and exploitation.

Pacifist Feminism has highlighted the importance of: (1) fully accepting that vulnerability (whether individual or of group) is long-lasting; (2) identifying the consequences that flow therefrom. Accepting vulnerability as inevitable leads to other kinds of attitudes and policies that (while taking security into account) let one come up with ways of lessening

possible pretexts for extremism, fostering a setting in which ever fewer people see VE as their only political way out. The aim is to reduce conflict by building trust, co-operation, and dispelling fears. In a nutshell, the aim is to foster personal and international relationships based on co-operation rather than on domination and humiliation (Cohn and Enloe, 2003).

Gender does not determine one's choice of approach. That said, the quest for invulnerability tends to be a more male trait. By comparison, women tend to recognise interdependence and vulnerability (that is, by responding in non-violent ways). This difference appears to be culturally coded. Insofar as women's

historic experiences are undervalued, it is hard for any political leader to accept vulnerability without losing face or seeming weak. Fully accepting vulnerability and putting forward other options requires the kind of leadership that goes beyond stereotypes.

Last but not least, one should say that terrorist attacks are one of those situations that make all of us feel utterly vulnerable. Based on this experience, one can tackle the roots of VE, based on the conviction that vulnerability is inevitable and that we should foster policies based on co-operation and mutual support rather than on domination. This reflection is one of Pacifist Feminism's greatest contributions.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Carmen Magallón has a PhD in Physics and a Post-Graduate Degree in Philosophy. She is a tenured university Lecturer in the Humanities, is Full Professor of the Institute, and Associate Professor at Universidad de Zaragoza, where she co-founded the Inter-disciplinary Seminar on Women's Studies. She is the President of Fundación SIP (Research Seminar for Peace) and is a member of the WILPF academic network (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) and of WILPF España. Her latest book, co-written with Sandra Blasco and with a prologue by Elena Grau, is titled "Feministas por la paz" [Feminists for Peace], published by *La Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad (WILPF) en América Latina y España*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2020. More information at: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carmen_Magallón





Cyber-activism Against Sexual Violence: #BringBackOurGirls

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few years, many successful campaigns have both denounced women's vulnerabilities and protested against gender violence. The success of these campaigns can be gauged by the number of their followers, spreading the message and involving celebrities and agencies around the world. Those campaigns have put gender inequality and women's protests against sexual abuse firmly on the agenda. However, this still raises questions as to both the limits to and opportunities for cyber-activism in general and in war-torn areas in particular. This paper addresses the influence of digital campaigns against sexual violence, exploring the impact of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, which covers the kidnapping of a large group of girls in Nigeria by the Boko Haram terrorist group. Among other things, we find that the campaign narrowly focuses on a group ('The Chibok Girls'), ignoring the vulnerability of many other girls and young women in Nigeria.

Keywords: extreme violence, digital campaigns, gendered violence, post-colonial.

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, international Civil Law has been an inclusive transnational movement that embraces women's rights. In recent years, the speed and impact of campaigns in this field have been greatly boosted by digital media (Bunch, 2001; Riles, 2002), which have become powerful tools for denouncing violence against women and defending them from it. Contemporary digital activism has crossed borders and the bounds of local cultural communities — a trend that can also be seen in feminist movements (Cockburn, 1998; Friedman, 2016). Thus, many campaigns have denounced women's vulnerabilities and have made common cause against gender-based violence.

Examples of this phenomenon can be found in the #BringBackOurGirls, #StopRapeInConflict, #NiUnaMenos, and #MeToo campaigns, whose success is shown by the number of their followers, the global reach of their messages, and the celebrities and agents involved. Feminist cyber-activists have pursued an agenda that covers issues such as sexual abuse in various settings (governments, organisations, the film industry, etc.). However, we do not know the real impact of these campaigns on local communities and the lives of the girls and women supported by such global initiatives. In this paper, we delve into the impact of cyber campaigns on women and girls in war-torn areas given the lack of information on and the complexity of power relations there. Accordingly, we focus on women's roles, specifically of girls and young women subject to extreme violence (Anderlini, 2018) from an agency perspective — that is to say, not only as vulnerable bodies but also as agents and digital activists.

There is a growing trend of seeking role models for both teenagers and young adults. Thus Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize winner and champion of girls' right to education, and Greta Thunberg, Swedish teenage activist against climate change, have become well-known figures on the world stage. In the process, they have become spokeswomen for their causes, drawing on the ideas and experiences shaping the younger generation (Bent, 2016). Here, social networks spread their ideas, trumpet their

speeches, and forge links with their followers, and in so doing, define the generations that make most use of these media.

Yet as members of patriarchal societies and despite the leadership noted above, girls and young women may fall prey to adults, especially in war-torn areas. Likewise, women are used as weapons of war against foes and their bodies are exploited by armies, relatives and boyfriends. Hence, there are settings in which girls suffer violence meted out as a function of their social origins, geographical roots, and ethnic group. As Braidotti (1994) notes, this is because girls, like adults, are not a homogeneous group. The passage from girlhood to womanhood varies in each case.

This paper is split into four broad sections. The first gives an introduction to the subject. The second contains a theoretical discussion of the framework of digital activism and the roles played by girls and women in war-torn areas and in online campaigns. The third section describes the research group's goals and methodology. It contains three sub-sections: (1) setting out our findings on the role played by women in war-torn areas (with special reference to digital campaigns); (2) discussing the strengths and weaknesses of such campaigns; (3) giving a summary and some ideas to guide activist's campaigns covering war-torn areas. The fourth and last section of the paper reflects on good practices for campaigners using social media.

FRAMING CYBER-ACTIVISM

Regarding digital participation, Claudia Mitchell (2017) explains that "social media platforms are deeply rooted in the daily lives of many young people around the world." Users employ these platforms for many purposes, such as sharing pictures, thoughts, or even discovering their sexuality (Ringrose and Eriksson, 2011; Boyd, 2014; Bustillos, 2017). Garrett (2006) and Carter Olson (2016) add that digital tools provide visibility, mobilise social forces, and spark quick, broad response, and in so doing, help shape public policy.

Castells (2011: 11) argues that cyber-activism is an extension of traditional social movements, a new and powerful tool that allows one to reach a global community pursuing the same goal. Thus, the Internet becomes a forum for deliberation that extends Civil Rights but also experiments with them and widens the overlap between freedom and discourse, and between the political arena and activism. That said, one should note criticisms of these practices. Annelisse Riles (2002: 302) warns that overexposure to Civil Rights campaigns dulls audience sensitivity — something that is not helped by a plethora of goals and decontextualisation of the issues at stake. Digital activism can all too easily become a ‘post-colonial practice’ if it neither deals with the concerns of Western citizens nor those of local actors (whose voices often go unheard in these global campaigns).

Charlotte Bunch (2001: 145) suggests that social activism is neither consistent nor homogeneous, since digital activism stems from conflicts and grassroots disputes, reflecting the myriad complexities of today’s global society — war zones, poverty, ethnic and religious conflicts, poor digital access, and social inequalities (Mohanty, 1991; Khoja-Moolji, 2015; Maxfield, 2016). Given the sheer range of contexts shaped by diverse cultural and social factors, who handles the message and what diversity of voices does this type of campaign include? The open debate on the international and local conduct of virtual campaigns is only one of the dimensions of this complex issue. Scholars and activists must take all voices in a given conflict into the account, and vulnerable groups and local agents’ access to communication tools. At the end of the day, who supports the messages and directs digital campaigns? Even more importantly what long-term results do these campaigns have for those involved?

Social networks also introduce a new notion of action — a kind of “suspension of the present” (Coleman, 2018) based on a different time-flow in these campaigns. Timing in digital media exhibits special features that have an impact on the cause espoused. The continuum between the local and the global is part and parcel of social media, in which past, present,

and future coexist all at the same time (Coleman, 2018). This “suspended present” shaped the lives of the girls and young women in our research, girls who became young women — many while in captivity. In this regard, the #BringBackOurGirls campaign started five years ago with the kidnapping of girls between the ages of 12 and 16. Now, five years on, their ages range between 17 and 21. In The West, we see them as young women but the Western Press still refers to them as “The Chibok Girls”, freezing their status as girls and overlooking the fact that they have all become women in the time gone by since their kidnapping. Furthermore, one should not overlook the fact that from the local cultural standpoint, the victims were already seen as women on the day they were snatched from their school (Mohanty, 1984).

Thus it is important to establish the course of this digital campaign, which began with a tweet from Nigerian lawyer Ibrahim Abdullahi, alluding to a public speech by Dr. Oby Ezekwesili, Nigerian Education Minister at the time. In that tweet, Abdullahi demanded the release of the girls kidnapped from a Catholic school in Chibok. This strengthens the idea that a male channel echoes women’s voices in order to reach them. The campaign stemmed from public awareness of gender violence. In the words of Dr. Oby Ezekwesili in a personal communication for this research, the success of cyber action boosted interest from Nigeria’s Government and international figures, making the issue hit the world headlines. Yet this can boomerang, for example in this case, the Boko Haram terrorist group exploited the publicity to put itself on the map, setting a bad example for like-minded groups (Cox *et al.*, 2018). As a result, ‘me-too’ kidnappings were carried out by others terrorist groups in search of notoriety. Some Chibok girls are still with the terrorist group and have not returned home.

WOMEN IN WAR ZONES: THE POLITICAL SETTING

There is wide-ranging debate on the roles of women in war zones (Enloe, 1989; Bloom, 2011; Magallón, 2010; Ponzanesi, 2014). Women are traditionally assigned

a passive role in wartime — something that contrasts with the active role played by Feminist Pacifism, which stresses both women's roles in stopping the path to war and in building the peace that follows. Pacifist feminists argue that women have always played an active role in wars, whether as soldiers or as nurses, and thus stress the vital role women must play in peace-making — a role shamefully overlooked by the history books. According to Ponzanesi (2014), the concealment of women's active role in conflicts is facilitated by their return to home and hearth after the war. This approach helps frame the roles played by women in the context of Boko Haram's terrorism.

Matfess (2017) has detailed many of the complex tasks performed by women in Nigeria's war zone¹, especially in terrorist camps. These tasks range from being terrorists' 'wives' to being suicide bombers, as recruiters, and as spies. Sometimes the Islamic terror group has been described as women's 'friend' (Matfess, 2017: 57) because it gives them money to support themselves and their offspring in war-torn areas. Like men, young women make key decisions that help them climb the social ladder, to survive, and to improve their lives and those of their families. In Westerners' eyes, these strategies may be deemed perverse or incomprehensible. Yet such a view stops us seeing that they are merely doing what they can to survive in the face of gender subjugation and extreme violence (Mohanty, 1998). However, the complexity of the conflict is not only reflected in the terrorists' violence against girls and women but also by that of the Nigerian army itself. In April 2019, Amnesty International condemned the sexual, gender-based violence committed by Nigerian soldiers both in prisons where Boko Haram women are held, and in camps for displaced persons set up to house and protect people fleeing the conflict. In considering the theoretical background to the case study, one should highlight the complex stories of the girls who were sexually abused. The lives of girls in Nigeria

vary greatly depending on where they live (in the countryside or in towns) and their religion. Those girls living in rural, Muslim areas seem to be particularly at risk (Maxfield, 2016).

The plight of girls in Nigeria went unnoticed on a global scale until the emergence of the cyber-campaign studied in this paper. In 2014, after widespread international coverage, many intellectuals and politicians demanded the release of 214 Christian girls kidnapped from their school. This violent deed revealed that Nigerian girls and young women, both Muslim and Christian, are victims of broader repression as a result of patriarchal and gender regimes, and of economic, cultural and social conflicts.

According to Mandrona (2016: 8) "Childhood is often viewed in terms of the implications for understanding femininity rather than an experience and ethical research topic in its own right." This becomes even more relevant when we add the intersections of ethnicity and religion to the equation. We must not only think of each woman being different (Braidotti, 1994; Yuval-Davis, 2006) but also see childhood as a personal experience covering myriad aspects. Thus the journey from girlhood to womanhood is a complex one. Is this complexity the same in peacetime and in wartime? Here, Hooks (1986) argues that we must address intersectionality. In the case of the Nigerian girls, these intersectional factors include: race in the context of the Civil Rights movement; religion; urban versus rural settings; educational and socioeconomic contexts.

Thus girls and young women involved in this conflict may play different roles. Some of these roles are as victims (of kidnapping, suicide bombing, rape, etc.). Other roles are as direct protagonists (terrorists, wives, mothers) or as social activists campaigning against gender violence and social injustice (whether locally or on the world-wide stage). Furthermore, the international uproar over the kidnappings sparked by the cyber campaign has turned the abducted girls' bodies into valuable bargaining chips between

¹ The Boko Haram insurgency is rooted in Borno State in North-Western Nigeria. Northern Nigeria tends to be much poorer and more illiterate than Southern Nigeria.

Nigeria's Federal Government and Boko Haram (Escola de Cultura de Pau, 2019), and into a plank in feminist politics and activism for putting sexual violence in war zones on the international agenda.

THE STUDY: METHODOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

Our research looks at the impact of digital campaigns fighting sexual violence against girls and women in war zones. Our methodological approach is built in three stages. The first examines the geo-political nature of Nigeria, specifically in relation to the main socio-political events in the country from the beginning of the Chibok kidnappings to the present. The second analyses the #BringBackOurGirls campaign in relation to gender relations in the local and international context. The third looks at female participation in this campaign.

Our case study was based on secondary data (reports, media news, academic studies on the conflict both in regional terms but also in relation to The Global North). Content analysis of the cyber-campaign's hashtag was carried out, and supplemented with interviews with key Nigerian players. We examined #BringBackOurGirls activism on Twitter from October to December 2014, and the movement's political impact up to the present. Analysis of the message and the political discourse around this hashtag are covered in our study since girls are the main subject covered. As the campaign stemmed from Nigerian civil society and spread widely to the international community, we also include contributions from interviews held in Nigeria with local and global activists. We spoke to them about how to fight against gender violence through digital mobilisation, as well on their participation in the #BringBackOurGirls campaign and their views on it.

We also take an intersectional approach to shed greater light on what girlhood and womanhood mean in these war-torn areas. In particular, we start from the need identified by Yuval-Davis (2006: 200) to include:

Various kinds of differences in our analysis [so that] we can avoid the combination of positioning, identities and values. Taking such an approach also helps us avoid attributing fixed identity groupings to the dynamics of positioning and location processes, on the one hand, and to the controversial and shifting political construction of categorical boundaries, on the other.

CYBER-ACTIVISM AND WOMEN'S VOICES IN THE #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS CAMPAIGN

After five years, the story of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign (both online and on the ground) holds valuable lessons given both its length and its outcomes at both the local and global levels.

In our view, this campaign is a poster-child for all of the following reasons: broad mobilisation; international impact; high participation by world-renowned figures in the art and political fields; the local results achieved; media impact. From a geo-political standpoint, the campaign has had a big impact on Nigeria's government and administration. This impact took the form of: (1) President Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan losing the March 2015 national elections (Carter Olson, 2016); (2) legislative and military measures to combat corruption and terrorism by the new Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari (Comolli, 2015); (3) timid inclusion of gender policies in Nigeria's political agenda, albeit with few real results given the persistence of the gender gap (Matfess, 2017).

The #BringBackOurGirls campaign has sparked a worldwide reaction. Our study revealed both positive and negative aspects of this international focus. It boosted interest in Nigeria's problems and, in particular, those affecting children and women in war zones. Here, one should note that childhood has been the focus of attention for the international community since the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly, 2001) and its Optional Protocol on child soldiers was signed. Likewise, The

UN Security Council, through its resolutions 1261, 1314, 1379, 1460, 1539, 1612, 1882, 1998, 2068 and 2143, has helped create an over-arching framework for the protection of those affected by armed conflict. It was not until the 18th of June 2015 that the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2225, which expressed "grave concern about the kidnapping of children in situations of armed conflict". Reading the document carefully and placing it in the context of the year it was passed, one can reasonably assume that the Chibok kidnappings and the impact made by the digital campaign that followed them were the catalysts for the UN Resolution. The fact that the kidnappings described in the Resolution broadly reflect the *modus operandi* of the Boko Haram terrorists and the Human Rights abuses committed by "non-State armed groups, in particular violent extremists" (UN Security Council, 2015) lend support to this thesis.

Nevertheless, the campaign also raised the profile of the Boko Haram terrorist group, making the kidnapped girls an even more valuable bargaining chip to pressure the Federal Government. Here, one should note that while most of the girls kidnapped on the 14th of April are still missing, a small group was released in exchange for the Government freeing some imprisoned members of the terrorist group. Thus Nigerian girls and women remain subject to patriarchal and social injustices, and their bodies continue to be used and objectified in the conflict. That said, it must be stressed that #BringBackOurGirls reflects the female voices of the conflict, as the hashtag comes from the speech of a Nigerian woman, Oby Ezekwesili.

This point in the campaign reveals both advances and setbacks on key issues bearing on gender violence in war zones, and handling of the complexities stemming from the diverse warring groups and their victims. First, the Chibok girls could adapt to the situation and become 'women' on the terms set by the terrorists, thus perpetuating their roles as victims in this conflict. Second, women played an active part in the local and global campaign, despite taking a critical stance.

Maxfield (2016), along with many intellectuals, has denounced the overexposure of the girls during the campaign. The message #BringBackOurGirls expresses public concerns over the use made of the girls' bodies. In addition, some Nigerian activists, such as the writer Teju Cole, demand that the case of the kidnapped girls be re-contextualised in terms of Nigeria's domestic politics. She argues that this would let her fellow countrymen make the issue their own — one to which they had become mere onlookers as a result of the international campaign and mobilisation. As we said in the introduction, the experiences of these young women are unique. That is why we suggest an ethical examination of online digital campaigns with a view to avoid a permanent state of victimisation.

During these five years, some local people have wondered about the scope of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. Nigerian activists have argued that by putting the international media focus on the Chibok girls, the plight of other Nigerian has been rendered invisible. They also call for greater attention to Muslim girls, who are at higher risk because they come from poorer, more vulnerable backgrounds and from mainly uneducated communities (Mahmood, 2017). Two Nigerian women interviewed in this study note that the campaign made a difference to the lives of the country's girls and women. Yet they argue the media spotlight on the Chibok girls has led to Nigerian women and their plight being thrust into the shade. Thus, the girls who have been defended in Western social media are Chibok girls, who were both Christians and schoolchildren. Meanwhile, illiterate Muslim girls living in poor, rural areas are ignored. Education and reinforcing the role of Nigerian girls emerged as the main action in Africa to prevent violence and gender discrimination. These measures would also help stop them and their families from joining Boko Haram's cause.

Western neo-colonisation is a further theme in this analysis, given that Western actors' intervention has had a direct impact on Nigerian politics. One of those we interviewed mentioned the way President

Goodluck gained a bad world reputation because of the Chibok case — something that helped him lose the election. He was not the only political casualty. Oby Ezekwesili (the most visible actor in the #BringBackOurGirls campaign) withdrew from the 2019 Presidential race because she failed to garner sufficient support. It seems that Nigerian citizens want action that reflects local factors and that they resent the imposition of Western ideologies.

So if we are to draw up ethical digital campaigns, we must avoid falling into the trap of attributing fixed identities to the subjects studied or — worse still — Westernise them. We must therefore be aware of possible post-colonial practices. Empirical analysis of #BringBackOurGirls suggests a blinkered vision, with our informants claiming that the campaign has only focused on the Chibok girls and ignores other girls affected by extreme violence.

This campaign is a good example of post-colonial discourse because it was begun by local agents and the international community's actions were confined to supporting the main initiative. Nigerian actors warned at various points in the campaign that non-nationals should be given a subordinate, supporting role so as to stress the key role played by the country's leaders and citizens in tackling the problem.

However, analysing the discourse of the *Bring Back Our Girls* campaign, one can see repeated patterns in the defense of child victims. We focus our attention on the fact that they were kidnapped because they were educated Christian girls. Boko Haram is trying to convert them to Islam to turn them into 'good wives and mothers'. The campaign has been running for five years. When the girls were kidnapped, they were aged between 13 and 17. Likewise, intersectional factors show the need for a situational definition of girls in the discussion: Are they 'girls' and if so, for whom? Are they 'girls' for their families and communities, but not for the terrorist group? How do they define themselves? Are they still girls after years of suffering or simply because they are under constant threat of being abducted?

UNDER DISSENTING EYES: THE INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO THE CONCEPT OF CHILDHOOD IN NIGERIA

So far, Nigeria has made little progress on gender or indeed any other kind of equality. According to Oxfam International (Mayah *et al.*, 2017), Nigeria ranked last out of 152 countries in terms of reducing gender equality. Poverty and unemployment have been identified as forces driving recruitment for terrorist bands. Botha and Abdile (2019) explain that being a member of an insurgent group offers booty and marriage opportunities for young people living in extreme poverty in war-torn areas.

Unemployment is given as the cause of youth support for extremism in Nigeria (Comolli, 2015; Ordu, 2017). The Government's counter-insurgency operations have also made people feel less safe in the area where Boko Haram operates. Young people — including girls and young women — who grow up in settings where extreme violence and poverty are the norm become targets of and participants in the actions of insurgent groups.

The plight of Nigerian girls and women stems from gender inequality and a deeply patriarchal culture.

Despite Nigeria's wealth of natural resources and the country's economic growth over recent decades, mass poverty remains a scourge, with over 62% of the nation's 180 million people still living in extreme poverty in 2017. In 2013, Nigeria ranked 48.8 on the Gini index, putting the country in 21st place on the world list. The aforementioned Oxfam Report states that things are going from bad to worse. Nigeria comes last in a ranking of 152 countries for its lack of commitment to narrowing inequalities. At the same time, gender indicators show that women in Nigeria get a raw deal. The average schooling is nine years but for girls it is eight. The mortality rate is 9.6 per 1,000 inhabitants but maternal mortality is 917 per 100,000 live births (2017). The situation in rural areas is complex, with girls expected to marry and become mothers at 16. Marriages are haggled over by male family members to set the dowry — a practice that is still common in Nigeria. Women cannot own land even though it is

they who slave in the fields. This means they have less chance of earning a living and fewer survival strategies open to them. The value placed on women and their bodies is so low that the prices at which they are sold by traffickers and vice rings in Nigeria has steadily dropped (Matfess, 2015: 166).

However the broad data conceals the fact that girls and women make up a heterogeneous group and play diverse roles. With this in mind, a new question arises in the debate on the definition of agency. According to Mandrona (2016: 3), girls can be “systematically discriminated against but can also be [...] capable social actors, who influence and are influenced by the world in which they live”.

Yet one may ask how girls and women living in such grim, violent places can perform agency? Can they act autonomously and speak with their own voices? The vulnerability of minors seems to justify adults’ vision of their lives given that it is grown-ups who take care of them, focusing on their age and identity.

As explained above, we need to take an intersectional approach and to do so by determining: (1) who belongs to a given community, and; (2) how Westerners have taken part in the campaign. That is why this paper seeks to “produce [new] imaginaries and understandings of ethical human beings regarding rights, otherness, power, agency and responsibility” (Mandrona, 2016: 3). These imaginaries suggest a relational ethic that includes local agents as a vital part in: (a) drawing up political campaigns fostering relational agency; (b) responding to gender-based violence to root out the patriarchal culture.

Because young women play a key role in socialisation and passing on culture, we also want to show them as agents of peace consolidation (Enloe, 1989; Bloom, 2011; Magallón, 2020; Ponzanesi, 2014; Anderlini, 2018). This do so, we must examine the roles young women play under conditions of extreme violence.

Botha and Abdile (2019) report gender differences in Boko Haram’s recruitment of women as terrorists.

They state that many young women were forced to join the organisation as mothers, wives and soldiers. These authors warn that ‘The Stockholm Syndrome’ (whereby victims identify with their captors) is a hurdle to the success of peace-building programmes seeking to resocialise the women. Insurgent women and kidnapped girls are ensnared in extremely violent settings in which they come up with survival strategies to protect themselves and their children. That is why they see being freed not as the end of the road but rather as just a new stage in their lives, posing new challenges. So far, reintegrating the rescued girl in society has proven hard. That is because they and their families have suffered the stigma of the offspring born by the girls after being raped by the terrorists.

Some civic associations, such as the Federation of Muslim Women (FOMWAN), have launched a girls’ education and empowerment programme. Its aim is to overcome women’s feeling of helplessness in Africa. Notwithstanding the diversity of opinion among those interviewed for this study, all of the respondents agreed on the need to empower the girls so that they can face the future.

As long as young women are aware of their own precarious situation, they will play various roles depending on the extreme violence they experience, and come up with complex strategies to deal with it. This points to huge failings in society that force girls and women to live out wretched lives under the thrall of the patriarchy. Lack of educational and other opportunities, and female roles shaped by arranged marriages and early motherhood are the unenviable lot of so many Nigerian girls and women.

Of course, one should not try to shove agency wholly on these girls and their communities. That is because they have little say in matters, and are tangled up in a complex web of power, prestige, vulnerability, gender violence, and isolation. We therefore need to find relational agency that distinguishes between the political lines of mass campaigns on the teenage girls, who grew to womanhood during their captivity. Digital campaigns require networks of inter-

generational activists. Thus ethical empowerment of the girls involves shared recognition of them and young women as “specific, incarnated beings” (Benhabib, 1992: 189) with limited access to political ‘intelligibility’ (Butler, 2009: XI) and to power.

Thus, as Mandrona states, new imaginaries based upon inter-generational dialogues are needed among all stakeholders. In concluding this paper, we make three recommendations for overcoming each of the following: (a) the intersectional definition of childhood; (b) relational agency as a feminist political strategy; (c) consensus for planning an ethical feminist digital campaign that is both local and global in scope.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has sought to critically reflect upon Nigeria’s complexity and on the challenges of internationally fostering gender equality, warning of the risk of gender violence in war-torn areas (where the victims are overwhelmingly girls and young women). Various approaches were used to this end: (a) an analysis of historical events (secondary data); (b) feminist theory (intersectionality); (c) communication studies (analyses of social networks and message content); (d) International Law (discursive analysis of UN Resolutions), and last but not least; (e) a philosophical component requiring a broadening of ethics and agency beyond blinkered post-colonial perspectives.

Our findings confirm the value of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign for making the voices of local agents heard, turning these individuals into spokeswomen for their communities. Yet such a strategy also ran the risk of simplifying the message and hiding the broader social situation.

First, the Chibok girls are a sample of the wider population embroiled in the conflict. The fact that the victims were Christian girls raises the issue of the interests underlying discourses on the Nigerian conflict. Here, it is hard to resist the conclusion that

the plight of the country’s Muslim girls and young women was largely swept under the carpet. Second, the campaign focused on the girls, objectifying their role as victims and building dichotomous categories (in which we are placed at the first of the two extremes), be it War versus Peace, Christians versus Muslims, Victims versus Evil-doers.

Yet the political analysis evidences multi-dimensional points of view, revealing that despite the ‘girls’ experience, they took personal decision based on their relational agency and their ability to respond to gender violence and the patriarchal culture framing it.

Patriarchal society allocates diverse roles, limiting the opportunities of its denizens, fostering gender inequality, forcing people to react through relational agency to their opponents and to forge solidarity and co-operation. This spawns adversity and dangerous friendships. Girls and women are highly vulnerable in this context and wield little power locally. Meanwhile, international actors may become the supporters of local actors fighting for justice (thus avoiding a post-colonial perspective).

Social networks create primary resources for mobilisation and give rise to a gender-based strategy for fighting violence and sexualisation. We need a kind of grassroots feminism that is both local and global in scope, and which identifies structural problems and local events. Thus, digital campaigns must include local and international experts to identify the best approach to the issue at stake and to draw up the campaign’s mission strategy. Rigorous analysis of the long-term effects of a campaign will help in planning future ones. That said, a digital campaign is just one element in boosting public awareness of the issues, and in amassing resources. Yet policies and structural changes need to be put into action if problems are to be solved.

With regard to women and age intersectionality, the world has new needs that tend to overshadow the victims and the paternalism they are subjected to. That is why we must first deconstruct the role

women and their bodies play as an instrument of the universal masculine gaze, avoiding the overexposure of women's bodies in public places and in the digital sphere. Second, the girls are actors in their own futures both as a sub-group of women and as part of the non-adult population. The role models followed by girls are important in guiding the population towards new messages and in deciding

what the youngsters will do in the future, and in reflecting the diversity of the juvenile population. In addition, this paper includes a critical definition of childhood, based on the need to avoid a sole, fixed identity. Here, it behoves us to resist application of Western notions of childhood and of the roles played by girls and young women when faced by extreme violence.

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Feminist Political Discourses in the Digital Era: A new materialist discursive analysis of the #BringBackOurGirls cyber-campaign

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ABSTRACT

Increasing use of cyber-campaigns is being made by social movements and political groups. Nevertheless, this popularity is often accompanied by undesirable consequences for social movements such as the violence denounced by contemporary feminism. Thus, some digital mobilisations create a rift between the physical and digital worlds — something that often gives rise to homogenisation of socio-cultural categories such as gender, race, and age. In this paper, we analyse the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, which sprang to life five years ago. Its path reveals the success of these cyber-campaigns in the field of contemporary feminism. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) is used to take a feminist genealogical approach to new materialisms. In doing so, it examines the temporal and spatial trajectory of the campaign to reshape affirmative feminist politics. These politics involve reconfiguring pre-established notions such as 'girl', 'agency', and 'otherness' to provide social movements with the capacity to respond. We therefore undertake an ethnographic examination of the hashtag (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015) to compare the beginning of the campaign with the situation now. We draw on these results to localise the shift from the local scale to the global one, in which structural powers, individual agency, and 'glocal' [local-global] and feminist affirmation policies become diluted.

Keywords: FCDA, hashtag ethnography, #BringBackOurGirls, new materialist kinds of Feminism, new kinds of materialism, agency.

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On the 14th of April 2014, 276 girls were abducted by the terrorist group¹ Boko Haram when they were attending a Catholic school in the Chibok region of Nigeria. Of these 276, today² no fewer than 112 girls are held by the Boko Haram. Despite the gravity of the kidnappings and the insurgency that gave rise to it, it was not until late April or early May 2014 that the kidnappings began to have a global impact — thanks to the #BringBackOurGirls cyber-campaign. It was begun by a lawyer by the name of Ibrahim Abdullahi. He tweeted the words uttered by ObyEzekwesili on the 23rd of April during the inaugural speech of Nigeria's APC Party (All Progressive Congress)³ at UNESCO (Maxfield, 2016). The number of hashtag posts has swung wildly over the last five years, while media interest has waned greatly. The way the campaign has unfolded makes some scholars and activists wonder whether the whole thing is little more than an exercise in 'social clicking' (Maxfield, 2016). Taking this perspective, many users are happy to just click on a button yet this gesture may stop them taking political action outside the purely digital sphere. Another criticism levelled at campaigns like this is that they can lead to 'post-colonial' practices. Other critics see post-colonial practices in the way countries such as The United States pursue a political strategy that de-legitimises the Nigerian Government

currently in power (Respondent⁴ Chilwa and Ifukor, 2015).

However, one should first note certain aspects that tend to be overlooked by these critics. One is "the context in which the campaign began and the assumption that its concepts of race and nation stayed constant throughout" (Maxfield, 2016: 886). The trajectory of these cyber-campaigns and their impact on the ground are matters of special interest in our paper. We also analyse the #BringBackOurGirls campaign to discover the setting that spawned the campaign. In doing so, we take an intersectional (or rather intra-sectional) approach to find a common thread running through the digital ethnography. To this end, the paper focuses not only on the concepts of 'nation' and 'race' but also on 'gender' and 'age'. That is because we consider them vital for understanding this particular campaign.

The methodological approach used in this paper is that of digital ethnography (Pink *et al.*, 2016), and more specifically Bonilla and Rosa (2015: 5) term this an "ethnography of the hashtag". The use of said ethnography lets us analyse the diverse discourses on a given subject since the hashtag itself categorises and indexes specific content (Xu and Zhou, 2020). It is thus easier to establish a relationship between frequent content on a given digital platform and discursive patterns than would otherwise be the case with a traditional critique bereft of such digital tools. As a case study, Bonilla and Rosa (2015) cite the case of Michael Brown, a defenceless black boy shot by a policeman in the city of Ferguson, Missouri in 2004. The shooting triggered a wave of protests and social movements in the US whose impact was so great that even today some public figures still link the case with the one covered in our paper despite the differences

1 The researchers are aware of the onto-epistemological debate in both academic and public policy circles on the difference between terrorist groups and violent extremism. However, as this subject will be covered extensively in other papers in this special issue of *Debats*, the authors have opted for the term "terrorist group" for semantic reasons. We consider that violence - be it physical or mental - is always extreme. That said, Boko Haram is a group whose whole policy is based on terror (Massumi, 2005) on both a local and global scale. Its activities have directly affected a group of girls who previously had nothing to do with either Boko Haram or with violent conflict (political, sociological, economic, or religious) in Nigeria.

2 That is, the 27th of January 2020.

3 The full speech can be accessed at the following links: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePeMkCA-5nU> (part 1) and at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUPBA6MZV2I> (part 2). Last access: 09/01/2019.

4 The qualitative methodology used in this paper includes: semi-structured interviews of local experts such as journalists, lawyers, and social activists with experience of this conflict. These interviews lasted an hour and were recorded after signing an informed consent on the use of the data. We use 'informant' throughout to maintain anonymity. There are five semi-structured interviews in all but this paper will use the data provided by a journalist of Nigerian origin.

and time between the two (Maxfield, 2016). Here, one should note that both of these cyber-campaigns show that "the rising use and availability of these technologies provides new documentation tools", and greater scope for discourses countering those found in the media (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015: 5).

Sassen (2017: 173) states that "the new ICTs [...] invite a new conceptualisation of the local sphere that can be adapted to cases that depart from the dominant patterns". For this reason, feminist movements need to design cybers-activist campaigns that "seek cross-border political practice, even when it comes to actors confined to the local sphere" (Sassen, 2017: 173). In explaining how the new ICTs work, Sassen points to the origin of certain NGOs that are active today, adding: "The types of political practices that are being debated are not ones charting a cosmopolitan path to the global sphere. Such practices only become truly global once local ones have spread far and wide. Thus in order to grasp how the #BringBackOurGirls campaign unfolded, we need to go back to the beginning and find out which practices spread. Thus the methodological point of departure for a given hashtag campaign is to see how it has spread and changed over time (5 years in the case of the #BringBackOurGirls one). That is why our paper used a qualitative sample, spanning from the month in which the hashtag was opened (May 2014) to activity in the month in which the first version of this paper was written (August 2019). We are therefore faced with an asynchronous ethnography for analysing discursive patterns since "platforms such as Twitter fuel information exchange and vibrant debates fostering deep criticism of power relations. Such debates are key for spreading public knowledge of discourses urging resistance and that were formerly confined to fringe groups" (Xu and Zhou, 2020: 88).

This comparison should reveal which practices are spreading most and what impact they may have. It will help us grasp how a cyber-campaign starts and what outcomes it yields (in this case, after five years). These practices will be examined within the ethical-ontopistemological framework of new materialisms (Van der Tuin, 2015; Colman, 2020). This will help

pin down key concepts, revealing how 'otherness', 'agency', and 'responsibility' work in this particular case. These categories drive the discourse and the ethnographic analysis, which we develop later on. Understanding their digital and analogue evolution will help us identify how feminist political actions can lead to local responses to structural problems.

CONFLICT GENEALOGY: CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE ORIGIN OF THE #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS HASHTAG CAMPAIGN

To grasp how the digital cyber campaign evolved, one needs to chart the chronology of the conflict, taking into account two strands (1) the post-colonial history of Nigeria; (2) the events surrounding the kidnappings. We shall first briefly look at Nigeria's post-independence history to shed light on the present state of affairs (Figure 1).

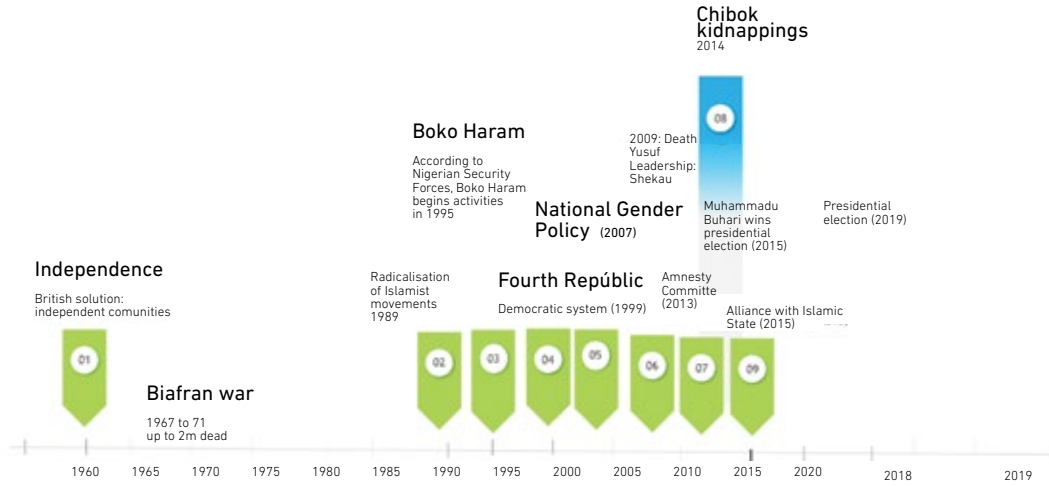
The research team's figure for this special issue and paper sheds light on Nigeria's recent history and the succession of democratic presidents, as well as the link with local politics, which had to grapple with the armed conflict that began in 1995. However, it was not until 2009, with the death of Boko Haram's main leader, Yusuf Shekau, that tension between the government and the terrorist group began to rise.

The figure 2 shows the 'genealogy' of the kidnappings.

The figure gives a kind of 'genealogy' of the kidnappings, and what we identified as a key moment in the unfolding events — namely the 2015 propaganda video showing the girls in captivity. The video went 'viral' and was picked up by the media which in the process greatly spread the terrorist group's propaganda. This shows the influence social networks and global media wield in reporting on local event — an issue that will be explored in other articles in this special edition of *Debats*.

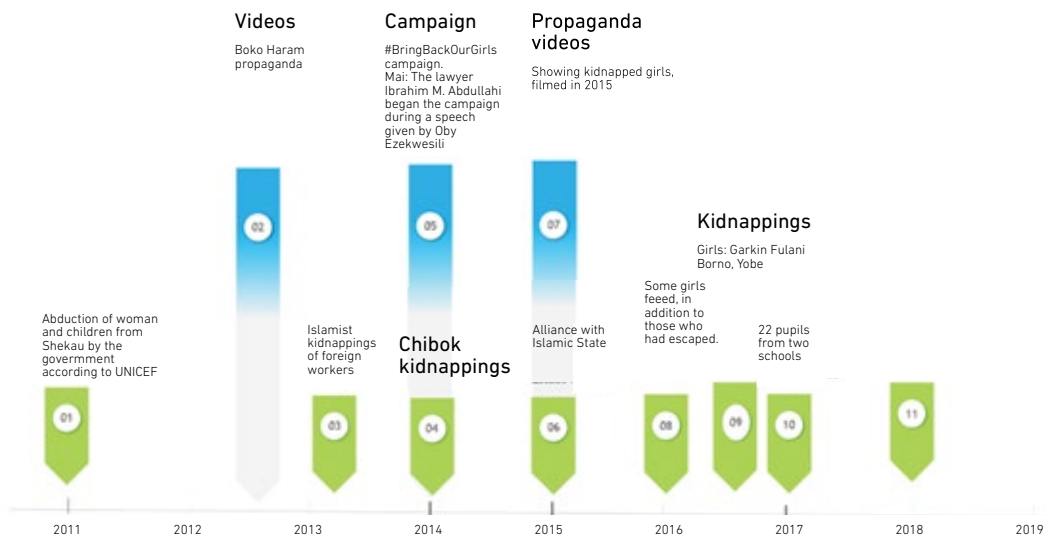
Both figures show how the kidnapping happened between two key moments in Nigeria's recent history,

Figure 1 Post-Colonial Nigeria



Source: Author.

Figure 2 Kidnapping genealogy



Source: Author.

namely after the Amnesty International Committee (2013) reporting on the situation in the country (until then, an issue that was largely a domestic matter) but a year before the 2015 Presidential election. In September 2014, Oby Ezekwesili gave an interview in The United States in which she spoke of the benefits of the cyber-campaign itself and of the continuity she felt was needed if it was to have a real impact (Channels Televisions, 2014a and 2014b). In her view, this cyber-marketing brought the issue into the “bedrooms”⁵ of many people who saw it as something close to their own hearts. This helped win global support and reach for the campaign (Minute 9 of the video). Likewise, she also argued that such cyber-campaigns cannot work alone but rather need to be accompanied by physical deeds. For Ezekwesili (Ajoke's Diary, 2014, Minute 10), the physical deed required was none other than the girls' rescue — something she saw⁶ as the “responsibility” of Nigeria's Federal Government. This was the self-same government that years later (2019) chose not to internationally publicise the next elections because it feared Western countries would seize the opportunity to meddle in the country's local politics (Informant).

According to April Mandrona (2016: 3), we need “to produce new imaginaries and understandings of the ethical being, rights, otherness, power, agency and responsibility” in order to think coherently about the situation of girls around the world. The truth is that some of these concepts are self-referential and lack a coherent or transversal definition that is in keeping with the society or the institutional/media/academic discourse they are used for. On the one hand, the

special features of each socio-cultural community shape cause and effect. On the other hand, failure to adopt a conceptually broader methodology capable of driving affirmative action and intervention (a concept that will be developed later) is a stumbling block to ‘social transformation’. Colman (2014) prefers the term ‘social change’, to differentiate it from a more Western notion of progress leading to more specific sociological transformation.

Before delving deeper into the paper's theme, we should like to start from what Donna Haraway (1988) calls “situated knowledge”, which can be considered as knowledge that starts from a specific relational experience that is diffracted by or interacts with a more global setting. Here, we proffer a provisional definition of three concepts that we consider key to grasping the complexity of the project that we have embarked upon. These concepts are: Otherness, Agency, and Responsibility. Carrying out an ethnographic analysis of the hashtag requires epistemological-empirical mobilisation enshrining these three concepts given that its ontology is defined as “the creation of discursive spaces for individuals who participate in cultural creations of meanings arising from the development of various themes” (Xu and Zhou, 2020: 89). Thus we need to identify which analytical categories mobilise the issue covered in this paper.

As Ezekwesili's words show, it is important to identify who should be held responsible for rescuing the girls. This type of discourse already identifies three levels of analysis that complicate the socio-cultural conflict but that also help begin the analysis with someone who wields political influence in the conflict. Rescuing the girls involves pondering:

- 1 Who is the ‘other’? Is it the government of Nigeria? Is it the terrorist group? Is it the people in their “bedrooms” (*sic*)? Is it the people behind the click?
- 2 Who has agency to promote this rescue? This factor is closely linked to the concepts of ‘otherness’ and ‘responsibility’, which we will define later. This is so because agency is

5 The words between quotation marks are those spoken by the former Nigerian Education Minister. Words always have a symbolic and material meaning and their action within a political discourse and the way they are used — even in an interview — is not accidental. The full interview can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRTVEkBnoCK>. Last access: 09/01/2019.

6 Here one should note the verb tense of the actions, since during the period spanning from the outbreak of the conflict to the present, Ezekwesili has gone from being Minister of Education to being a Presidential candidate. At the time of this interview, she held neither of these positions but was an advisor to the Nigerian Government.

shared by the nature of the cyber campaign and the unique physical actions identified by Ezekwesili.

- 3 Who is responsible and in what sense is this person/body able to 'rescue' the girls? What does the notion of 'rescue' imply for those girls who are still unaccounted for? At the same time, these concepts underpin the approaches used to reach our conclusions.

However, all these categories are based on self-referential concepts that cannot easily be applied outside the local context of the conflict. An intersectional approach (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013) reveals the need to incorporate various dimensions so that one can start from a common base: gender, age, religion, sexuality, ethnicity, origin, among many other things — as we shall see later. Nevertheless, grasping what 'girl' means in Nigeria requires a departure from Western ideas about girlhood given that there are marked differences. Likewise, thinking about the meaning of 'girl' leads us on to the concept of 'otherness' and 'agency' in this case, since the campaign demands that we "bring the girls back." "Others" have to acknowledge the abducted girls' place of origin and rescue them from thralldom in the terrorist camps.

One might argue that the cyber-campaign was focused solely on freeing the girls but over time it became a representationalist media claim. We thus propose the new materialist concept of "intra-sectionality" (Geerts and Van der Tuin, 2013). Here, 'agency' is understood within the scope of the digital relationship covered by our case study, and 'responsibility' as 'the ability to respond' (Haraway cited by Revelles Benavente and González, 2017) to the present political framing of the conflict. The first section of the paper covers theory. The second section sets out our research methodology. The third uses hashtag ethnography (Rosa and Bonilla, 2015) to delve into the case and mainly focuses on material-discursive analysis guided by the aforementioned three empirical-methodological concepts. The paper ends with constructive proposals for affirmative intervention to boost the ability to respond but that

do not 'colonise' the #BringBackOurGirls case. Rosi Braidotti's affirmative policy (2015) is a post-human strategy based on the quest for forums fostering active but non-destructive resistance. Such resistance forges empowering spaces rather than giving agency to people and other actors in a given conflict. It is an affirmative policy that seeks social and ethical transformation based on relationships, not on hierarchical disruption that merely leads to new hierarchical anthologies.

INTRASECTIONALITY: THINKING THROUGH THE NOTION OF 'GIRL' IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA

In 1990 Rosi Braidotti explained 'difference' as a multi-faceted thing, not as an 'either/or' choice (as in 'woman' as 'not man'). There are various levels of difference — men versus women, among women (breaking with the univocal notion of 'woman' in within feminist theory and for the political movement in general). However, as Mandrona (2016) states, girls are different from women, so one more level could be added to that proposed by Braidotti to grasp the ontological differences between the two. According to Chiluba and Ifukor (2015), the girls who were abducted from the Chibok school were aged between 14 and 18. In the context of Nigerian culture, that means that some of them were already considered to be potential mothers. Making these women seem like children (from a Western perspective, in which they would still be considered girls) gives rise to a counter-discourse ('these girls must be rescued') that attacks the Nigerian government and the terrorist group alike. However, we cannot understand the viral discourse of the campaign from this Western standpoint since we would be victimising and 'post-colonising' the girls who are the centre of the media campaign on three different levels:

- 1 For feminists and NGOs promoting the 'girls' liberation.
- 2 For the Nigerian government (which needs the girls to regain the legitimacy it has lost in the eyes of the world).

3 For the terrorist group, which uses the 'girls' as bargaining chips and to keep the organisation in the media spotlight?

Contemporary feminist theory relies on the concept of intersectionality to analyse and explain these differences. However, this concept is really just a tool for delineating difference. Contemporary theory tries to go beyond this. According to Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013: 788), intersectionality is "an analytical tool that captures and relates to contextual power dynamics [...] it is a nodal point that brings together investigations with open ends of the following dynamics (considered conflictive and overlapping): race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality and other inequalities". Thus, they define it as a starting point for capturing the complex social dynamics in which sundry oppression factors interfere in a given sociological development.

Additionally, the intersectional approach also allows one to begin with empirical work as a first step to theorising about the data (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013: 792). Bearing in mind the 'suspension of the present' implied by the analysis of social networks (Coleman, 2018), it is hard to reconcile starting from a previous theory to frame the results with the need not to 'colonise' them. However, as we have shown through discursive genealogy, the linguistic representation of the campaign is univocal — a criticism of the intersectional perspective that is fairly common in contemporary feminist theory. For example, Evelien Geerts and Iris Van der Tuin argue that this approach can fall into representationalist traps (2013) in which the intersection of certain social categories is presented as an active component of the research, while the participating subjects become passive components.

This digital campaign might be seen as a clear example of the consequences of this intersectional representationalist reading. The three media levels focusing on the notion of 'girl' to develop the campaign fall precisely into this reading and foster highly specific political practices in the cyber-campaign, as we shall see later. Part of the project that we present in this special issue consists of the development of semi-structured interviews with local agents and experts

on the subject. One of our informants told us that digital campaigns such as #BringBackOurGirls had turned the Chibok girls into a symbol and 'bargaining chip' for the terrorist group in its dealings with the international press. This gave the terrorists even less reason to release the girls, most of whom remain in captivity to this day. We therefore consider the scope for applying active intersectionality principles in both our research methodology for this project and for part of this paper. Here, one should note the interrelationship of different identities defining a given group and their link to the node (or platform) upon which Crenshaw's intersectional approach is based. This node would be the digital campaign itself and a notion of social networks as a 'suspension of the present'. In addition, our approach also moves away from the 'subjugated knowledge' concept espoused by Sandra Harding (1986). That is because we seek to activate 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1988) as the starting point for the girls' relational agency rather than just considering them as victims who must be shielded by 'White Feminists'.

Thus we try to explain the campaign's corporal and affective expressions from the standpoint of relationships — physical and digital — rather than from the personification or objectification of certain pictures. Maxfield (2016: 885) warns us that "digital expressions were part of a larger reality and were therefore involved in their own stories and systems of power". Thus — continues Maxfield (2016: 885) — the genealogy of the conflict and its presentation in the media sometimes grant agency to figures from The Global North, such as the film director Ramaa Moseley. The upshot is that Nigerians enter our imaginary as "poster girls" rather than as individuals relating their experiences in their own words (Maxfield, 2016: 891). This intra-sectional approach analyses: (1) specific moments; (2) the scope for altering the concepts described earlier; (3) the lessons for affirmative intervention in the design and dissemination of feminist cyber-campaigns. We say 'affirmative intervention' because instead of focusing on the potential pitfalls of such a campaign for feminism (see Maxfield, 2016, for example), we analyse relational moments that can yield answers (or exhibit 'responsibility', as Haraway would put it).

TWITTER: AN EMPOWERING SPACE FOR AFFIRMATIVE POLICIES?

According to Sassen (2017: 173), “The digital media are key for activists rooted in specific physical spaces, and focusing on local issues that link to similar groups in other parts of the world.” One of the main functions of the tweets that Xu and Zhou (2020: 89) identify is the ideological demarcation of an individual person within a discursive space (which, we add, is a collective one). Thus, we can verify how physical spaces and discursive spaces converge in certain patterns, yielding local and global explanations of certain contemporary phenomena. In this respect, Twitter catalyses the convergence of diverse identities with different geo-political positions. When it comes to the methodological approach to this social network, quantitative approaches based on the use of technological software are commonly used (for example, Xu and Zhou, 2020; Rosa and Bonilla, 2015). This paper stresses two specific periods in the Twitter campaign. It does so to establish representationalist discursive patterns exhibiting a Western, post-colonial vision of the empirical and epistemological concepts noted above. Here, we not only analyse the most recurrent tweets during the two periods but also delve into the images produced. Visual media accompanying the discourse is a key feature of the Twitter platform. Images play a major role in shaping how we see and feel about a given subject (Whitty *et al.*, 2018). One should also note that pictures make a faster impact than text and may well be subject to a wider range of interpretations.

In contextualising the conflict, we have taken up Mandrona's (2016) suggestion of changing the imaginary so as to tackle the host of patriarchal relationships arising from the mix of social networks, terrorism, and the girls. This paper delves into the campaign to come up with new imaginaries precisely because it “changed the world's collective perception, swiftly drumming up support for the cause and putting the issues before a worldwide audience” (Njoroge, 2016: 312). It sprang from the efforts of Nigerian parents and activists who felt the nation's government was shirking its duty (Njoroge, 2016: 312). It reveals that

the campaign was born in the local sphere, and from the relational agency of a group of people united by emotional ties (mostly forged through family and gender). When the campaign made the leap to the global scale, local agency vanished. This in turn led to the captive girls becoming: (1) a bargaining chip for the terrorists in their haggling with the Nigerian government; (2) a propaganda tool for publicising the terrorists' cause in the world media. Two key factors were highlighted by international actors: (a) the Nigerian government's inability to manage its own crises (Njoroge, 2016: 321); (b) the 'need' for post-colonialist intervention by other countries (such as The United States) — something that completely delocalised the problem. Once an issue had been delocalised, the spotlight fell on media language on and treatment of what was at stake. This is highly undesirable because it makes one lose sight of women's agency. That is why a relational approach is preferable because it is more likely to highlight individual experience and to include the voice of the local women involved in the campaign.

Facebook and Twitter — together with Instagram — are fairly interconnected social networks, since the hashtag (#) allows simultaneous publishing of posts on Facebook and Twitter (even though the latter has a 140-character limit). Njoroge (2016) carried out a rigorous discursive analysis of the origins of the cyber-campaign, focusing more on Facebook. This lets us identify the four thematic points that she considers most important at the outset: “Education for girls; denunciation of human trafficking; religious oppression; women-power” (Njoroge, 2016: 320). This theming seeks to identify a feminist discourse in the cyber-campaign. However, the author also notes major hurdles, such as the need to empower girls by inculcating critical thinking. This is hard to say the least because girls do not receive a Western education in Northern Nigeria but rather one that is specific to a region that is far from both the national Capital and the more 'developed' South (according to Western criteria). Rather than trying to empower the girls who are victims of the conflict, one would need to find agency spaces — physical, political and symbolic — to

give girls in Northern Nigeria the chance to respond to the daily challenges facing them. The cyber-campaign must be accompanied by an analysis of the 'suspended present', seeing it as the relationship between the girls' past, present and possible future, and which ties in with the affirmative action taken for them.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE CONFLICT: WHO DO WE BRING BACK?

The official Twitter account of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign is the empirical focus of this paper. Instead of undertaking a quantitative analysis, we opted for a qualitative one covering two specific moments in the hashtag's history. These moments highlight the campaign's dynamism and varying intensity. One might say that the hashtag is a kind of avatar spurring on the protest movement to rescue the abducted girls. In September 2019, the account had a fixed tweet, which was the first one to appear on the News Wall every time a user entered the official site. It was dated the 14th of April 2019, marking the fifth anniversary of the Chibok kidnappings. It read as follows:

It is now 5 years since the abduction of 276 #ChibokGirls from school. For # 5YearsTooLong, 112 #ChibokGirls have remained in captivity. This tragedy is the #ShameOfANation. Our demand today is the same as it was 5 years ago - #BringBackOurGirls now and alive.⁷

⁷ In the same way that Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa (2015) do in their article (see Footnote 1), this paper includes posts and tweets from the official #BringBackOurGirls Twitter account. Due to Data Protection laws, the information is anonymised, hiding users' names. We will use the real names only where they have gone viral or are reproduced by the media or public figures. As these authors explain, tweets are sometimes deleted but that does not preclude them from contributing to scientific knowledge. They also refer to the nature of this data, which is sometimes used in an ethically questionable way by corporations such as Facebook or Twitter for commercial purposes. This paper and project are wholly non-commercial, their sole purpose being to contribute knowledge for social ends. https://twitter.com/bbog_nigeria?lang=es. Last access: 09/01/2019.

This short tweet tells us that half a decade has gone by since the kidnappings, of the campaign's origin and how almost half (112 out of 276) of the abducted girls are still in captivity — "the shame of a nation". The collection of tweets may disappear depending on the scope (Rosa and Bonilla, 2015) — the official Twitter account has over 3,400 followers. This makes tracing the campaigns beginning and gathering all the tweets that have been published a hopeless task. Put baldly, an ethnography of the hashtag showing the first steps in campaign would simply not be viable.

However, there is a second option for marking the cyber-campaign's ontology: harnessing institutional discourses (academic, media, literary) to draw parallels between the impact of the start of the campaign and the campaign today. To this end, we drew up a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) (Lazaar, 2007) to examine all the tweets during the last month of data collection (August 2019). The FCDA is a qualitative technique that lets one analyse discourses (visual, linguistic, contextual, and so on) taking gender as a transverse axis framing the hierarchies of power that such discourses hide. Being able to contrast the genealogy of the discourse (analogue and digital) with the current state of affairs reveals how the campaign unfolded and came up with an effective plan to use social networks to foster social activism.

In the next section, we will carry out a qualitative analysis to identify the origin of the movement that Oby Ezekwesili talked of earlier. It is contextualised by the genealogy of the conflict itself. To address this 'suspension of the present', we need to insert an FCDA of the tweet that seems anchored, since it establishes the origin of the conflict within the cyber campaign, and linked activity on the platform during the last month. There were thirty-nine tweets from two highly specific public profiles. As a sample of the original tweets, we will take one from each profile to identify the theoretical and methodological starting point that the Twitter account follows today, five years after the outbreak of the conflict.

THE CONFLICT TODAY: WHO ARE WE BRINGING BACK?

Following the FCDA technique, we need to adopt gender as the backbone of our analysis, which in our case is clearly demarcated by the symbolic/linguistic label of 'girls'. We contend that the campaign's goal is no longer the initial goal of 'rescue', which we identified in the introduction to this paper. Five long years have passed since the kidnapping took place and there are still victims who remain unaccounted for. Yet these will surely no longer be girls. Not only has enough time passed by to make them adults by Western reckoning (18 years old) but they have also undergone various affective experiences that greatly distance them from the moment of the kidnapping.

If we take the last 39 re-tweets in this account during August 2019 as our sample, we can say that activity lay between medium and high, with an average of over one tweet a day. We can also say that most of the tweets come from two people of very different origins and interests: Rosa Muñiz and Frederica Wilson. If we think about the origin of the conflict and the large number of personalities who joined at the beginning, we can see several familiar faces. As Sassen pointed out at the beginning of this paper, cyber campaigns originate through local actions and become global due to the proliferation of certain deeds. However, this proliferation during the campaign has been strongly marked by the individualisation of the conflict, that is, by the support of recognised public figures from the Global North for the campaign. However, "Having people such as Michelle Obama or David Cameron holding up a slogan and looking fretful does not solve the problem." "We, the people, use a hashtag because we do not have the power that these leaders have. I want influential people to act and not just update their status" (Chiluwa and Ifukor, 2015: 285).

Frederica Wilson, a Congresswoman for the Democratic Party in California, uses this conflict and sometimes compares it to the #BlackLivesMatter movement. However, we cannot forget that the religious, geographical and gender differences (that is, intersectional differences) between these two

cases makes it well-nigh impossible to furnish an exhaustive, unifying analysis of both conflicts. Frederica Wilson is a woman of African descent and belongs to the political class of the country's first half-African President.

US political representatives of African descent, headed by the country's first half-African President (born to a mother of European descent and an African father). She and her co-religionaries need a political cause that does not identify with the focus of the conflict but that is grist to the mill of American politics. The situations are completely different but the media representation of both conflicts is very similar. Using this campaign against what she calls "a humanitarian crisis" allows her to position herself within left-wing values that do not compromise the politics of her country. This means that one can update one's status without having to commit to the cause. It is an example of the much-criticised slacktivism and an intersectional representationalist approach on the part of the media and of the way these social networks work.

On the other hand, the most active figure of #BringBackOurGirls is Rosa Muñiz, who publishes almost daily posts on how many days have passed since the girls were abducted. Muñiz is not someone who holds any power but rather a person who has been doggedly following the same discourse for the last five years. She represents the group of girls who are currently aged between 15 and 23, reproducing the 'suspension of the present' caused by social networks (Coleman, 2018).

If look at the network's present activity in the light of the theories framing this paper, we find a representationalist intersectionality within the Western concept of 'the girls', and a clear-cut case of slacktivism. One can therefore say that the present cyber-campaign is unlikely to end the conflict. Social networks are dissemination tools that catalyse certain information, as we have already seen. However, that information needs to foster a relational response if one to change the facts on the ground.

Figure 3 Screenshot of the official account of the 25th of August 2019

DEVELOPING AFFIRMATIVE FEMINIST POLICIES

Bearing in mind the sheer complexity of the phenomenon described here, how can one draw up cyber-campaigns that are feminist but that steer clear of Neo-Liberal, Post-Colonial, or even terrorist networks? Isolating the structure of social networks is no easy task given the moment that one's tweet goes viral, one runs the risk of strengthening one's adversary. As Sassen (2017: 177) puts it, "The results are not unidirectional and homogeneous but rather are mixed, contradict one another, and create new elements".

Thus, we propose an onto-epistemological, methodological, and political framework for our approaches. The reason is to better deal with complexity from multiple standpoints rather than simply in terms of cause and effect. The main strands supporting our study are Western Feminism, the pigeon-holing of the victims as 'girls', and politics as an arid exercise in dualism. We not only need feminism as a platform in planning these campaigns but also to ensure a situated 'glocal' [global-local] feminism capable of tackling the structural problems we face. Njoroge (2016) warns us that Western-inspired post-feminism sometimes

causes gender issues to be overlooked because they have supposedly already been 'solved'. These false 'victories' foster an illusory Neo-Liberal feminism in which women can already do whatever they want. Obviously, such feminism is not only a mirage in The East and The South but also in The Global North and in The West. This feminism is born from the dualistic logic that preaches on the norm and by so doing, only reinforces it — something that Butler presciently warned of in the 1990s in *Gender Trouble*.

The same goes for the concept of empowerment — something that Njoroge (2016) wonders about. We consider that this notion has at least two important consequences. The first is the oppositional dualist logic that urges us to search for a feminist who can empower a woman or girl (as already defined by the post-colonial feminism of Spivak or Mohanty, 1988). The second is that it structurally puts women or girls in the role of victims or of executioners. This raises a problem that is basically of a patriarchal nature: the girls cannot get an education and are turned into bargaining chips at both the international and local levels.

and virtual elements). In this context, one should note that the Nigerian government went so far as to say that it suspected Boko Haram agents had infiltrated the political structure (Njoroge, 2016). This conflict has put the Nigerian Government's incompetence under the spotlight. It has also led to the country refusing international aid for fear of interventionist policies. Yet the same Chibok patriarchal conflict has also highlighted the need for 'glocal' [global/local] frameworks to help in such cases. Maybe we need to shift towards drawing up cyber-campaign strategies that focus on the different women found in North-Eastern Nigeria (whether they be political, literary, or media figures, or even members of the Boko Haram terrorist group). Such an approach would let us draw upon their life experiences rather than upon our Western pre-conceived notions.

The way the campaign was designed ensured that it had a big international impact but it also made it harder to resolve the conflict once it had gone viral, jumping from the local to the world scale. This is why contemporary feminism must exercise great caution to avoid such mistakes in future cyber-campaigns. Using celebrities/public figures (Michelle Obama, David Cameron) to promote voices, and using Western-style pictures on campaign posters has only helped Boko Haram turn the victims into bargaining chips. A relational approach would use ways of avoiding such individualisation, which manifests representationalist intersectionalities and that, in the final analysis, only fosters a de-localised social conflict that de-legitimises local agents.

CONCLUSIONS

Ezekwesili (2014, Minute 13) told us that structural solutions are needed when structural problems arise. Gender violence in war zones is a structural problem underlain by many socio-cultural layers. These layers cannot be simplified through the simple logic of cause-and-effect. Here, social network campaigns can be agents of change as long as their strategies and design are approached from a gender perspective. Throughout

this paper, we have eschewed generalist approaches and Western perspectives in order to understand a conflict that began five years ago. Sadly, that conflict is far from being a one off — similar ones break out today even though they may differ in form.

Women's bodies remain a bargaining chip for terrorist groups, political institutions, and even the media. Gender-based violence against women's and girls' bodies is a constant in our society, be it Western, Eastern, Northern or Southern. The contemporary media landscape offers a rising tide of cases as the scourge of right-wing extremist ideology reaches every corner of the world.

The path taken by the project and work done for this paper lead us to stress an idea proposed by Maxfield (2016: 889), namely that "Digital expressions were [and are] part of a broader reality underlying power systems and histories". Understanding a conflict therefore means placing it in its geographical, spatial, temporal, and power settings and linking these to the subjects involved at the outbreak of conflict. Cyber-campaigns offer excellent platforms for raising one's voice in protest but these voices should not drown out the stories of those directly affected. We must therefore take various elements into account, such as: individualisation in the campaign; media representation of the female body; categorisation of the people involved; the political strategy based on affirmation and not on negation or on the dual powers of post-colonial empowerment.

In addition, the campaign's path also reveals different ways of using social networks to tackle the problem of gender violence. The course of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign and various geo-political events over the last five years have only muddied the waters, rendering the issues more complex. That is why when drawing up future anti-gender violence cyber-campaigns, we should think more about: which strategies to follow; how to make the leap from the local sphere to the global one; how to make the campaign go viral from the outset; reviewing the campaign's media treatment if the conflict drags on.

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Big Data Analysis of the #BringBackOurGirls Cyber-Campaign

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ABSTRACT

We used a web tool to extract Twitter API data on the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. The Twitter hashtag was used for a campaign denouncing the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, Nigeria on the 14th of April 2014 by the Jihadist group Boko Haram. The data extracted covered the period spanning from the creation of the campaign (19th of May 2014) to the 16th of May 2019. The data were anonymous because they were provided in aggregate form, covering things such as: the number, content, and chronology of tweets; information on geographical area; the relevance of the users making comments; information on followers; the impact of tweets; 'likes'; re-tweets; demographic profiles (gender); keyword information. These indications were provided in the form of mass, open data by Twitter's API. The data was ordered and analysed by the research team during the course of the qualitative study to shed light on the cyber-campaign.

Keywords: hashtag, #BringBackOurGirls, Boko Haram, Chibok, Jihadism, Africa.

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INTRODUCTION

As noted in the Abstract, our data analysis is based upon the campaign run through the #BringBackOurGirls Twitter hashtag. The hashtag was created on the 23rd of April 2014 by Ibrahim M. Abdullahi, a Nigerian lawyer, to draw the world's attention to the kidnapping of 276 girls from a school in Chibok in the State of Borno in North-Eastern Nigeria. The kidnappings were carried out by Boko Haram, an Islamic terrorist group. Many public figures joined the campaign from around the

world. These included: Michelle Bachelet (Chilean politician); Michelle Obama (President Obama's wife), Malala Yousafzai (a Pakistani activist); Ellen DeGeneres and Angelina Jolie (actresses), who played key roles in spreading word of the Twitter campaign abroad, giving it a much higher profile as they demanded the freeing of the kidnapped girls. Social media have been used in other conflicts since then, including in 'The Anglophone Crisis' (Ambazonia War — see map at Figure 4) in Cameroon in 2016 (Oriola, 2017).

Here it is worth briefly contextualising the kidnappings leading to the cyber-campaign. Nigeria is a large, culturally and ethnically diverse West African nation. It is also geographically varied, with tropical rainforest in the south and savannah and semi-desert in the north. The country's GDP is the highest in the region thanks to a cornucopia of mineral resources (petroleum, natural gas, coal, tin, gold, bauxite, iron ore), and many agricultural products. The population has soared from 46 million in the 1960s to almost 196 million today (Nganji and Cockburn, 2020). Despite the country's natural riches, Nigeria's soaring population, endemic corruption, and bad governance have led to extremes of wealth and poverty, lack of social welfare, and a host of other problems. It is a nation of marked regional differences. Southern Nigeria is home to 50.8% of Christians and 1.4% of other religions. In Northern Nigeria, 50.4% of the population is Muslim — the fruit of a Southward spread of Islam from Sub-Saharan Africa. The Jihadist Boko Haram terrorist organisation has operated in Northern Nigeria since 2002. Boko Haram is allied to ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant], whose goal is the creation of a Fundamentalist Islamic State (World Bank, 2019) under Sharia Law and to drive the population belonging to other religious groups further south. Since 2009, tensions in the area have led to an armed conflict in which over 20,000 people have already died. In just the last five years, over 10,000 women and girls have been kidnapped there, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW). The HRW report of the 30th of April 2014 stated that many kidnapped women/girls were forced to marry members of the terrorist group, while others were sold for 2,000 Nairas (about US \$12.50 each) and sent to neighbouring countries such as Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon. Although the kidnapping of the 276 schoolgirls in Chibok was far from an isolated incident, it proved to be a turning point, forcing Nigeria's Civil Society to react, sparking a storm of protest and actions around the world once the violence suffered by women in the country's conflicts became more widely known (Celso, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

In the study titled "Digital Communication as a Tool in the Fight Against Gender Violence in War Zones", of which this paper forms part, we analysed the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag between its creation (May 2014) and May 2019. To ensure users' anonymity, we based our analysis on: (1) statistical values linked to the quantitative impact of Tweets — users' reactions through re-tweeting certain comments, videos, links or contents from tweets during specific periods, and ; (2) geo-location of users in order to grasp the world impact of the events covered and to detect significant behaviour patterns.

Figure 1 shows the impact of given tweets within a specified period (from the 4th of August to the 12th of August 2016), in which one can see users' activity/reactions to specific tweets. Figure 2 shows the number of followers, re-tweets and tweets, and the impact of the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag by geographical area during the same period. As we noted earlier, such information lets us see how the hashtag campaign spread from the local sphere to the global one, and to specific areas.

Figure 2 shows the number of followers, tweets, re-tweets, and the impact of this information by geographical area — data from which we obtained a map of the campaign's spread as reflected by users' activity in each zone.

The location data reveal that the campaign began as a local one and ended up as an international one. In other words, the greater part of the campaign's impact stemmed from the involvement of Nigerian citizens, with a total of 4729 tweets of which only 572 were published in Northern Nigeria (Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, etc.), an area in which roughly 50.4 % of the country's population live. One can therefore say that mobilisation was much greater in Southern Nigeria. This seems odd because the kidnappings took place in Northern Nigeria. We shall now delve into this issue to consider possible explanations for this apparent regional disparity in response.

Given that the geo-location data were not obtained from GPS sensors but rather from the information voluntarily supplied by users, one might suspect that many of those tweeting may have deliberately falsified their location (for example, by putting down made-up countries). Others may simply have left the location field blank. This is understandable given rational fears of being tracked down and suffering reprisals. One can therefore say that such geo-location information is unreliable and we have therefore excluded it from our analysis.

Although the social network does not geo-localise its users, we noted that many of those expressing support for the kidnappers (rather than for their victims) chose to remain anonymous or to give the names of made-up countries in the ‘location’ field. We also saw that many of the users put down location data for all the countries they had lived in — information that helped us identify those members of the Nigerian diaspora who had spread the campaign from the host countries in which they are now living. Thus the geographic area from which their tweets were

Figure 1 Specific tweets by days

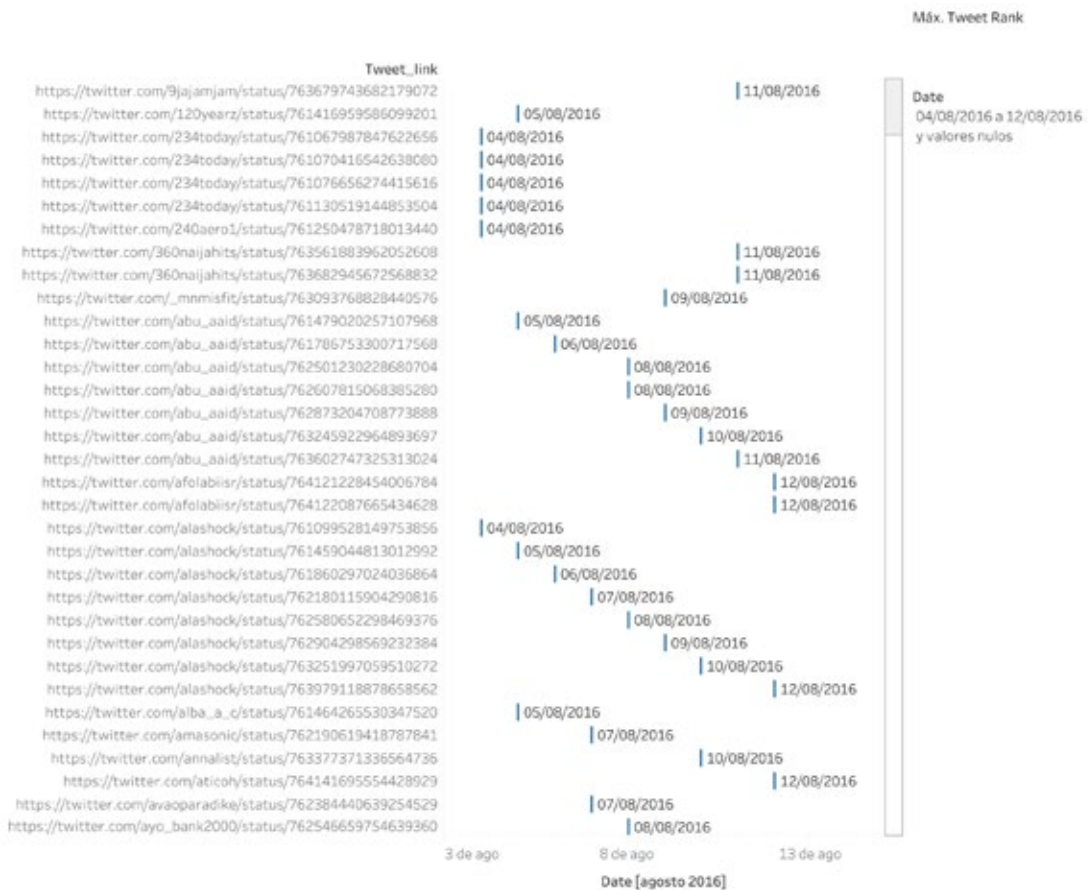


Figure 2 Number of followers, impact, tweets and re-tweets by geographical area

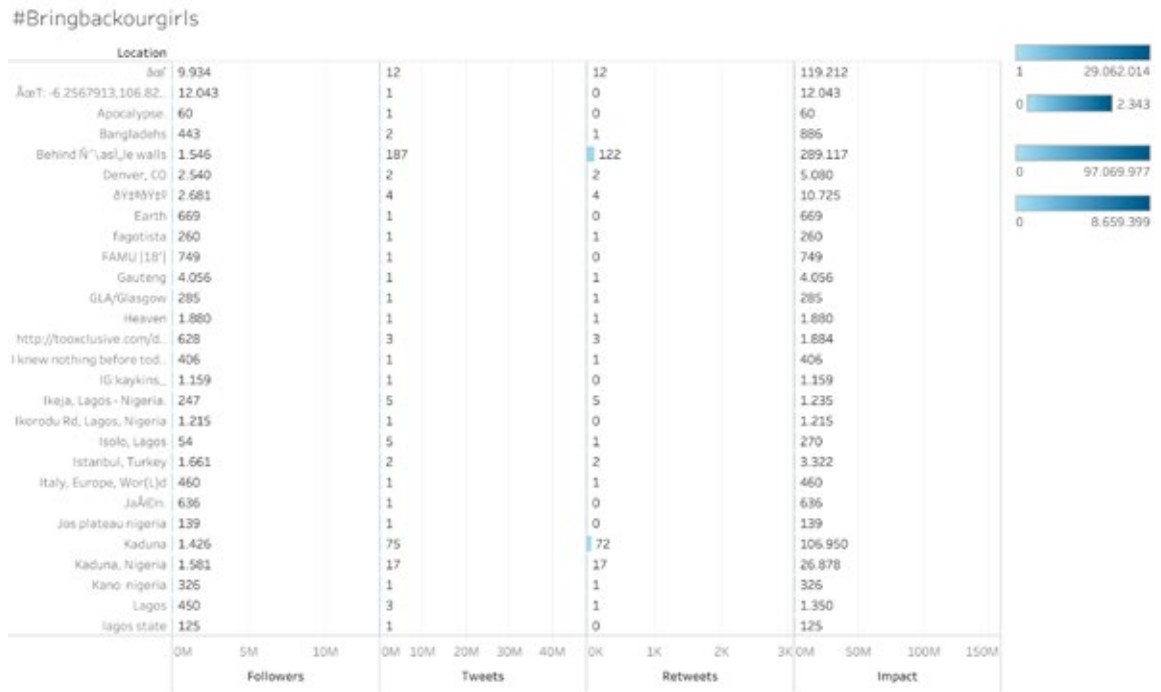
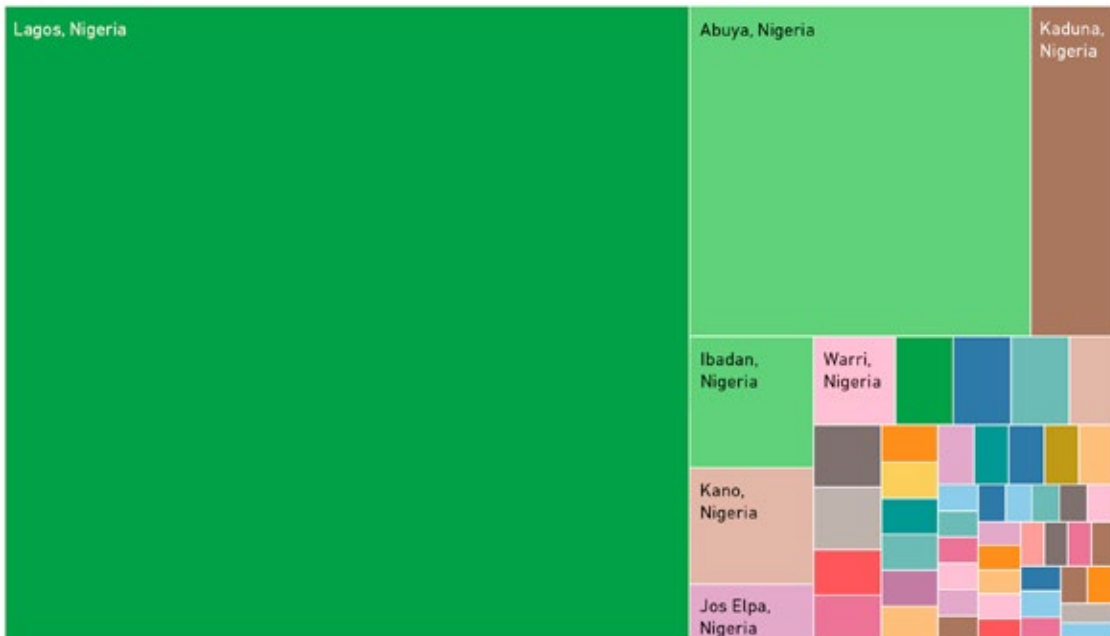


Figure 3 Nigerian citizens' participation in the campaign, broken down by cities

Nigerian localisation by areas

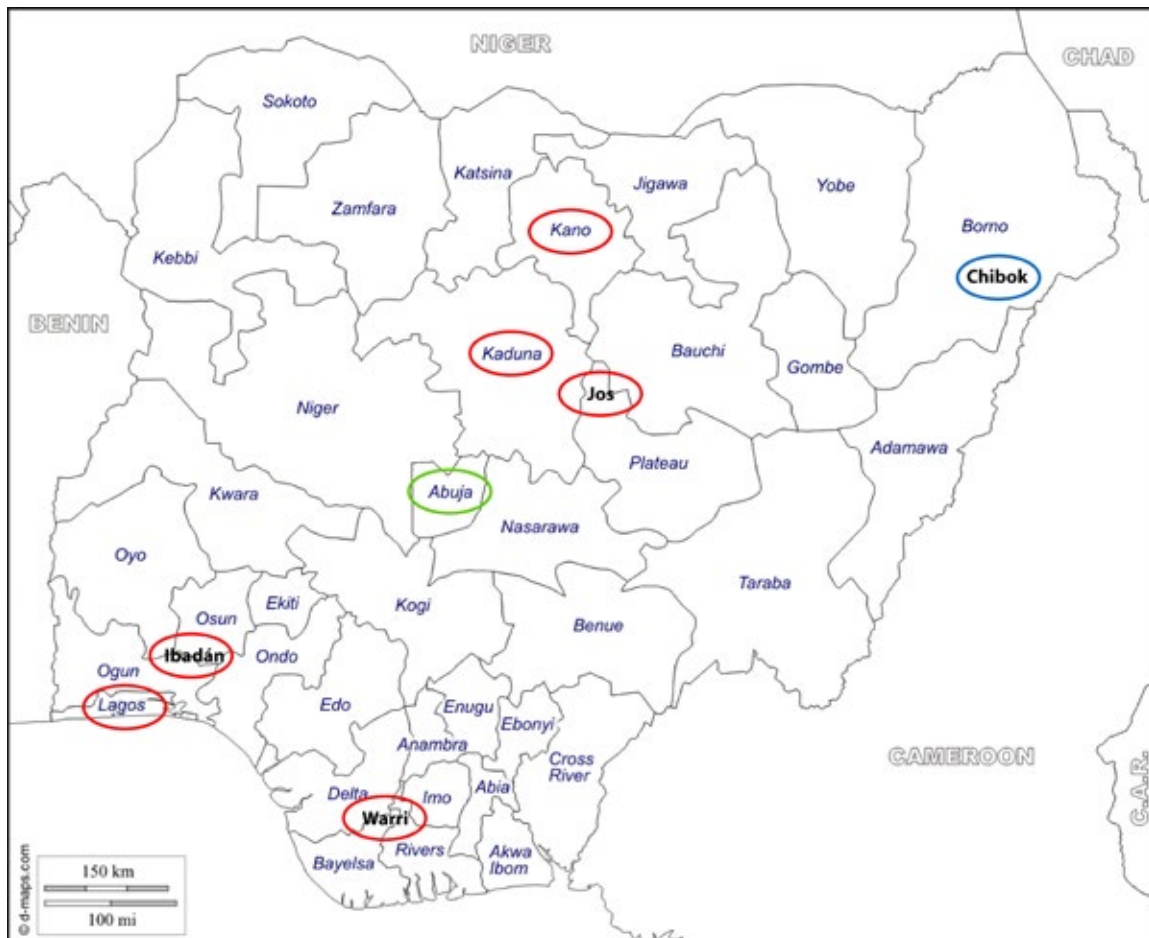


written helps us say to what extent this cyber-campaign influenced African emigrants living abroad, and to discover how many non-African users took part (that is to say, how the campaign spread to the rest of the world which — in principle — knew little or nothing of local circumstances in North-Eastern Nigeria).

Our analysis revealed that Nigeria was the country with the greatest number of tweets. The United States ran it a close second — possibly thanks to media coverage of the cyber-campaign by political celebrities in North America.

Figures 3 and 4 show those Nigerian cities in which there was most participation in the cyber-campaign. On the map in Figure 4, Chibok — the city where the kidnappings took place — is circled in blue. Abuja, Nigeria’s present Capital — since 1991, succeeding Ikeja (1976-1991) — is circled in green. Lagos — the country’s biggest city, financial heart, and the former Capital (1914-1976) — is where most tweets were published. Figure 4 shows the geographical break-down of tweets in North-South terms of the cities shown in Figure 3. The Southern cities such as Lagos and Ibadan, together

Figure 4 Map showing Nigerian citizens’ participation by city



with the Capital (Central Nigeria) account for most of the country’s Christians — the same faith as that of the kidnapped girls. Most of those taking part in the campaign were from these cities, where participation was even higher than in Chibok (Borno State), which is where the abducted schoolgirls were from.

Figure 5 shows users’ tweets by country and geographical area, recording both the campaign’s national and international repercussions. The information gleaned reveals that those involved in the campaign were drawn from Nigeria, people in other African countries (especially South Africa and Kenya), and at the international level, from The United States, Spain, and Canada as news of the Kenyan kidnappings reached their nations.

Another datum in our research on the #BringBack-OurGirls hashtag is the number of tweets published for each user account (that is to say, the number of tweets written by each individual). The figure was aggregated to maintain confidentiality. This information gives an idea of the spread of information and users’ reactions to the kidnappings.

Figure 7 shows the trend in activity spanning the period between the hashtag’s creation on the 19th of May 2014, and the 28th of June 2015. The graph shows the number of responses to a tweet, the number of re-tweets, the average number of tweets sent per user, and the total number of tweets. This information lets us contextualise the hashtag and see users’ reaction to it.

Figure 5 Citizens’ participation by regions and countries

#Bringbackourgirls localisation and re-tweets

Localisation by area



Localisation by country

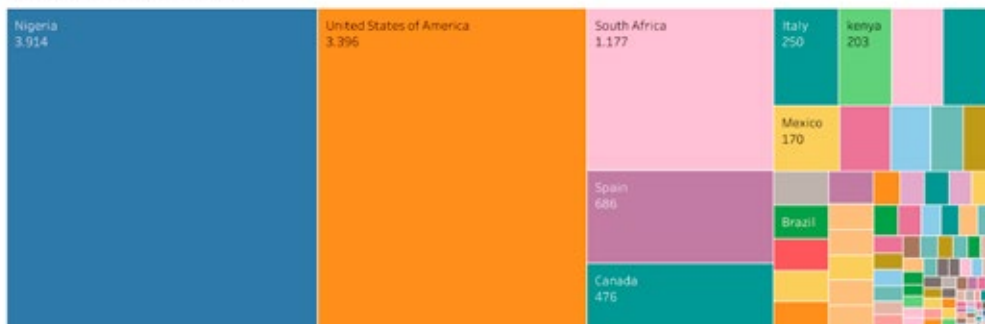


Figure 6 Number of contributions by user

#Bringbackourgirls Tweets by number of users

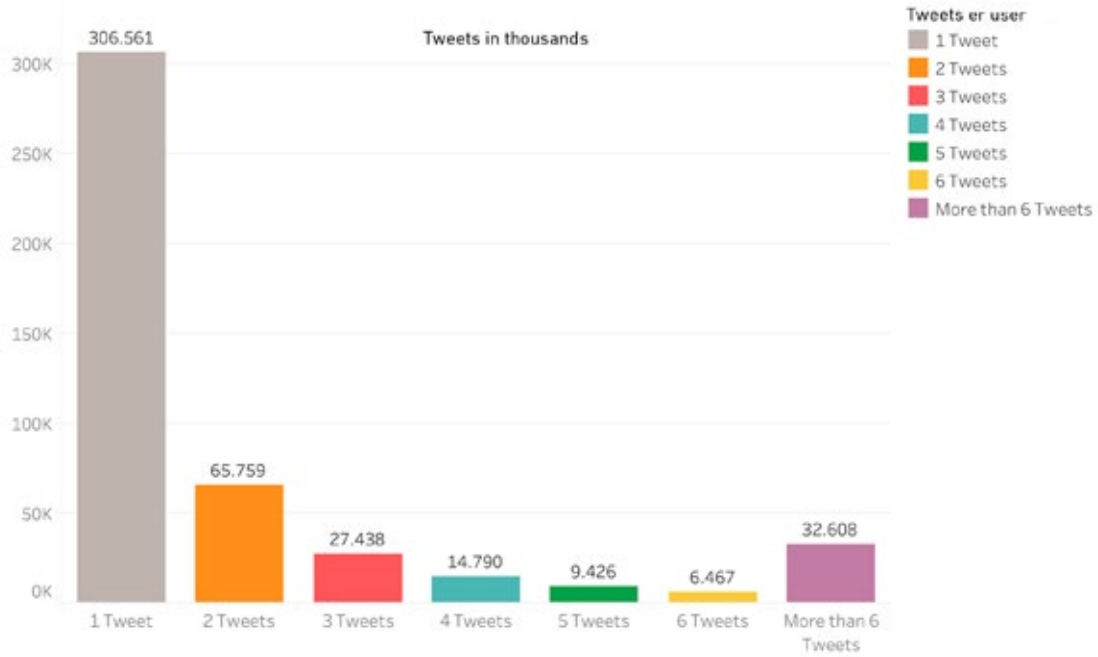
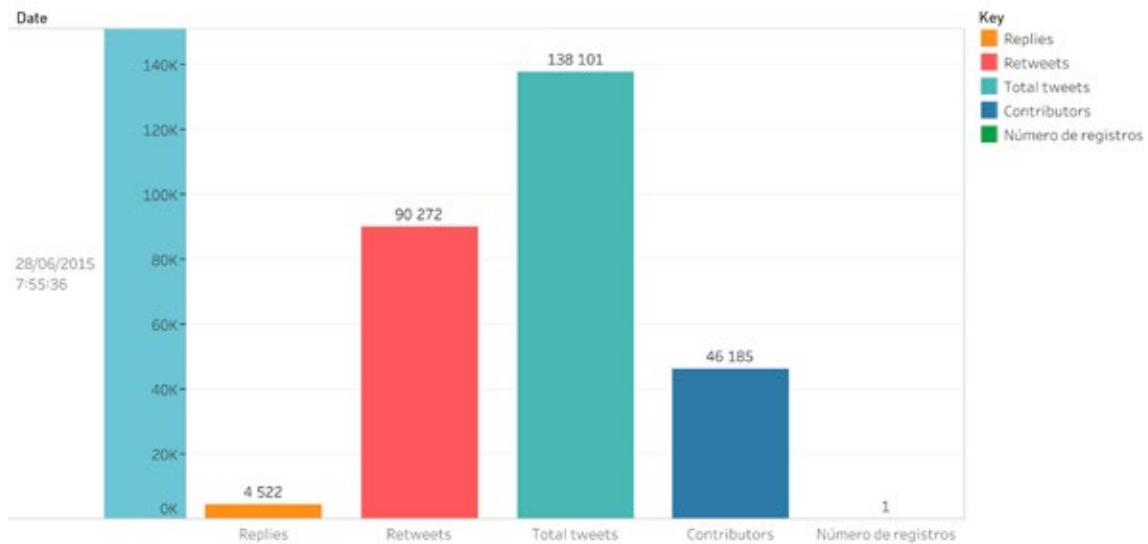


Figure 7 Hashtag activity on the 28th of June 2015

#Bringbackourgirls Activity 28/6/2015



Among other things, Figure 8 shows the number of re-tweets in relation to the total number of tweets published by users in the period spanning from the 19th of May 2014 to the 16th of May 2019. This reveals the rate at which information was spread among users during this period. The speed with which information spread suggests the importance placed by users on the information in the tweets. Analysis of tweeting trends over the period also sheds light on the way the news spread. New events sparked heightened interest for a while, which then fell off. How long users stuck with the hashtag depended on their social commitment and the relevance of the news items.

Figure 9 analyses the hashtag's first year (2014), in which there was a large number of re-tweets, coinciding with the BBC's publication of the news that Boko Haram was forcing the kidnapped girls to fight for the terrorist group. This news strongly motivated

users to respond, boosting the number of both tweets and re-tweets linked to the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag. On the same lines, there were research articles analysing how the media covered stories on the terrorists' use of women in their war on the infidel (La and Pickett, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this analysis, we have used secondary data on a set of tweets sparked by the #BringBackOurGirls cyber-campaign and its worldwide repercussions. The results reveal that the campaign grew from a local one to a global one, having an international impact. Nigerian citizens were the ones who took the greatest part in the campaign and of these, most of them belonged to the same ethnic group and/or the same religion as the kidnapped girls. We also noted

Figure 8 General activity spanning the period between the hashtag's creation on the 19th of May 2014 and the 16th of May 2019

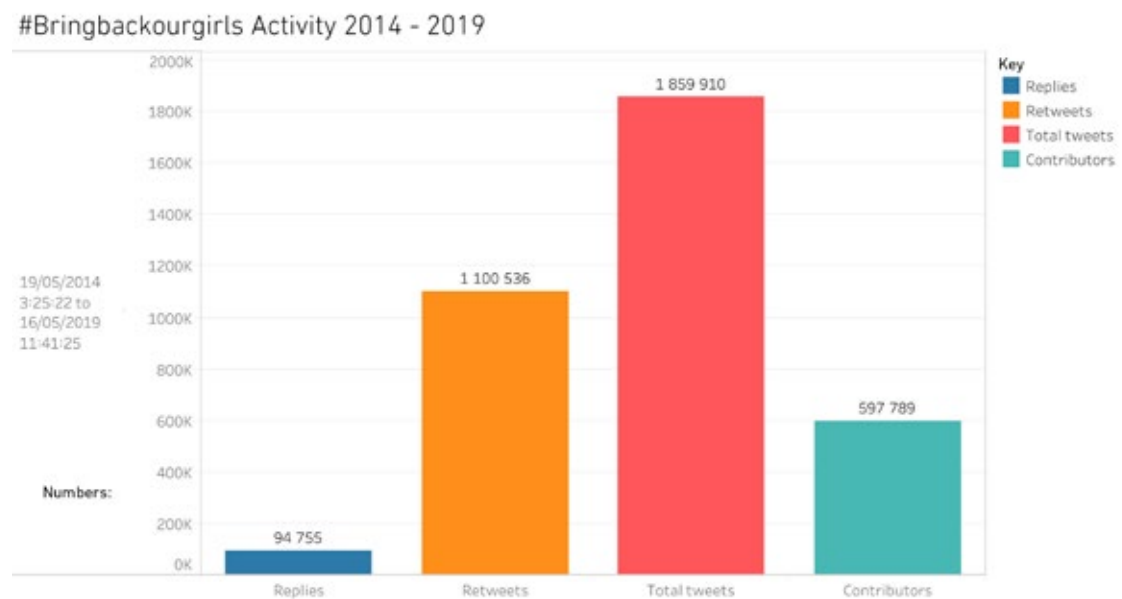
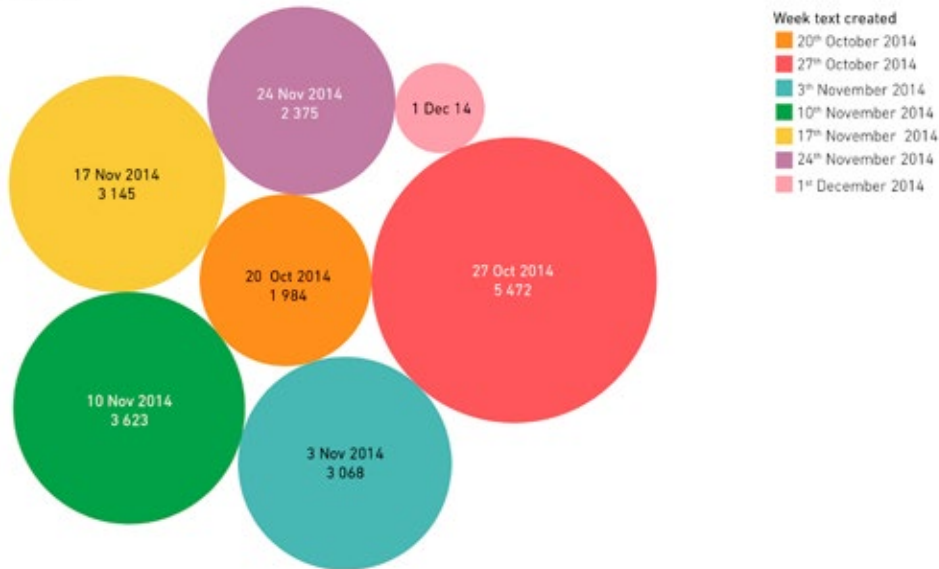


Figure 9 General re-tweeting during the hashtag's first year (2014)

Re-tweet dates



the unreliability of the geo-location data since it was provided by users themselves rather than from GPS. These data were rendered even more unreliable by the fact that many of those posting had reasons for hiding their identity and location — something that was especially true of those whose tweets supported the kidnapers. With regard to the statistical data, the fact that the volume of tweets held up throughout the

period showed the keen interest sparked by the Chibok kidnappings both among Nigerian users and those from the rest of the world. The cyber-campaign's impact let us measure its path and all of the key moments at which the number of re-tweets peaked between May 2014 and May 2019 (see Figure 8). We also zoomed in on participation after these key points to capture the cyber-campaign's details.

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Online Activism Against Gender-Based Violence: How African Feminism is Using Twitter for Progress

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ABSTRACT

The chief goal of African feminism has been to better African women's dire conditions in a mainly patriarchal society. Over the last five years however, the tide appears to be turning as feminists across the continent make greater use of online platforms to work change. This paper discusses the ways in which African women are using Twitter to protest against the abusive conditions women face including early and forced marriages, domestic abuse, abduction, sexual assault, slavery and other forms of gender-based violence. Through the lens of three hashtag campaigns (#BringBackOurGirls, #JusticeforNoura and #JusticeForOchanya), the paper examines the impact of twittering on African gender activism. Through Critical Discussion Analysis of selected tweets three key narratives emerged, constructed by the online activists who took part in the campaigns: *Solidarity in Feminist Sisterhood*; *Gender Equality*; and *A Call for Justice*. The tweets are analysed under these themes showing that the meanings constructed by the activists helped advance the African feminist cause. The paper concludes with the lessons to be drawn from the campaigns, which show social media's scope for advancing the goals of African feminism.

Keywords: #BringBackOurGirls, #JusticeforNoura, #JusticeForOchanya, African Feminism, activism.

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INTRODUCTION

Feminist movements around the world face challenges stemming from the political, social, economic, geographical and cultural contexts in which women live. African feminism, an exponent of feminist theory focusing on women's experience in the continent

(Ihle, 2009), It deals with uniquely difficult, existential problems. These include poor access to education, female genital mutilation, early marriages, domestic abuse and risk of death from conflict (Mutume, 2005). The agenda of African feminists, regardless of ethnicity or nationality, is a focus on Africa and the

peculiar situation of women who live on or are from the continent (Toure, et al., 2003). Over the last decade, a key issue highlighted by African women is gender-based violence. Spontaneous online campaigns have served to highlight this issue. This paper presents a case study of three such campaigns and argues that online activism, through the themes and narratives it brings to the fore, shows potential for boosting progress in African feminists' quest to eradicate gender-based violence. It probes the social construction of meanings around the three campaigns and their implications for future campaigns.

Feminist activists in general have long fought for women's political, voting and legal rights; reproductive and parental care; contracts and ownership of property; protection from domestic violence, rape and sexual harassment or abuse; workplace rights including equal pay and maternity leave; and against other forms of the social and cultural discrimination women encounter (Drucker, 2018). Within Africa, feminism is not only philosophical and academic, it is also experiential and practical (Ahikire, 2014). In essence, African feminism tends to stress the daily experiences of African woman, particularly within the context of a hyper-patriarchal, conflict-prone setting. Ahikire (2014) suggests that African feminism therefore aims to provide the political strategy and intellectual backbone for the continent's women's movements.

After many African countries gained independence in the 1960s and 1970s, the feminist movement on the continent emerged as a subset of anti-colonial struggles in which nationalism was prioritised over feminism (Ahikire, 2014). From the late 80s through the 90s, the African feminist movement shifted the focus to fighting poverty, malnutrition and maternal and infant mortality (Maerten 2004). This period coincided with growing levels of theorisation and knowledge production on the continent (Mama, 2005) with growing output from indigenous Women's Studies faculties. African feminism has a track record of mobilising African women to address the special needs, conditions and aspirations of continental African women (Nkealah, 2016 and Baderoon and Decker, 2018).

This mobilisation has had its limitations, including waning enthusiasm for feminist ideals even within women's movements (Ahikire, 2014).

With the dawn of the 21st century, new opportunities emerged for the African feminist movement to re-energise and draw up new strategies. In November 2006, over 100 African feminist thought leaders met in Accra, Ghana to draft a "Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists" (African Feminist Forum, 2006). The charter defines African feminists as women who either live in, work in or are from Africa who "fight for women's rights (...) and (...) focus on the lives of African women on the continent" (Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists, 2006, p.3). It sets out feminists' principles for African women, outlines institutional ethics for women's movement organisations on the continent and elevates feminist leadership. The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), coupled with rising literacy rates among African women in the 21st century, has provided great opportunities, tools and platforms that can be leveraged to advance the ideals of the African feminist charter.

Social media platforms have given women a new-found voice to address the conditions in which they live. With the use of hashtags, important issues are brought to the attention of masses of internet users throughout the world. In its simplicity, hashtag activism has emerged as one of the feminist movements' most potent forms of protests. It involves the use of the hashtag symbol (#) followed by a word or phrase that identifies a key concept or topic of interest. Dixon (2014) asserts that through the algorithms of social media platforms, hashtags facilitate a search for related issues thereby amplifying discourse among online users.

The next section of this paper introduces the three hashtag campaigns on Twitter, #JusticeForNoura, #JusticeForOchanya and #BringBackOurGirls that form the basis of the study. After introducing the three hashtag campaigns and the victims that inspired them, the paper analyses the common themes and narratives which emerged therefrom. Using Critical

Discourse Analysis (CDA), selected tweets from the campaigns are discussed along the lines of three common themes: (i) Solidarity in Sisterhood; (ii) Human Rights Mean Gender Equality; and (iii) Advocacy for Justice. The paper also highlights major outcomes of the movements, including the impact they had on the victims, the government and the society. The concluding part identifies ways in which these three movements can influence future campaigns and the overall women's movement in Africa.

Noura Hussein

In May 2018, a young Sudanese woman named Noura Hussein Hammad, 19, was sentenced to death by hanging for the fatal stabbing of her 35-year old husband, Abdel Rahman Mohamed Hammad. While the government accused Noura of cold-blooded murder, she argued that her actions were in self-defence following an intense physical confrontation when Abdel was attempting to rape her for a second time. Her family had forced her into marriage at the age of 15, dashing Noura's hopes of completing her education to become a teacher. Noura escaped and took refuge at her aunt's where she remained for three years. Her father, having signed the marriage contract with Abdel, later tricked Noura into coming back home, after which she was handed over to Abdel against her wish (Mackintosh and Elgabir, 2018).

For her refusal to consummate the forced marriage, Abdel violently raped Noura in the presence of and with the help of his three male relatives, who held her down. The next day, Abdel attempted to rape Noura again, which led to the struggle in which he sustained fatal knife wounds (Amnesty International UK, 2018). Noura went back to her family immediately after and told them what had happened. She was handed over to the police and disowned by her family. Evidence presented at her trial, including medical forensics, corroborated Noura's claims of a fight between her and the deceased. However, the presiding judge found her guilty of murder by applying an archaic law that does not recognise marital rape. She was therefore convicted of pre-meditated murder and sentenced to death (Mackintosh and Elgabir, 2018 and Amnesty International UK, 2018).

Image 1



#JusticeForNoura

By the time Noura's sentence was delivered on the 30th April 2018, she had been imprisoned for about a year. Stories about her conviction began to spread among Sudanese on the encrypted messaging application, WhatsApp. On the 1st May 2018 Sarah Elhassan, a Sudanese American freelance writer, shared the story on social media platform Instagram (CNN, 2018). Her post inspired the #JusticeForNoura hashtag, which went viral on Twitter within days of its first use.

Noura Hussein's conviction exposed the extreme gender inequality in Sudan's legal system, where early marriage, forced marriage and marital rape are socially and legally permissible (Amnesty International UK, 2018). When the story was first shared on Twitter, it quickly gained attention, sparking a global outcry and demands to spare Noura's life. Internet platforms went viral with the #JusticeForNoura hashtag becoming the central rallying point others used by campaigners include #JusticeForIsraa and #NouraHussein.

Elizabeth Ochanya Ogbanje

Elizabeth Ochanya Ogbanje, 13, died in October 2018 from Vesico-Vaginal Fistula (VVF) and other health complications resulting from over five years of serial rape (starting when she was only eight) by her uncle, Andrew Ogbuja, and his son, Victor Ogbuja (Adaoyichie, October, 12 2018 and Ameh, October, 23 2018). Ochanya was a brilliant young girl who had a passion for school from a tender age. Due to

inadequate educational facilities in their community, Ochanya's parents sent her to live with her uncle in Markudi, a city in Central Nigeria (Adaoyichie, 2018). The sexual abuse began with Victor, the son, who had threatened Ochanya not to tell anyone what was happening. When he was caught by his sister, who reported the case to their father, Victor was merely scolded. Soon afterwards, the father himself began to abuse the little girl (Adaoyichie, 2018).

Ochanya's health began to deteriorate in January 2018 and she was admitted to hospital where she told journalists of her ordeal "When I was eight years old, the son [Victor] started sleeping with me and when his sister caught him, she reported him to their father and the father scolded him. From then on, the father also started sleeping with me.... I told my mother; that is why we brought this case here. I want my health back" ("Rape case: Justice," 2018, para. 6). Unfortunately, she died a few months after.

Image 2



#JusticeForOchanya

News of Ochanya's death enraged the Nigerian populace, leading to an uproar on social media. In line with the concurrent #JusticeForNoura campaign, Nigerians coined #JusticeForOchanya to demand the immediate arrest and prosecution of her rapists. Ochanya's tragic story was publicly shared on Facebook by a user

familiar with the background to the story. Thereafter the story began to appear on Nigerian blogs in October 2018, blog posts that were later shared on Twitter were accompanied by the hashtag.

Chibok Girls

On the night of the 14th April 2014, 276 teenage Secondary School girls between the ages of 14 and 17 were kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists from their dormitory in Chibok, a small town in North-Eastern Nigeria (Omeni, 2017; Fox News, 2014). The girls were reported to have spent the day studying in preparation for their final exams. Boko Haram, the radical Islamist organisation, claimed responsibility shortly after (Omeni, 2017 and Smith, 2015). A video released by the militant group called the abducted girls the sect's 'slaves' (Smith, 2015: 186) and also taunted the Nigerian government, human rights organisations and the international community (Hill: 2014, Smith 2015 and Sahara TV, 2014). With their main operational base in North-Eastern Nigeria, Boko Haram has also been active in Chad, Niger and Cameroon (Bureau of Counter-Terrorism, 2014).

Boko Haram strongly opposes Western education and democracy, using jihad to establish an Islamic caliphate in Nigeria and neighbouring countries (Azumah, 2015). The mass abduction of the Chibok school girls was intended to show the sect's opposition to Western education, especially for girls and women (Chiluwa, 2015).

Image 3



#BringBackOurGirls

Nigerians were shocked by the government's indifference and inaction in the days following the abduction of the 276 schoolgirls from Chibok (Pendergrass, 2015). This happened against the background of a steady rise in Boko Haram's terrorist attacks. In previous attacks, Boko Haram had gone on a rampage, sacking villages, killing people and destroying properties. The Chibok abductions were the terrorist group's most daring act yet. Outraged by the Nigerian Government's sluggish response, Obi Ezekwesili, a former Minister of Education, called a press conference to demand action. In her speech, she called on the government to "Bring back our girls" (Maxfield, 2015). This inspired a tweet from a Nigerian lawyer with the viral hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. Other hashtags bearing on this campaign include #RealMenDon'tBuyGirls, #BringBackOurDaughters, #ChildNotBride and #BokoHaram.

METHODOLOGY

Hashtags are a feature of virtually all of the major social media platforms. A hashtag campaign can originate from any of the platforms, depending on the promoter's preference, before finding its way on to other sites. The three hashtags analysed in this study were prominent on three major platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The paper focuses on how each of the campaigns was conducted on Twitter because this was the social media platform on which the three hashtags gained most momentum.

For the analysis, online hashtag tracking tools (mainly from www.socialert.net) were used to aggregate thousands of tweets for each hashtag, depending on how many views and impressions they generated over a given timeframe and the thematic areas they covered, including: feminism; womanhood; human rights; gender equality; gender-based violence. Using search functions on the Twitter desktop version, a few dozens of these tweets from each hashtag were randomly selected for analysis. The keywords that were searched for were chosen to ensure the sample was representative of general views in the selected

tweet population. Although randomly selected, the analysed tweets were also deliberately selected from a pool that covered the dominant narratives of the campaign. Selected tweets for each campaign were coded as follows: TWTJN represents Twitter posts related to #JusticeForNoura; TWTJO stands for Twitter posts on #JusticeForOchanya and TWTBBOG are for Twitter posts from #BringBackOurGirls. Thirty-four analysed tweets are serially numbered in the order in which they appear in the paper, stripped of their author: TWTJN 1-14; TWTJO 1-10 and TWTBBOG 1-10. One should note that other languages were also used for the three campaigns such as Arabic, Spanish, German and Nigerian Pidgin English. However, only Twitter posts in English were analysed because most of the participants in the campaign tweeted in English.

For each hashtag, a timeline was set using the aforementioned online tools as shown in the table 1.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a method provided the theoretical framework for analysing the selected tweets, which are presented exactly as the users published them without any corrections. An interdisciplinary approach to discourse analysis may include examining collective interactions, texts and/or social practices at the local, institutional, cultural, political, and societal levels (Hansen and Machin, 2013). CDA considers language as a form of societal practice that enables the investigation of how societal power relations are established. It highlights the rhetoric and issues of structural inequalities, exploitation, discrimination and power asymmetries in societal strata by providing insights into the way discourse resists socio-political inequality (Wodak and Michael, 2001).

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE CAMPAIGNS

From the onset, the three campaigns share a commonality of victims, girls and women, living in Africa. Their stories reflect the prevailing experiences of millions of their peers across the continent. What Stolz and Faure (1997) term "the secret suffering of African women" is in a sense no longer secret. Stories of sexual

Table 1 Data presentation

	#JusticeForNoura	#JusticeForOchanya	#BringBackOurGirls
Timeline	21 st May 2018 – 12 th May 2019	29 th October 2018 – 13 th May 2019	31 st May 2014 – 15 th May 2019
Selected Posts during period	5,766	2,971	33,664
Selected Users during period	4,341	1,996	17,749
Reach*	31,479,693	17,587,494	177,622,591
Impressions**	43,067,940	36,537,351	525,663,669
Selected Posts Analysed	14	10	10

*Reach is the total number of people who viewed these hashtags within the stated date spans.

**Impressions represent the total number of times the hashtags were tweeted and re-tweeted.

Source: www.socialert.net

violence and other forms of domestic abuse are covered practically daily in African mainstream media, blogs and social media platforms. When the stories of the Chibok girls, Noura and Ochanya emerged, they were essentially to an audience already aware of such horrifying abuse. They naturally formed the seed activists for each campaign. One can assume that before the widespread use of social media, these present-day online activists might have felt powerless to do anything about the terrible stories they heard in the media. Yet with a smartphone in their hands, they became voices — albeit small ones — that swelled the chorus in the “Twitterverse” (Ingerson K. and Bruce K., 2013). Just as every drop of water helps make an

ocean, so each activist’s voice helps build meanings and discourse in a hashtag campaign.

Linguistic and Rhetorical Characteristics of the Tweets

On Twitter, the masses in their millions have taken over the power to construct meanings, set narratives and direct the news cycle, away from the central nodes that hitherto controlled the traditional media (Poster, 2009). Other scholars have questioned this potency of online social media platforms ((Jenkins 2006; Mason 2008; Shirky2009), arguing that social media platforms have sustained and even strengthened pre-existing narrative-imposing power structures. Nevertheless, Twitter activists do feel empowered

to air their opinion. Previously confined to just 140 characters, Twitter users now have double that to succinctly post their views. These opinions are not subject to any editorial strictures or the whims of any grammar police.

The thousands of tweets for the three hashtags are mainly 280 characters long or less, this figure being the maximum allowed. Except for tweets taken from institutional posters, most of the tweets share a common contextual background and are typically expressed in colloquial language, with attendant grammatical and punctuation errors. Remarkably, the nouns and pronouns used by the overwhelming majority of the posters almost wholly refer to the victims. Sometimes referred to by their first names (Noura or Ochanya), or collectively (Chibok girls), whenever “she” or “they” were used by posters, the name(s) of the victim(s) is inherent. Posters were generally self-effacing and whenever they used first person pronouns it was always to highlight their own solidarity or identification with the victim’s plight.

Although activists expressed strong disapproval of the evil done to the victims, adjectives expressing ‘shock’ were sparingly used in all of the three campaigns. This underscores the activists’ familiarity with such experiences. Yet the strong disapproval expressed also showed that the activists’ familiarity with these acts of violence had not numbed them to the harm caused by the evil deeds.

Posters of the three hashtags mostly employed an expressive style seemingly lacking in rhetorical value. In most posters, the main goal does not seem to be to persuade others to join the campaign. Rather, they were simple personal views of the ‘facts’. They typically paraphrase their own understanding of the situation followed by ways in which they think it important to show urgency or call for action. Although the posters seem to deliberately avoid persuading readers, they nevertheless appeal to emotions by using personalised terms to show the victim’s plight. Using selected tweets, the next part of this paper will delve deeper into the narratives and meanings constructed by the posters

through three themes: solidarity; gender equality; the quest for justice.

Solidarity in Feminist Sisterhood

Sisterhood is a bond between women who share a common goal to uplift, emancipate and empower other women by uniting to foster social change. As in the solidarity stressed by labour movements, feminist solidarity is critical in the fight for gender equality and social development. It is also important within local politics in merging women’s movements and activists on the one hand, and international feminist advancement on the other. Sisterhood was emphasised in the early era of ‘Second Wave Feminism’ (Morgan, 1970) but became increasingly criticised in ‘Third Wave Feminism’. Through their experience as Chicana women, Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981) have questioned the ideas of solidarity within the feminist movement, considering white feminists as essentially part of a racial hierarchy that dominated women of colour. Other scholars have challenged the vertical relationships that exist among women and questioned the possibility of sisterhood within such societal structures (Goldenberg, 2007; Frye 1996).

In what some scholars have termed “Fourth Wave Feminism” (Munro, 2013), enabled by the internet and social media, it is may be worth revisiting the ideals of strengthening the solidarity bonds among women. Concepts of solidarity and sisterhood are particularly relevant for African women who live their lives in a male supremacist culture where they are expected to wholly depend on men. Through social media, they can challenge this culture and protest for social change. They can be joined in this endeavour by ‘sisters’ from around the world as the sisterhood bond goes beyond geographies. Data captured by socialert.net show that the three campaigns were actively engaging women from countries throughout Africa, Europe, North America, and Australasia.

The most common theme across the three campaigns was the identification of the respective victims as ‘sister(s)’ by people who have never met them. In the #JusticeForNoura campaign, feminist activists

called for clemency and stood in solidarity with the victim, whom they addressed as their ‘sister in humanity’ irrespective of their geographical or historical backgrounds:

TWTJN 1: “Noura is being sentenced to death for stabbing and killing a man whom her family forced her to marry and wanted to rape her for the second time. I stand with my sister”

The *TWTJN1* poster rejects the idea that Mohamed Hammad was Noura’s husband. Although the official story portrays her as a cold-blooded murderer who took her ‘husband’s’ life, this poster rejects that narrative, choosing instead to address Hammad as “a man” who was attempting to rape her a second time. When the poster uses the first-person pronoun “my”, it is to underscore the feminist solidarity that she feels with Noura. The use of first-person pronouns (in singular and plural forms) can convey solidarity within a tweet in a powerful way. Searching each of the hashtags along with the word ‘sister’ yields tens of thousands of results containing many variations, including “my sister” (as in *TWTJN 2*, *TWTJN 3*, *TWTJO 4* and *TWTBBOG 2*); “my or our sister” (as in *TWTJN 3*, *TWTJN5*, *TWTJO 1*, *TWTJO 2*, *TWTJO 3*, *TWTJO 4*, *TWTJO 5*, *TWTBBOG 1*, *TWTBBOG 3*, *TWTBBOG 5*); and “sisterhood” (as in *TWTBBOG 3*, *TWTBBOG 4* and *TWTBBOG 7*).

TWTJN 2: “#JusticeForNoura DC Rally will be held this Saturday!!! Noura, a young girl in Sudan is a victim of rape and is being sentenced to death after killing her attacker! A sister rally will be held in Sydney, Australia (confirmed) and a London one is in the works and TBA!!”

Although Noura was an adult at the time (aged 19), most activists on the campaign consciously chose to refer to her as a “young girl”, a key rhetorical tactic to make the reader think of a middle-aged man raping a minor (See *TWTJN 2* and *TWTJN 3*). This was employed by hundreds of posters who called Noura a “Sudanese girl” or “young girl”. Surprisingly, activists who took part in the #JusticeForOchanya campaign did not rely heavily on this tactic even though Ochanya was actually a minor, her abuse beginning when she was just eight. Only a few posters (as in *TWTJO 5* and *TWTJO 7*) stressed that

Ochanya was a minor. The #BringBackOurGirls campaign already highlights “girls” within the hashtag, confronting the reader with troubling imagery of hundreds of schoolgirls being dragged from their dormitory into terrorist encampments.

TWTJN 3: “Noura is a Sudanese girl that's been sentenced to death for murdering a man who tried to rape her for the second time out of self-defense. I'm a woman and I support my fellow African sister #JusticeForNoura”.

For many African feminist activists taking part in these campaigns, it was important to underscore the common African heritage they share with the victims. *TWTJN3* poster identifies with Noura as “my fellow African sister”. Targeted searches across the three hashtags yielded thousands of such identifiers (also represented by *TWTJN 5*). The African feminist activists who expressed this regional solidarity saw themselves as part of a women’s movement, in solidarity with other women, fighting and challenging existing power structures.

TWTJN 4: “In Zaynub's words, Noura Hussein is our "sister in humanity." We can't let her die for defending herself against the man who raped her. #JusticeForNouraActive petitions: <https://change.org/p/justice-for-noura-maritalrape-deathsentence-sudan>”.

TWTJN 5: “My African sister, you are a symbol of many women... #JusticeForNoura”

Posters of *TWTJN 4* and *TWTJN 5* consider the subject of their campaign not just as a victim but also as an object of their shared humanity and a symbol, a representative sample of the huge daily challenges facing millions of fellow African women. Participants empathise with the victim’s plight and instantly forge a link with her. All three campaigns can be seen as part of the bond of online African feminism.

TWTJO 1: “#JusticeForOchanya We Demand Justice for Our Sister OCHANYA. As a matter of fact, both the Man, Son and his wife and anybody involved should be brought to book.

This also tells us that we must all be vigilant to the activities in neighbors houses. #observe”

The activist author of *TWTJO 1* is making a call to action for justice on behalf of “our sister” Ochanya, whose name is capitalised. The poster sees society bearing a responsibility to look out for and report other cases of abuse that may be occurring within the neighbourhood, including a secondary hashtag “#observe”. In essence, we as society owe it to Ochanya because she is “Our Sister”.

TWTJO 2: “Ochanya is our own Sister! We won't stop until our voice is heard #JusticeForOchanya”

TWTJO 3: “She had dreams, aspirations and a bright future. But it was truncated. She's Our sister. #JusticeForOchanya”;

TWTJO 4: “Ochanya is my sister, your sister, my neighbor, your neighbor. She deserves justice #JusticeForOchanya”

Posters of *TWTJO 2*, *TWTJO 3* and *TWTJO 4* continue the narrative from *TWTJO 1*. Because Ochanya is “Our Sister” it behoves us to ensure our voices represent her, and many like her. She is presented as any of us, a sister with “dreams, aspirations and a bright future” who unfortunately would not live to fulfil them. Much the same sentiment is expressed in *TWTJO 5* below.

TWTJO 5: “Please let's join hands together and get #JusticeForOchanya. Say no to rape. Say no to child molestation. That father and son should dwell in jail all their lives or die by hanging, no human being should go through what Ochanya went through. She was once a daughter, a sister”.

The sisterhood solidarity that laced the #BringBackOurGirls campaign was so effective that it influenced many subsequent feminist hashtag campaigns, as can be seen in the analyses of #JusticeForNoura and #JusticeForOchanya. The Feminist discourse on the missing schoolgirls is marked by references to emotional attachment to the 276 girls who are addressed as sisters.

TWTBBOG 1: “Let that sink in almost a year later our sisters never got home THE WORLD JUST FORGOT #BringBackOurGirls”;

TWTBBOG 1 expresses disappointment that the world may have forgotten about the Chibok girls a year after their abduction. It has been over six years now since the abductions, many twitter activists still raise this concern on each anniversary of the girls' abductions (April 14th). Some celebrate the rescue or escape of some of their “sisters” but still add their voices to the need to rescue all of the others. As *TWTBBOG 2* states, 70 of the girls have been reunited with their families, “faith” needs to be put into action “NOW” for the release of the others.

TWTBBOG 2: “Standing with my sister in solidarity...raising our voices. FAITH IN ACTION! #70 of the 219 #BringBackOurGirls NOW!”

In *TWTBBOG 3*, *TWTBBOG 4*, *TWTBBOG 5*, *TWTBBOG 6* and *TWTBBOG 7*, the sisterhood that binds the activists with the victims and other women “worldwide” is worth highlighting. *TWTBBOG 5* offers prayers for the safe return of “our sisters” while *TWTBBOG 6* poster tweeted female members of the US Congress holding placards of the #BringBackOurGirls to show their own solidarity with the “worldwide” movement. In the poster, showing female members of parliament of a powerful country supporting the movement symbolises the strength needed to take on the power structures that allowed the Chibok abductions to happen in the first place.

TWTBBOG 3: “Our Sisterhood is worldwide. #BringBackOurGirls #bambiepower”

TWTBBOG 4: “#BringBackOurGirls This is about sisterhood”

TWTBBOG 5: “#Sisterhood #BringBackOurGirls Praying that our sisters will all come back safe and sound”

TWTBBOG 6: “The women of the Senate fighting to #BringBackOurGirls: “Congressional sisterhood a powerful voice for the voiceless” <http://cnn.it/1gnQ9Q6>”.

TWTBBOG 7: “I speak from the heart of sisterhood. From the sensitivity of being a woman and the transperance of empathy. #BringBackOurGirls”.

These power structures perpetuate atrocities on “womanhood” by denying them “protection”, and may cause lack of socio-economic progress, according to *TWTBBOG 8*.

TWTBBOG 8: “Listen to me a country that does not offer protection for womanhood will never rise. #BringBackOurGirls”

With deliberate narratives stressing common bonds, women used the online media to herald a new dawn of African feminism, with social media platforms helping them to forge worldwide links. At root, African feminists are sisters who may live in different countries or continents but are linked by the online community to celebrate their womanhood and air their views against the most common forms of abuse, injustice and inequity. The act of solidarity and sisterhood was not just expressed on the social media platforms, as we can see with the poster of *TWTJN 6* taking steps offline to provide support to one of the victims:

TWTJN 6: “I set up an email account to send letters of support to Noura to keep her morale up. Letters will be printed and delivered to her. Email your letter of support to JusticeForNoura@gmail.com. Letters should be in Arabic, but if you can't, send in English anyway. #JusticeForNoura”.

Hundreds of users responded to *TWTJN 6*, with willing activists volunteering to translate the letters from English to Arabic and *vice versa* and to help in the compilation process to ensure that Noura felt her life was valued by her sisters around the world. Other activists showed support by sending in their pictures holding a #JusticeForNoura placard or by signing the change.org petition urging Sudanese authorities to free Noura.

Sometimes the stigma of victimhood discourages abused women from sharing their experiences in public (Kennedy and Prock, 2016; Berkey L. et al, 2000). These three campaigns find ways to reverse the narrative, referring to the victims as “sisters” and “heroes” who should be celebrated for being strong women. Noura for example is praised by many

activists on Twitter for fighting her many foes. She stood up to the system (“her oppressor”) according to *TWTJN 7*, who expresses “hope” that she prevails.

TWTJN 7: “#JusticeForNoura Noura Hussein is a feminist hero for standing up to her oppressor. I hope she wins her appeal”

The poster of *TWTJN 7* does not define what a “feminist hero” is but directly links it to “standing up to” an oppressor. This implies that women who daily battle against the social power structures ranged against them are heroines who should be lauded for their efforts.

Human Rights Mean Gender Equality

The aspirations of feminism are aligned with basic principles of human rights (Parisi, 2010). Women movements push for freedom, protection from gender-based violence, end to discrimination, right to education and healthcare, rights to vote, participate in political leadership, to own property, to earn equal pay, etc. The victims that inspired the three hashtags are women or girls who have endured tragic violations of their basic human rights. Noura was denied access to education and forced to marry a man when she was still a minor. She was violently raped. Ochanya made the sacrifice of living away from her parents just to gain an education that should have been her right. The men she was entrusted to serially raped her for over five years, starting when she was only eight. In the end, she lost her right to life. The 276 Chibok girls were seized at school and dragged off to captivity in terrorist camps. They symbolised the strength needed to denounce forced marriage, rape, religious conversion at gun-point, and psychological torture.

African feminism understands that women liberation on the continent cannot be achieved without radical changes to the way women’s rights are addressed (African Feminist Charter, 2006). This realisation becomes more obvious when considering the huge interest sparked by the three hashtag campaigns and the violations of human rights that they covered.

Adolescent sexual abuse in Nigeria is a criminal offence under Chapter 21 of the nation’s Criminal Code in which the accepted age of consent is 18 (Nigerian Criminal

Code Act, 1990). However, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2014) one in four girls will experience some form of sexual abuse before she turns 18. The UNICEF report further states that six out of ten children in Nigeria experience one or more forms of abuse (physical, emotional or sexual) before reaching the age of consent. While expressing outrage at the abuse young Ochanya suffered, online activists vehemently stated that every young girl has 'a right to her body' and needs to be protected from being raped.

For the TWTJO 6 poster, the discourse on Ochanya extends beyond her as a single victim. By calling for a "fight" for other the "Ochanya's out there" (sic), the poster recognises that there are other girls, and women whose rights to their "body", "thoughts" and "dreams" are being violated. While Ochanya will not live to fulfil hers, activists must fight to protect these basic rights of women. TWTJO 7 similarly underscores the point that many other girls are — like Ochanya — being raped and abused, while expressing the hope that such victims will be encouraged to speak out.

TWTJO 6: "she has a right to her body Right to her thoughts Right to her dreams she couldn't live to fulfil... Fight for Ochanya's out there, it could be your daughter, sister, friend. Fight against "RAPE""

TWTJO 7: "Many people are currently going through what Ochanya went through for 5 years of her life. The first step that must be taken in reducing sexual assaults on children is to support victims to have the courage to openly speak about their experiences. #JusticeForOchanya".

According to the narrative being set by these activists, the rape culture is widespread and must be confronted. In the case of Noura, even within marriage, rape occurs and it is unacceptable. TWTJN 8 and TWTJN 9 echo this narrative to state that no form of rape should ever be acceptable, even when committed under the guise of "marriage". When a supposed "husband" forcefully has intercourse with his "wife" it is still sexual violence which violates the woman's rights. These simple narratives are imbued with a

strong rhetorical discourse that clarifies what the victim's rights are and how they must be protected.

TWTJN 8: "She's a human, she's a woman and she stands for resistance. Rape is not okay, whether the partners are married or not. It is wrong!"

TWTJN 9: "Noura Hussein was a victim of severe sexual violence. Her rights must be respected and she deserves care, support and protection... #JusticeForNoura"

According to the TWTJN 10 poster, the narratives set by "movement" participants who showed "solidarity" with the victim helped in freeing Noura. Expressed with political finesse, the author appreciated those who "stood up" for justice and "made human rights matter".

TWTJN 10: "Movements matter. Solidarity matters. Collective organizing works. Feminist organizing makes the world a better place. Thank you to all the women who stood up for #JusticeForNoura and made human rights matter"

The 276 Chibok girls had their rights collectively and individually violated and with many of them still in captivity, these violations continue. TWTBBOG 9 refers to the "womanhood" of abducted girls who remain in captivity, a subtle reference to the length of time for which they have been away. Although they were taken as "girls", many of them are now "women" and their dignity is bruised by endless sexual abuse.

TWTBBOG 9: "The 234 girls who are still being held hostage are silently mourning their abused pride and womanhood. We must #BringBackOurGirls"

By tying the abuse and violations of victims to human rights, campaigners succeed in drawing and sustaining the level of outrage needed to effect change. This creates a coalition that goes beyond gender. Men became important participants in the advocacy for the Chibok girls, introducing their own mini-hashtags such as #RealMenDon'tBuyGirls. Since women's rights are human rights (Clinton, 1995), men will find a stake joining feminists to defend these rights.

Advocacy for Justice

Two of the three hashtags prominently use the word “Justice”, a virtue commonly accepted by society. The feminist activists recognise that justice is not necessarily what comes out of the existing judicial system. The distinction is highlighted in many tweets, particularly in the #JusticeForNoura campaign in which archaic local laws still prevail in the Sudanese legal system. Because the legal system does not contemplate the possibility of rape within marriage, Noura’s defence was dismissed out of hand by the judge. Instead of being seen as a rape victim who was trying to defend herself against a second rape attempt, Noura was treated as a cold-blooded murderer. The movement insists that true justice must be done. For the *TWTJN 11* poster, Noura’s case should not be seen through the eyes of Sudanese jurisprudence. Where the legal system permits forced early marriages with the “consent” of a girl’s parents, the poster considers the marriage “illegal”. Therefore, Noura is not the perpetrator of the violence but its victim. She was not only the victim of this illegal marriage; she was also a victim of an “injustice” system. The abuse she endured left physical and mental scars.

TWTJN 11: “#JusticeForNoura A victim of rape, a victim of illegal child marriage, a victim of physical and mental abuse, and when she defended herself, she became victim of injustice”

TWTJN 12 captures the frantic attempt of an activist to keep the momentum of the movement going, urging readers to join the effort and show their “solidarity”. The poster equally rejects the legal recognition accorded Noura’s “husband”, referring to him polemically as Noura’s “rapist”.

TWTJN 12: “People all around the world are calling for #JusticeForNoura. There are only two days left to appeal her sentence of execution for stabbing her rapist. Keep sending your solidarity pics in, and sign here: <http://change.org/JusticeForNoura> #JusticeForNoura #Justice4Noura”

TWTJN 13: “As the subject of rape and sexual abuse, Noura should be treated as a victim and not a criminal and be given justice as she has

survived child marriage, forced marriage and marital rape #JusticeForNoura”

TWTJN 13 joins others to underscore this point. The accused, Noura, should not be treated as an aggressor or criminal, rather she is the victim of a system that allows forced child marriages. Noura survived the system and should be “given justice”. Justice here does not mean as determined by Sudanese law. Instead, it means justice in terms of the international human rights protecting victims.

Advocacy for justice (economic, political and cultural) will likely remain a key theme of African feminism for many years to come. As calls poured in demanding clemency and pardon for Noura, activists condemned the initial sentence of death by hanging passed on the victim—who was often described as a ‘rape survivor’ (as in *TWTJN 14*). The posters expressed optimism that the death sentence would be overturned given that women who survive rape are victims and should not be put on trial.

TWTJN 14: “I... urge the Sudanese government to pardon rape victim Noura Hussein and show the world, that women who are brutally raped, are the real victims. #JusticeForNoura”

Other activists called on people in positions of authority to help keep the movement going and maintain the narrative as the date for Noura’s appeal approached.

TWTJN 15: “We can all support by raising awareness, speaking to authorities, and continuing to keep the issue at the forefront as the team fights for her appeal #JusticeForNoura”

True justice requires that rapists must not go free. The activist movement, focused on the girl child Ochanya, strongly emphasised the need to protect victims from sexual predation by ensuring that child molesters are prosecuted (as in *TWTJO 8*).

TWTJO 8: “Pedophiles/Child molesters should be brought to book. No child should be a victim of molestation... #JusticeForOchanya”

The poster of *TWTJO 9* conveys the impact that Ochanya's story had for the tweeter. Hundreds of the tweets from the three hashtags reveal this personal identification with the victim's plight. The post highlights the absurdity of society judging the victims rather than their predators.

TWTJO 9: "This story strengthens my resolve to be part of the fight against child molestation in Nigeria. It's a huge part of our society but its hidden because we judge the victim and not the perpetrator. #JusticeForOchanya"

TWTJO 10 humanises the victim, whose freedoms have been snatched away by perpetrators who must not be allowed to continually evade justice.

TWTJO 10: "She had dreams too, just like each and every one of us. [heartbreaks] For Ochanya, and for every single victim of sexual assault, there must be justice. These vile rapists cannot continue freely with their own lives. #JusticeForOchanya"

Advocacy for justice works if women come together to speak against violence and injustice. The #BringBackOurGirls galvanised support for the war against Boko Haram as the only way to obtain justice for all the atrocities they committed. The poster of *TWTBBOG 10* argues that women are capable of exercising significant collective power when they organise. The posts issue a rallying cry to feminist activists to confront violence.

TWTBBOG 10: #Bringbackourgirls shows power women have when they organize. Stand up to violence and support feminist activism now #fearless..."

One of the commonest challenges women face – regardless of race, class or geography – is sexual abuse. For decades men, powerful and ordinary, had gotten away with sexual assault and harassment of women. As more and more women summon the courage to tell their stories, a new era has dawned in which justice is expected against perpetrators. A common hashtag that has spurred this movement is #MeToo through which women share their stories, support one another and jointly confront misogyny (Mendes et al., 2018).

OUTCOMES OF THE CAMPAIGNS

These three campaigns, like other gender activism carried out on social media platforms, have had a real impact on the victims that inspired them, as well as on local society and on government policies. The hashtag campaigns drew sufficient attention to critical issues for the mainstream media to take notice. Stories about the hashtags hit the headlines both locally and internationally, creating sufficient pressure for government action (Segun and Muscati, 2015).

#JusticeForNoura launched a female emancipation revolution in Sudan in 2018, the campaigns' pragmatic calls for action led to review of some of the archaic laws used in convicting Noura. UN Gender Equality Statistics and the Human Development Index still rank Sudan 165th out of 188 countries in terms of the treatment of women and of children as young as 10 years' old — both of whom can still be forced into marriage. However, the movement launched by #JusticeForNoura has forced Sudan to launch a modernisation of their Family Law Act with changes that include raising the age of marriage to 18, requiring consent of the woman before marriage and denunciation of cases of marital rape. Pressure from various sources ensured Noura's conviction was commuted to manslaughter, with a reduction from the maximum penalty to five-year imprisonment, in addition to a monetary fine of 337,500 Sudanese Pounds.

#JusticeForOchanya was a campaign for a victim who came to a tragic end. Its focus was to ensure the perpetrators of her abuse were brought to justice. It succeeded in ensuring the alleged rapists were arrested and arraigned in court through massively attended offline protests. The campaign also drew renewed attention to the enforcement of Nigeria's Child Rights Act which aims at improving the investigation, prosecution and handling of child harassment, child sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation, and so forth in a manner that prevents further trauma to the child.

#BringBackOurGirls was the most viral of the three campaigns. It had a far-reaching impact not only on the case of the Chibok girls but also on the state of

governance in Nigeria, the right of the girl child to safe education and the conduct of other feminist campaigns online. Government action occasioned by the campaign's protest led to the rescue and release of dozens of the girls, some of whom have received asylum in certain Western nations to complete their education.

These three hashtag campaigns were turning points for African feminism. All three occurring over the last five years, they convey lessons on how effectively the feminist cause can be advanced to benefit women throughout Africa. Overcoming deeply-ingrained cultural prejudices is hard, however the changes wrought by these hashtags show that it is far from impossible.

CONCLUSIONS

Activism and/or social movement involve the use of action to achieve political or social change. With growing internet penetration across Africa, feminist activists on the continent have been handed a new weapon in their struggle. It is one that simplifies mobilisation of the women's movement. The three hashtags analysed (#JusticeForNoura, #JusticeForOchanya and #BringBack-OurGirls) have shown the huge scope hashtag activism holds for African feminists in fostering, participating, and conducting protest. Activists have taken advantage of the new opportunities brought by social media and the internet to spread their causes by taking control of the social construction of meanings and narratives around the issues they care about. The three hashtag

campaigns led the public discussion on the issue through three key themes: (1) solidarity in feminist sisterhood; (2) elevation of gender equality; (3) a call for justice for the victims of abuse. Thanks to the relative successes of these hashtags, African feminism now has a powerful medium at its disposal to give a strong voice to those who formerly suffered in silence.

From the three hashtags analysed, feminist social media activism played two roles. First, it served as a society watchdog. The government and judicial system in affected countries were called upon to either mete out justice, show clemency or provide security for their citizens. A fair slice of the online population took part in demanding democracy and good governance by speaking the truth, confronting corruption, and standing up against injustice. Second, it raised awareness globally by beaming a light on the conditions under which women live in Africa. The widespread use of the hashtags on social media influenced worldwide mainstream media coverage of the campaigns that inspired the hashtags.

The three campaigns show that for a cause to be turned into action, topics should elicit empathy. When online users can automatically find a connection to the cause, they promote it. This ensures that even men become feminists and demand better treatment for women. The cultural/traditional setting in Africa makes the man the head of the household and community. Men need to be convinced of the need to empower women in order to foster the advancement of society as a whole.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Feminist Cyber-resistance to Digital Violence: Surviving Gamergate

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ABSTRACT

Women in cyberspace do not escape patriarchal violence and are subject to strict social control exercised through technological means. Cyber-violence especially affects women with an explicitly feminist presence in virtual spaces. Their participation in and advocacy of feminist values are considered a transgression of the patriarchal mandate, which seeks to exclude women from public spaces or, failing that, to marginalise them. That is why they are the targets of grave intimidation, harassment and threats. At the same time, digital networks have spawned a plethora of spaces for women's collective, political and social action. Thus, *online* activity has played a key role in the resurgence and revitalisation of feminist communities and debates. This paper analyses the projects launched by Zoë Quinn and Anita Sarkeesian, two of the main targets of the *Gamergate* movement. We will study: (1) *Crash Override* and *Speak Up & Stay Safe(r)*, a helpline and a resource platform for cyber-violence victims, respectively; (2) feminist cyber-resistance projects, within the framework of cyber-feminism and the current paradigm shift in the culture of protest and feminist organisation.

Keywords: cyber-feminism, cyber-violence, manosphere, Gamergate.

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INTRODUCTION

August 2019 marked the fifth anniversary of the beginning of Gamergate, a massive campaign harassing feminists under the pretext of defending journalistic ethics in the tech and video-game industries. The Gamergate movement sprang to life in 2014, sparking a fierce cultural war that has raged until the

present. On the one hand, there were video game critics and independent ('Indy') creators — most of them women — who demanded greater inclusion in the industry. On the other hand, there was a mixed bag of opponents: journalists, anti-feminist groups, YouTubers, influencers, trolls, and even conspiracy theorists. Yet in reality, Gamergate was a side-show

to the main cultural battle for an Internet space that would both make women visible and include them.

The Gamergate events were not the first sign of Internet-spawned violence against women. Similar attacks had been carried out before this major harassment campaign — as we shall see later, and had a particularly racial twist. In 2013, for example, in what came to be known as ‘Donglegate’, the consultant Adria Richards tweeted a sexist joke that she had heard at a technology conference she had attended. The tweet ‘went viral’, she was sacked and private/identifying information on her was bandied around the Internet. As a result, Richards received death threats, while ‘touched up’ photos of her were published in which her head was grafted on to the torso of a naked porn queen. Indeed, some months before Gamergate, 4chan users got together, pretending to be online feminist women, sparking a new trend of fake feminist hashtags such as #EndFathersDay and #WhitesCantBeRaped (Warzel, 2019). These hashtags can be thought of as part of a larger ‘misinformation campaign’ but they are not the only case in today’s highly-charged political and social scene. Strategies based on the kind of misrepresentation and violence seen during Gamergate also played a part in smoothing Donald Trump’s path to The White House. This was because the online mobilisation of the ‘Alt-Right’ [Alternative Right] did much to sway swing voters. Indeed, the key figures in this new American Right such as Milo Yiannopoulos, Mike Cernovich, and Steve Bannon became celebrities and consolidated their fan base at the height of Gamergate. The discussions of conspiracy theories by Trump followers seen in other Internet scandals such as Pizzagate and QAnon are hosted on the same web pages as back then. Today, these web sites continue to churn out anti-feminist attacks. For instance, 8chan, a web site that played a big role in Gamergate was closed after it featured in no fewer than three mass shootings in 2019 — El Paso (Texas, US), the Christchurch mosque (New Zealand) and the Poway synagogue (California, US). The shootings were all announced previously on the web site’s forum by the respective killers. The radicalisation of White ‘straight’ [hetero-

sexual] men to right-wing/ ‘Alt-Right’ positions on web platforms such as YouTube and Reddit (Horta Ribeiro *et al.*, 2019; Habib *et al.*, 2019) is something that feminists (as victims of digital violence) have denounced for years. Here, feminists argue that such virtual violence is often a harbinger of the real thing, fostering hatred of women, racial minorities, members of certain faiths, and the LGBTQ community in general. Feminists further argue that such violent discourse is commonly found on ‘men only’ sites (which they dub the *manosphere*). These sites form a realm of blogs, forums, web sites, sub-Reddits, and Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook accounts. The realm’s common denominator is hatred or resentment of women in general and of feminists in particular. The *manosphere* shifted from cyber-culture’s fringes to the centre between 2010 and 2014, beginning with the social network culture and ending in the Gamergate saga (Jane, 2018). Unwilling male virgins, ‘men’s rights’ activists, pick-up artists, and Crypto-Nazis (those who express their Nazi beliefs in ‘code’ yet deny that they are Nazis) all share a sub-culture, a set of aims, the same anti-feminist, racist language and ideology, and Neo-Darwinist, Neo-Liberal principles.

Given its scale, media impact, and ramifications, Gamergate is considered a paradigmatic case. That is because the cyber-attacks were made against: (1) women around the world (especially those in the video game and IT industries); (2) feminist writers and journalists covering/denouncing Gamergate (such as Jenn Frank, Mattie Brice, Brianna Wu, Jessica Valenti, Ijeoma Oluo, Ellen Pao, among many others). In particular, we study the cases of Quinn and Sarkeesian and the cyber-resistance strategies feminists came up with to survive Gamergate. To this end, we used a qualitative methodology based on ‘netnography’ [net-based ethnography] (González Gil and Servín Arroyo, 2017) since the Internet is not only a space in which culture is (re)produced but is also a cultural product stemming from social practice.

This method centres on the study of online spaces, which is to say on human relations, digital com-

munities and culture. Thus ‘netnography’ gave us practical ideas for gathering, producing, and analysing data on both the ‘manosphere’ and feminist cyber-resistance. In both cases, we apply one of the four ways of using netnography indicated by Kozinets (2015). In symbolic netnography, one makes a craftsman-like search of key webs and profiles to grasp meaning systems in the online field. As Christine Hine notes, “Internet ethnography [netnography] does not necessarily mean moving from one’s desk”. The netnographer visits web sites to gain insights into the nature of users’ experience, not to travel” (2004: 60). Putting traditional ethnographic tools to work in the digital world involves beginning with a little cultural familiarisation to facilitate the subsequent fieldwork. Browsing and reading the content in the ‘manosphere’ and cyber-feminists responses to it helped us compile a list of the most important webs for the purposes of our study. During this period, we drew up a list of cases on digital violence against feminists, from which the two cases covered by this paper were chosen. We examined the responses provoked by this violence and their outcomes. As Pink *et al.* (2016) note, the digital aspect is not the most important feature of ‘netnography’. That is because online relations are not confined to the digital sphere since they also reflect and spill over to offline settings and their socio-cultural conditioning factors and socio-cultural patterns. This means that what interests us is the interaction between people and technology and the interrelationship between online and offline spheres. Because these interactions are complex, they cannot be seen as mere dichotomies. Accordingly, the paper considers the unfolding of events both within and outside the digital sphere to reveal how cyber-violence is an issue that reaches beyond the computer screen.

CIBER-VIOLENCE: A PHENOMENON PENDING DEFINITION

Feminist literature reveals sundry notions on what constitutes cyber-violence in the digital sphere and uses a plethora of terms to describe it. These terms include: ‘cyber-violence’; ‘cyber-harassment’;

‘cyber-abuse’; ‘online abuse against women and girls’; ‘technology-aided gender violence’; ‘online hate’; ‘e-bile’; ‘gender trolling’; ‘online misogyny’, and (more exotically) ‘rapeglisch’ (Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016; Citron, 2014; Ging, 2017; Ging and Siapera, 2018; Jane, 2014, 2018). Some of these are broad umbrella terms, others are gender-neutral. In general, the terms are limited in one or more ways depending on the cases they are applied to, the nature of the victims, the aggressors, and the kind of violence employed. On the one hand, this lack of consensus reveals the novel, complex nature of the phenomenon. On the other hand, it gives a wide range of options for analysing the issue. Here, one should note that online male chauvinist violence may also have racist, homophobic, or transphobic dimensions if the women attacked are ‘racialised’, belong to the LGBTQ group, or to other marginalised minorities.

In 2007, Amnesty International conducted a study into online violence against women. It covered eight countries. No less than 23% of the women surveyed stated that they had been subject to some kind of online abuse or harassment, while almost half (46%) said that the violence was of a sexist or misogynist nature. When it comes to the perpetrators, 60% of women were the victims of unknown aggressors. The kind of violence seen in Gamergate has a set of common features, namely it: (1) takes place on the Internet; (2) makes use of anti-feminist propaganda; (3) is long-lasting; (4) it is collective and anonymous, making it possible to ‘specialise’. Digital violence makes use of sundry strategies to reach its goals. These strategies include: (a) sexist insults; (b) hate speech; (c) ‘flaming’ (starting discussions with offensive messages — usually in forums); (d) unsolicited messages of a sexual nature; (e) stalking and monitoring; (f) harassment; (g) threats; (h) identity theft; (i) libel; (j) vengeance porn; (k) sexual blackmail; (l) ‘doxing’; (m) ‘swatting’ (making hoax calls to emergency services; (n) hacking; (o) Denial of Service (DoS) / Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks; (p) ‘pharming’ —that is, redirecting a domain name to another page; (q) ‘outing’ (revealing another person’s sexual identity); (r) ‘deadnaming’ (using the birth name of a trans-

sexual individual); (s) ‘Google-bombing’ (changing the search index results in Google); (t) ‘shock trolling’ (using frightening contact to shock victims), and so forth. In addition, one should note that some of those who have suffered digital violence made use of one or more of the precautionary measures set out in this paper. Attackers often use several strategies at the same time. It is therefore impossible to say where one ends and another begins — something that makes the subject that much harder to study. Thus ‘raiding’ (a massive, co-ordinated attack) was common during Gamergate and was typical of anonymous forums such as 4chan. These attacks comprised insults, threats, touched-up photos sent by e-mail, and messages sent by text or through social networks.

The purpose of such violence is to silence, marginalise, or expel women from the public sphere (whether this be online or offline). In the case studied in this paper, the targets of the violence were women who were explicitly feminist in a sphere dominated by men — that of video games and technology. According to the 2017 Amnesty International Report, cyber-violence has a ‘chilling effect’, discouraging women from exercising their rights because they are fearful of legal sanctions, being constantly stalked, are racked by anxiety, self-censor, distrust others, feel panic, suffer from post-traumatic stress, seek high-level security, and so on. One of the Report’s findings was that women feared for their safety in the real world in 41% of cases. With regard to the effects of violence, 58% of women victims said they were afraid to use the Internet and/or social media again. Furthermore, 56% of the women surveyed said that they were less able to concentrate on daily tasks, and 55% suffered stress, anxiety, and panic attacks. Furthermore, two thirds of the women felt helpless in the face of such violence. Most women (76%) changed the way they used social networks as a result so as to boost their security and privacy, changed the content of what they published, or the expressions they used — in other words, online violence elicited a kind of self-censorship. This is where cyber-feminist resistance strategies come into play to battle against and survive digital violence.

CYBER-FEMINISM: DWELLING ONLINE

The patriarchy — says Sadie Plant (1996) — is not a construction, order, or structure but rather an economy in which women are staple goods. It is a system in which exchanges take place solely among men. Women, tokens, merchandise and money always pass from one man to another and it is assumed that women exist “solely as a medium, transaction, or transfer between a man and his fellows” (Irigaray 1985b: 193; cited in Plant, 1996: 341). This ‘speculative economy’ is underpinned by tools, basic products, and the media knowing their places and having no aspiration to usurp or subvert the governing role of those they serve. The patriarchy needs to contain and control what is meant by ‘woman’ and ‘feminine’.

Nevertheless, the digital sphere took off in the mid-1990s and the Internet grew, becoming a melting pot of old identities. Gender could be bent and blurred and space-time co-ordinates meant little. Virtual worlds are not only important because they open up existing spaces to women within a given order of things but also because they undermine a vision of the world shaped by “two thousand years of patriarchal culture” (Plant, 1996: 340). Plant stresses the creative potential of cyber-space, a place where one can transgress and challenge the patriarchal economy and threaten to dissolve subjectivity (Kennedy, 2007).

For Plant, “technology is basically feminine” (A. Guil Bozal and J. Guil Bozal, 2006: 84). She goes further and argues that co-operation between women, machines, and technology is the basis of cyber-feminism. In her words: “Cyber-feminism is an uprising by goods and materials in the patriarchal world; a dispersed, networked rebellion forged through links between women and computers, and between computers, communication systems, and networks” (1996: 349).

One cannot speak of cyber-feminism without mentioning Donna Haraway. In her work *Ciencia, cyborgs y mujeres: la reinención de la naturaleza*, the author looks at the position occupied by women’s bodies in what she terms “the computing science of domination”, a world production, reproduction, and communica-

tion system in which women are incorporated and exploited to varying degrees (1995: 279). Following in Rachel Grossman's footsteps (1980), Haraway places women in an "integrated circuit", a world restructured by social, scientific, and technological relationships that, far from manifesting technological determinism, represent a "historical system that depends on structured relationships among people" (1995: 283). Thus to a greater or lesser extent, ICT influences (but does not determine) social relationships bearing on sexuality and reproduction. For Haraway, sex, sexuality, and reproduction are the key technologies that structure our personal and social opportunities.

Feminist theory in general and cyber-feminism in particular owe their concept of cyborg to Haraway. She states that "ICT and biotechnology are key tools for building our bodies" (1995: 279). Haraway uses the imaginary of the cyborg as a metaphor, symbol, and representation to escape from facile dualisms of gender, race, and class. A cyborg is defined as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid whether machine and living thing, a creature spawned by social reality and by fiction" (1995: 253). A central utopian discourse on technology and computers gives people the chance to escape their bodies (Lupton, 1995). The notion of a cyborg is the closest there is to this ideal, and thus represents the idealised body.

The work of Remedios Zafra stands out in the Spanish cyber-feminism field and is key to grasping the Internet as a place to occupy and the scope for the *genderised* body¹ to dwell in it. She asks how one can dwell in a place that is in truth a non-place that is constantly shifting and changing in a medium that is de-hierarchicalised and on which all interaction and reality is mediated and manipulated through an interface. In her view, dwelling in the Internet goes far beyond browsing. That is because it implies knowledge and appropriation of the space, an exchange with the setting, in which the user makes the leap from playing role of "traveller-spectator"

to that of "dweller-actor" (2004: 15). Given that the place we are speaking of is a virtual one, it offers great scope for dematerialising and freeing the body to forge a new kind of subjectivity. That is to say, deconstructing the subject adds value to women and "all those 'others' that have hitherto been kept out of the official history" (2004: 15-16). Thus the Internet is a medium that lets us live — taking up a state that is always temporal and reversible — and to think about who we are. Nevertheless, Zafra warns that "The Internet is no less attractive for those who repeat and accentuate old models of social hierarchicalisation" (2004: 16).

For women, there are several reasons why dwelling in this online realm is so revolutionary. First, it is a realm in which the public and private spheres converge in the same space, screens open cracks in the house walls, the masculine dominion over the public sphere is undermined. This all forces us to dwell in versatile spaces in which public action can be taken from one's home. Second, it is because women lose this "in the virtual world, women shed that long-suffering expression that marked our fate and a predictable future" (Zafra, 2004: 17). Like Haraway's cyborg, the Internet lets us shed the sexualised body and swap it for a changeable interface, free of the ties of biology and the organs that make us up.

According to Plant (1998), bodies are continually shaped by the processes they are subjected to. Yet in the Internet, these processes have no material limitations. In Plant's scheme, the Internet is a space without bodies that holds out the promise of a sphere in which one has total freedom, a place "that is limitless in terms of the names one can use. An individual can spawn a host of avatars on the Internet, and these may assume any sexual identity or species" (1998: 52). The possibility of discarding our bodies in this sphere is just one more step towards building a post-gender world and achieving the cyborg ideal.

This is seen as a utopian position within the cyber-feminist movement given that it does not matter how virtual the subject is, there is always a body

¹ The term *gendered* encapsulates the idea that gender limits, determines, and constructs people's bodies.

linked to it wherever it may happen to be (Stone, 1992). This is especially true of the feminists whom we analyse here, no matter how much they carry out their professional activities in cyber-space; their physical, *gendered* bodies are always present. Even though they come up with new ways to shed their 'offline' bodies, one should note that the virtual community springs from the physical world and must return to it: "Even in the era of the techno-social subject, life is lived through bodies" (Stone, 1992: 452). Forgetting the body is physically harmful (especially for women from racialised minorities and others pushed to society's fringes).

Zafra (2004) also argues that cyber-space should be seen as a new way of forging communities. It is an interactive, multi-dimensional medium in which users can be spectators, producers, and spreaders of information all at the same time. Furthermore, cyber-space's cross-cutting, de-hierarchicalised nature lends itself to a liberating, creating use of the medium. This allows one to 'de-territorialise' and 're-territorialise' experience and lay claim to one's localism or globalism, as the case may be.

In addition, "Internet as a political sphere makes many think in terms of a utopian collectivism uniting Mankind within a single overarching network" (Zafra, 2004: 65). Yet the Internet also threatens to repeat or strengthen the patriarchy's socio-symbolic patterns. For women (a group historically kept out of the public sphere) the use of the Internet for feminist political purposes poses many opportunities and challenges. Cyber-feminists are the first to acknowledge that "ICT has great potential for making a personal, educational, and political impact, opening up new possibilities for women to challenge traditionally-defined roles for the fairer sex and to break down the hang-over of organisational rules rooted in the past" (2004: 74-75). Like in the feminist self-awareness groups of the 1970s, today's Internet also exhibits a confluence of public and private spheres. From the cyber-feminism standpoint, re-thinking women's role online involves coming up with new ways of shaping the subject, and new ways of building the collective. On the one hand,

subjects with or without projected or invented bodies can ditch the built identities that bind us. On the other hand, online settings for the collective — what Zafra calls "action micro-spaces" (2004: 99) — let us leap spatial boundaries and thus also overcome the confluence of different cultures and contexts. In any event, this social cyber-structuring of collectives and subjectivities requires feminisation — in the form of de-hierarchicalisation and deconstruction (2004: 95) of the patriarchal, hegemonic mindsets of 'the powers that be'.

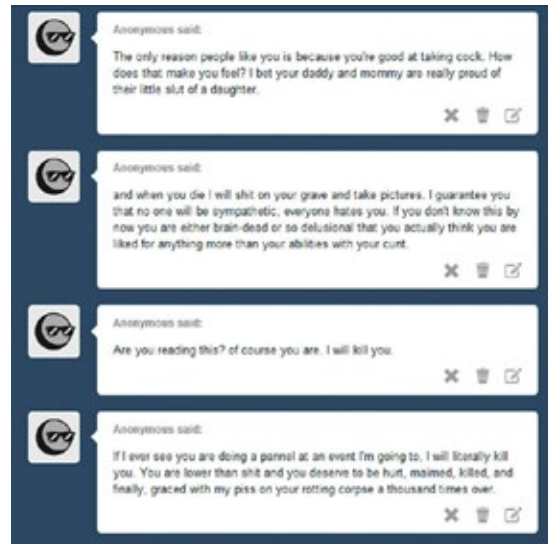
GAMERGATE: THE CASES OF ANITA SARKEESIAN AND ZOË QUINN

In February 2013, Zoë Quinn, a designer of independent video games, launched *Depression Quest*, an interactive game that related a young person's history of depression. The game enjoyed little success at the outset but it did spark debate on Wizardchan (an Internet forum for virgin adult men). Forum members complained about the poor quality of the game and that women could not be expected to grasp the nature of 'real' depression. Some of the forum users found Quinn's telephone number and began calling her. She documented the insults hurled at her on social networks (but not against the game's co-author, who happened to be a man) (Malone, 2017). In August 2014, her former boyfriend, Eron Gjoni, created a blog titled *thezoepost.wordpress.com*, in which he described intimate details of his relationship with Quinn and accused her of having screwed positive reviews out of journalists in the video-gaming sector in return for sex (Totilo, 2014). One of these men was Nathan Grayson, a writer for Kotaku, a leading web site in the field. Yet the fact is that neither Grayson nor Kotaku published reviews of Quinn video game. That, however, did not stop thousands of users flooding the social networks (see Figure 1) with messages such as: "If I ever see you at an event Round Table, I will kill you. You are not worth shit and you deserve to be hurt, to be mutilated, and killed. I will piss on your rotten corpse a thousand times over" (Malone, 2017).

What was to become a massive cyber-harassment campaign against Quinn was set in motion on */pol/Politically Incorrect*, a discussion board on the anonymous 4chan forum. The title given to the threads was ‘Ethics in Game Journalism’ to ward off possible criticism. The idea was to seize on lack of journalistic ethics to forge a supposedly reformist movement and to criticise the elimination of the sub-forum as stemming from censorship or poor moderation. Quinn’s former boyfriend was invited to the sub-forum and this is why ‘Quinnspiracy’ was the name given to what was later to be known as Gamergate. Gjoni’s involvement made it clear that the protests had little to do with journalists supposedly breaking their code of practice. Shortly after Gjoni’s accusations, some hackers revealed personal documents on Quinn and photos of her stark naked. Her Wikipedia entry was altered and her open death date was first change to ‘soon’ and then to the date of her next public appearance. Furthermore, Quinn’s father’s address was leaked. He received so-called ‘cum tributes’ in due course with photos of his daughter covered in semen (Malone, 2017). Quinn obtained a restraining order. Yet given the gravity and credibility of the rape and death threats, she was forced to leave home (Dewey, 2014). As a result of these attacks, Quinn was diagnosed with complex post-traumatic stress, a problem that compounded her previous mental problems — something that Gjoni used against her. In Autumn 2016, Quinn dropped the charges of harassment even though the Courts had banned posts on her. That said, the legal system was virtually powerless to stop the growing horde of cyber-freaks harassing her. During the hearings, a judge who saw no legal grounds for harassment went so far as to suggest Quinn look for a job that caused her less grief. His advice was: “You are a smart girl [...] do something else” (Malone, 2017).

The case of Anita Sarkeesian — a Canadian culture critic — may be better known than that of Quinn in the Gamergate saga. In 2009, a web site titled *Feminist Frequency* was created together with a set of videos in order to analyse and criticise stereotypical portrayals of women in popular culture, and in games and in online spaces. Three years later in 2012, it was decided

Figure 1 Anonymous messages received by Quinn in 2014 through her Tumblr account



Source: Malone (2017).

to launch a crowd-funding campaign on Kick-starter to fund *Tropes vs. Women*, a series of YouTube videos in order to research the tropes applied to female characters in popular culture, such as ‘the damsel in distress’, the ‘manic pixie dream girl’, and ‘Woman in the Refrigerator’². The project raised over US \$150,000 — much more than the US \$8,000 target set (Campbell, 2017). The reaction in the ‘manosphere’ to this runaway success was to accuse Sarkeesian of fraud and pocketing some of the money raised. From 4chan and *subreddit* The Red Pill, ‘raiding’ campaigns were set in motion against the crowd-funded campaign. These ‘raids’ included flooding the social networks with death and

2 The ‘manic pixie dream girl’ is a female character whose sole purpose is to provide the love interest that spurs the male protagonist to reach his goal, gain happiness, love, and so on. The ‘Women in the Refrigerator’ trope refers to female characters who are raped and/or killed to advance the story of the male characters in the plot [The origin of the expression lies in a *Green Lantern* comic-book strip from 1994 in which super-hero Kyle Rayner (alias *The Green Lantern*) returns home to find that his girlfriend has been murdered and stuffed into his fridge by the villain, Major Force].

rape threats (Figure 2) and altered images showing the targeted women being sexually abused. For instance, Benjamin Daniel, a self-styled ‘feminist-basher’ created *Beat Up Anita Sarkeesian*, a video game that lets users bash a picture of Sarkeesian’s face (Ging, 2017).

In September 2014, the organisers of the Game Developers Choice Awards received bomb threats if they gave Sarkeesian an award as industry ‘ambassador’. On this occasion, special security measures were taken for the event. Nevertheless, a conference at Utah University the following month had to be called off because of threats. An e-mail signed by someone who claimed to be a student threatened to carry out America’s most deadly campus shooting [sadly, not an easy record to beat]. “One way or another, I will make sure they all die”, wrote the author, threatening to gun down conference-goers, staff, and members of the university’s Women’s Centre (McDonald, 2014).

More recently, at the VidCon convention in June 2017 (the world’s biggest event of its kind in the

field), brought together thousands of people working in the online video industry. Sarkeesian took part in the *Women Online Round Table* (Kane, 2017). Carl Benjamin — the British YouTuber hiding behind the online pseudonym ‘Sargon of Akkad’ was sitting near the front with a group of his followers. Benjamin can be thought of one of the most ‘professional’ harassment artists of those mentioned earlier. That is because he makes over \$5,000 a month through his Patreon site, with a network of subscribers or ‘patrons’ eagerly lapping up his incendiary videos attacking a number of victims, including Sarkeesian. There are many YouTubers who make a handsome living out of ugly videos that vilify and mock feminists such as her. A number of unscrupulous souls eager to make a quick buck are taking advantage of a new market niche, to wit the online harassment industry with an anti-feminist twist. Taken as a whole, these accounts have millions of followers whose threats and harassment are spurred on by a constant stream of videos spreading lies and inciting violence.

Figure 2 Examples of the tweets received by Sarkeesian



Source: Sarkeesian (2015).

Figure 3 Examples of Carl Benjamin’s video channels



Source: YouTube (User: Sargon of Akkad).

At the time of writing, Benjamin³ has 963,000 subscribers to his YouTube channel. His content covers various political subjects in The United States and The United Kingdom: Black Lives Matter; racism; terrorism; freedom of speech and so on. Most of his videos rail against the ills of feminism, the Liberal elites, the media, ‘political correctness’ (*sic*), and in general all the ‘left-wing reactionaries’ he considers responsible for repressing free speech (Campbell, 2017). Furthermore, in line with other anti-Feminist propaganda, he stoops to using ‘Photoshopped’ pictures of Sarkeesian in his videos (Figure 3). Before he was expelled from Twitter, his ‘Wall’ page used an unflattering mash-up of a picture from Disney’s *Beauty and The Beast* to snipe at his victims (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Carl Benjamin’s Twitter Home Page



Source: Twitter account (User: Sargon of Akkad).

3 Benjamin stood as a UKIP candidate in the 2019 European Election. During the campaign, he was headline news for making ‘jokes’ about raping Labour MP Jess Phillips (MacDonald, 2019), for inviting his followers to a chat peppered with White Supremacist and anti-Semitic messages (Di Stefano and Wickham, 2019) and for an episode in which a demonstrator threw a milk-shake at him during a campaign in which he was going to speak together with Milo Yiannopoulos [a Far Right-Winger who was former editor for *Breitbart News*, and who dallied with Neo-Nazi groups] (Cockburn, 2019).

During the VidCon events, Benjamin gate-crashed a Round Table featuring various women, including Sarkeesian, Kat Blaque, and Franchesca Ramsey (the latter two being both activists and YouTubers). Benjamin was accompanied by a cameraman and a posse of followers who then interrupted the proceedings and made things difficult for the speakers. The gate-crashers’ actions were acts of deliberate harassment and intimidation.

The Round Table began with the question: “Why do we need to discuss online feminism in video games?” to which Sarkeesian answered: “Because those harassing me are sitting in the front row”. After the event,

Benjamin went on to the social networks and uploaded a video alleging that he had been insulted. He said that Sarkeesian had called him “human refuse” and “a wanker”, and that this ran counter to VidCon’s guidelines. He lamented that Sarkeesian had refused to hold a debate with him. Following the video posting, there was a spate of violent insults against all those who had taken part in the Round Table. Sarkeesian wrote on her web site: “It was a deliberate attempt to poison the atmosphere and show us that if we dare to appear in public to express the ideas that we share online, then we can expect the harassment we suffer on social media to pursue us into the physical world” (Sarkeesian, 2017).

In his video reacting to the events at VidCon, Benjamin said that the first three rows in the audience were filled with his followers, who proudly call themselves *shitlords*, the sworn enemies of the SJW⁴. He added that his actions were not ill-intentioned but merely ‘playful’: “We had a ball. It was an adrenaline rush to be there to engage in *shit-posting* and to troll” (cited in Campbell, 2017). In this respect, Sarkeesian said that these statements bore out what she had been saying for years: “They are doing all this just for the hell of it. They get a kick out of using the power the patriarchy has given them to ‘put women in their place’, to intimidate and silence those who dare raise their voices and uphold their right to be treated with respect and decency in these spheres and to live full lives” (cited in Campbell, 2017).

Nevertheless, she said that for her and other women, being the target of these harassment campaigns is a worrying, traumatic experience. Indeed, extra security had to be laid on during the rest of the convention. In confronting Benjamin, Sarkeesian said she wanted to dispel the idea that women should avoid conflict and remain passive when threatened. She argued that ‘turning the other cheek’ silenced women’s voices, thus perpetuating a culture in which such harassment is

seen as normal. “I believe the row was liberating for those women who grasped what happened and who had been through the same thing themselves. They could see that I did not just take it on the chin but instead directly challenged the *shitlords* to admit what they had done” (cited in Campbell, 2017).

Feminist Cyber-resistance: Life beyond Gamergate

In 2015, Anita Sarkeesian created the web page *Speak up & Stay Safe(r)* in collaboration with Jaclyn Friedman and Renee Bracey Sherman. The web site provided an online guide for protecting oneself against online harassment. Friedman calls herself “a feminist agitator” and is an activist and the author of several books: *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape* (2008) and *What You Really Want: The Smart Girl’s Shame-Free Guide to Sex and Safety* (2011). She is also the founder and former Director of Women, Action & the Media (WAM!), a non-profit organisation focusing on the struggle for gender justice in the media. Renee Bracey Sherman is an activist for reproductive justice. She sits on the Board of the pro-rights reproductive organisation NARAL Pro-Choice America. Sherman is also the author of the work *Saying Abortion Aloud: Research and Recommendations for Public Abortion Storytellers and Organisations*.

Speak Up & Stay Safe(r) was created with the stated goal of sharing what these three women had learnt after years of being victims of digital violence: “We know how intimidating, terrifying, and overwhelming online harassment can be and we hope that this document helps empower women readers take informed decisions on security and preventative measures” (Friedman *et al.*, 2017). The web site is in three languages: English, Spanish, and Arabic. The Project is one that is constantly evolving. At the time of writing, the last update to the web site was July 2018. Yet the document is also one that is open to collaboration by others, especially when it comes to translation into other languages. The documents and resources on the web site were gathered with the help of experts in online security and other fields. According to Sarkeesian, this guide is for anyone who has suffered a cyber-attack or who fears they will. It was specially designed for women,

4 SJW stands for ‘Social Justice Warriors’, a pejorative term used to criticise those who defend progressive or Left-Wing ideologies/perspectives, including feminism.

racialised people, trans-gender individuals, ‘queer’ people, and others whose oppression is aggravated by digital violence (Sarkeesian, 2019).

One should note that Sarkeesian, Friedman and Bracey Sherman stress that their guide is neither infallible nor free from bias, warning readers that:

We wish that there was no need to write this guide. You should take at least some of these precautions to ensure your safety online. Unfortunately, this will cost you time and maybe even some money but this is the price that women, and coloured, queer, and trans-gender folk and members of other oppressed groups have to pay to dare to express their opinions in public [...]. We also note that people with greater economic privileges and leisure time find it much easier to exhaustively apply such strategies. This fact of life is itself a structural injustice, underlining the unfairness of online harassment. No system is foolproof so there is always a chance that one may still fall prey to harassment despite taking all the recommended precautions (Friedman *et al.*, 2018).

The guide is easy to follow and users do not need any special skills to apply the recommended steps. Any user with a basic knowledge of computers and the Internet will be able to put its recommendations into practice. At the outset, the document states that it gives guidance on how one can protect oneself from individuals, poorly-organised groups, and cyber-mobs online. If the attackers are governments, large companies, or well-organised institutions, users are recommended to use Front Line Defenders — an organisation that focuses on defending and protecting Human Rights activists in peril.

The guide comprises eleven main sections:

- Recommended preventative measures. These include ones to prevent *doxing* such as access-

ing *data broker* pages⁵ to check one’s personal information available online and to delete it whether by making a formal request or by creating an account that removes your information from those lists. Furthermore, *doxing* attacks usually also target people in the victim’s circles in order to amplify the impact of harassment. That is why it is recommended that friends and family also take measures to protect their personal data.

- Secure passwords and access. This section recommends: (1) having many different passwords; (2) changing passwords often; (3) using an online password manager; (4) creating long; difficult passwords; (5) making sure these are never saved in ‘the cloud’; (6) using two-factor verification; (7) using security questions; (8) using different e-mail addresses for different accounts.
- Security on web sites: This includes security advice to protect web domains and the comments section, as well as how to protect oneself against DDoS attacks and the risks involved in using certain *plug-ins* and *widgets*.
- Social networks: Given that many feminists use social media to complement their own networks, this section makes recommendations on such media sites, such as how to: (i) de-activate geo-localisation; (ii) check what is published on one by monitoring the alerts and notifications such as those provide by Google Alerts (iii) making reverse searches for images if one is worried about a given image; (iv) creating accounts with one’s own name on a major platform. The section also includes tips and guidance on browsing Facebook and Twitter and on using these social networks safely.

5 *Data brokers* are companies that gather information on people from public and/or private sources, add anonymous individual profiles, and then sell the data to marketing and advertising companies, government agencies, insurance companies, and outer outfits.

- Security in online gaming: Recommendations on passwords, *gamer tags*, profiles, accounts, privacy controls, downloads and re-broadcasting in streaming mode for gamers.
- ‘Snail Mail’ (letters, parcels): As we noted earlier, attackers can also use strategies to physically threaten users in the offline world. That is why the authors tell users how to protect themselves from attacks using snail mail and postal addresses — for instance, using mail boxes rather than street addresses, or so-called ‘virtual mail boxes’.
- Other: This section gives tips on such things as creating aliases, camera security, video calls and chats, encrypting devices such as cell phones, laptops, and tablets.
- Documentation and denunciation: The authors highlight the importance of documenting harassment and denouncing it to the social networks and platforms on which it takes place, and to the authorities.
- Strategies based on the individual: This section suggests drawing up communication plans, supporting friends, family, colleagues, and staff. There is also a sub-section on keeping oneself healthy in body and mind.
- Resources: Given that the guide does not cover all the resources available, this section introduces new tools, including those provided on the *Crash Override* web site, which we shall look at below. This helps fill some of the gaps should users need a wider range of options.
- The final section on online harassment provides links to books, videos, and articles covering online violence in greater depth.

In addition, based upon their experience as victims of cyber-violence, Zoë Quinn and Alex Lifschitz (the latter another video-game developer who was harassed in the Gamergate scandal), founded *Crash Override* in 2015. The organisation is a helpline, a non-profit, and a resource centre all rolled into one, helping those

who have suffered or are suffering online violence. *Crash Override* comprises a network of experts and ‘survivors’ who work with victims, tech companies, legislators, the media, experts in security and mental health, and the security forces to heighten public awareness of the issue and to provide direct help with a view to eliminating the causes of online violence. For reasons of privacy and given the risk that fighting such violence entails, the people working in the organisation remain anonymous as far as the outside world is concerned. The entity tackles a range of issues, including sex photos/videos (vengeance porn); hacking; online security; harassment; stalking; doxing; swatting; identity theft; threats; cyber-mobs; hate speech groups. *Crash Override* offers resources to individuals, groups, companies, and Civil Servants. The organisation supports victims before, during, and after violent episodes, drawing on public resources, private help, and collaboration with other bodies to address the problem. To this end, *Crash Override* furnishes guides, interactive tools, and educational materials covering online violence, information on protection and security measures. These resources cover the basic features of violent events. Nevertheless, each act of violence is unique, making victims believe no one else has the same problem. This makes them feel even more alone and helpless. That is why *Crash Override* has free private helplines for victims. Personalised help includes a ‘safe space’ in which victims are listened to, understood, and helped by expert staff members or by those who have suffered similar violence. The victims are helped on: (1) avoiding or confronting violence; (2) dealing with stalkers; (3) denouncing abusive social network accounts; (4) post-query monitoring and support; (5) referral to specialists and/or other organisation when *Crash Override* lacks the resources or skills to deal with an issue. On the last point, one should note that the network is staffed by volunteers — something that inevitably imposes limitations.

They work with technology companies to forge communication channels to speed up action on users’ complaints and thus cut the time taken to deal with harassment on social media platforms. In addition,

both sides benefit from this collaboration. On the one hand, the network gets to know the internal workings of social media companies (thus helping *Crash Override* improve its support for victims). On the other hand, the social platforms use the feedback from *Crash Override* to tighten up on the terms of use and service, and ensure they are complied with. This is the case of Civil Servants, government agencies, legislators, and security forces, whose experts help draw up policies to protect those subject to online violence — especially when the culprits are former husbands and boyfriends. Furthermore, when companies, activist organisations, government and judicial bodies work together, this makes it easier for individuals to work with the net-

work and to take part in a long-term informal study looking at ways to fight online violence.

Last but not least, the resource centre offers guides on safety, doxing, communication with the police and similar bodies, educational materials for staff, guides for third parties — which for example includes *Speak Up & Stay Safe(r)*, and a list of useful tools to round off one's online protection. These additional tools and applications include such things as password managers, and two-factor verification. One of these tools is C.O.A.C.H (*Crash Override's Automated Cybersecurity Helper*) (Figure 5), an interactive application that takes users step-by-step

Figure 5 C.O.A.C.H: Crash Override's Automated Cybersecurity Helper

COACH: CRASH OVERRIDE'S AUTOMATED CYBERSECURITY HELPER



What would you like to do first?

Strengthen the security of my online accounts so people can't break into them as easily.

Hide my personal information, like my home address or phone number.

Fortify my website(s) and make them harder to attack.

Make it harder for people to take control of my computer or phone.

Clean up and remove old or embarrassing accounts

None of these cover what I need.

through the process to protect every aspect of their online presence.

In addition, one should also note that Feminist Frequency became the tax sponsor of *Crash Override* in 2016 (Sarkeesian, 2016). Nevertheless, in its 2018 Annual Report, the organisation stated that the *Crash Override* team would henceforth form part of other groups even though the web site and C.O.A.C.H. guide continue to operate (Feminist Frequency, 2018).

FINAL REFLECTIONS

To sum up, Gamergate can be seen as a paradigmatic example of anti-feminist digital violence. Gamergate was a watershed, attracting a great deal of media and social attention — especially in The United States. Violence against women in general and against feminists in particular grew greatly during Gamergate and increasingly focused on the digital sphere. This reprehensible conduct led to much more discussion on social platforms and web sites' responsibilities to the online community, and on the means available to the judicial to pursue such violence. Since the lamentable events of 2014, certain web sites such as Twitter, Spotify, and Paypal have drawn up new policies and have expelled leading 'manosphere' figures behind the harassment campaigns⁶. Other social media providers such as Facebook, YouTube, and Reddit, continue to host and protect individuals and groups bent on spreading hate and inciting violence.

Cyber-feminism faces challenges on many fronts. One problem is that some platforms are working at a snail's pace in taking preventative measures. Another issue is that some sites have done nothing at all and remain trapped in the pre-Gamergate paradigm. A

third issue is that new Artificial Intelligence (AI) gives attackers an edge. Here, AI makes the creation of 'deep fakes' child's play.⁷ The sheer speed of technological 'progress' and the indifference of many governments and large companies make it hard to defend against determined attackers.

The projects put into action by Anita Sarkeesian and Zoë Quinn are just two of many cyber-feminist initiatives undertaken on the Internet. These initiatives range from apps and webs for complaining about harassment (for example, *Take Back The Tech!*) to feminist *bots* to unleash mass responses to trolls. Yet the truth is there is no 'magic bullet' for resisting and responding to online violence. Virtual feminist communities have to be flexible and adapt their practices to the circumstances of those suffering one or other kind of male chauvinist violence, whether this takes place online or offline. *Speak Up & Stay Safe(r)* and *Crash Override* are two examples of innovative, ingenious solutions for women dwelling in the Internet, helping users create "micro-spheres of action" (Zafra, 2004) and offering support and resources to women suffering one or other form of social violence. Here, both initiatives have done a great deal to change the Law's lax interpretation of violence perpetrated online as somehow 'unreal' despite its clear link to offline violence.

Feminists are stepping into the breach to create archives and communities where platforms refuse to apply their terms of use to all those at risk from online violence (protagonised by the Alt-Right groups mentioned earlier), Such action helps marginalised/oppressed users/communities survive online and become fully-fledged digital citizens, Thus the only way the Internet can safeguard users' basic rights is to create a web in which the feminist and other progressive causes can flourish free of the scourge of online harassment and threats.

⁶ Carl Benjamin, for example, was expelled from Twitter in 2017 and again in 2019 after hiding behind another made-up name. YouTube demonetised his channel in May 2019 but did not expel him. More recently, it demonetised his second channel 'Akkad Daily' in March 2020. Patreon forbade his use of the platform in 2018. The user's Facebook remains active.

⁷ This is a technique that uses unsupervised learning algorithms to produce altered but hyper-realistic videos. The approach was used in *vengeance porn* cases to add the faces of famous women to figures in pornographic videos.

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Net-Strikes¹: A Proposal for Re-orienting Social Struggles in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

The globalisation of the economy and the slow but steady loss of Nation-States' power to global enterprises and financial capital force us to redefine strikes as a weapon for advancing social causes. The institutions legitimising this form of protest have changed greatly in the 21st Century. They must recoup their ability to change things if they are to remain an effective tool. The following paper reveals the reasons behind the decline of strikes in the modern world and proposes the 'net-strike' concept (or networked strike): a formula for bringing strikes up to date to meet today's challenges.

Keywords: global enterprise, financial capital, globalisation, social rights.

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INTRODUCTION

"(...) because the day will come when we have had enough and that's when we will be capable of anything".²

Vicent Andrés Estellés (1983: 69)

A study by the consulting firm McKinsey Global Institute (2017: 21) forecasts that by 2030, as much as 20% of the world's workforce may be replaced by robots. The forecast gives a detailed breakdown by geographical area and profession and predicts a net destruction of employment in all sectors. These findings contrast with those of Autor and Salomons (2017) who carried out a retrospective study on earlier cases, concluding that overall employment would not fall but rather be redistributed. Autor and Salomons also argued that workers' real wages would fall.

Whether or not these forecasts come true, the fact that 2030 is only ten years hence raises many thorny ques-

1 We have used the term 'net-strike(s)' throughout for the sake of brevity rather than 'networked strike(s)' or 'strike network(ing)', employing the singular or plural as appropriate.

2 Freely translated from the Catalan original: "*Perquè hi haurà un dia que no podrem més i llavors ho podrem tot.*" (Andrés Estellés, 1983).

tions that are hard to answer. These questions include: What tensions will arise from global redistribution of employment?; Are governments and institutions doing anything to meet them, and if not, would it help if they did? What everyone seems to agree upon is the sheer speed of the transformation — something that is made patent by the endless stream of news stories on the topic.³

In our view, the process driving these changes is the transformation of industrial economies, which are shifting away from Nation-States and towards the consolidation of globalisation centred on global business and financial capital. Nation-States have been handing over their public management functions to: (1) supra-national entities eager to strip them of some of their regulatory powers; (2) global companies and financial capital, which are in many ways to blame for the widespread destruction of social, cultural, and economic values (Llorca-Abad, 2011).

This situation has sundry implications. In this paper, we strongly focus on re-formulating strikes as a way of protesting against a lack/violation of workers' rights. In tackling the subject, we shall only partially address economic and legal issues. That is because our aim is to draw up the concept of 'net-strikes' (or networked strikes) insofar as the issues at stake stem from communication needs and obligations that arise from an imposed form of globalisation.

The scale, implications, and complexity of the subject would require a methodological approach that lies beyond the scope of our study. That is why our paper is more in the nature of an essay. Yet within these limitations, it provides theoretical contextualisation and a well-defined methodology. Our analysis adopts a constructionist approach to the issues in which we prioritise texts by authors covering the theory and criticisms of 'The Information Economy'.

This approach begins with a literature review that gives a multi-faceted vision of the twists and turns of modernity. The conclusions reached are based on hermeneutical analysis of three kinds of information sources: (1) some of the main studies published annually by top consulting firms in the sector and their historical series; (2) proposals made by other leading authors in the field; (3) the use of illustrative, paradigmatic cases.

Our aim is to conduct a useful review of the strike concept and to consider how one might revive its strategic value as a way of controlling 'the powers that be'. The main challenge here is to identify these powers so that one can fight them on equal terms. In the 21st Century, information flows and 'fake news' make it hard to pick out one's enemy which, by contrast, knows who we are, what we think, and how we behave (Llorca-Abad and Cano-Orón, 2016). In our view, the chances are slim of repeating the general, revolutionary, wildcat strikes of the past that shook up crisis-ridden societies. That is why we stress the need to review the notion of strikes as a weapon in social struggle and demands.

STARTING CONCEPTS

What is a strike?

Assata Shakur, an activist and leader of the American Black Panther party, is said to have stated: "No one in history has ever achieved their freedom by appealing to the moral sense of their oppressors." The underlying problem raised here could be applied to many social struggles throughout history. These struggles stemmed from diverse clashes of interest. By the 19th century, strikes were already seen as tools for instrumentalising these conflicts. "All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to and to resist the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable." (Thoreau, 2017: 10).

Over many decades, Thoreau's thought has influenced many civil rights defenders such as Ghandi

3 Doncel, L. (1st of April 2018). "El empleo no peligra; tu sueldo sí." [Your job isn't at risk but your wages are] *El País*. Source: <https://elpais.com>

or Luther King. Likewise, at the outset strikes were closely linked with the exercise of basic rights and demands for work-related improvements. This kind of protest or struggle (which ended up becoming a right in many countries) was exercised by those who wanted to continue working in the same place but under better working conditions (Gourevitch, 2016: 309). In this sense, a strike involved "subverting the normality of production based on the rejection of work as an instrument of domination exercised by a private power over people" (Baylos Grau, 2014: 22) — an issue that continues to spark conflict between citizens and public authorities.

We should recall that strikes began to make sense in highly-industrialised modern societies. The State was at the apex of political and administrative power. As such, it underpinned the legal order governing the relationship between factory owners and their workers. That is why strikes began as illegal political-economic struggles whose goal was to amend laws or have them repealed (Ruay Sáez, 2017: 130). Unlike other protest actions, strikes were long battles with employers. In their simplest form, they involved workers collectively withdrawing their labour (Santos Azuela, 2015: 480).

Over time, exercising this right "required a bilateral relationship between workers and the government authorities — something that involved haggling and a lot of give and take on both sides" (Baylos Grau, 2014: 14). Much of this mediation was taken on by workers' associations, which were the germ of today's trade unions and on whose role we shall speak later. In the first half of the twentieth century, articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up (DOIT, 1944) gathered the fruits of this trend.

The UDHR states the "Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration, ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity" (UDHR, Article 23[3]). According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) Declaration,

work cannot be subject to shareholders' control and Articles 87 and 98 recognise the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.⁴ This is still the conceptual framework for 21st Century strikes — namely as a mediating instrument for many conflicts, particularly those of a labour nature: "Strikes are a way of altering and orienting legislative design and social policy" (Baylos Grau, 2014: 19). Yet we urgently need to ask whether this definition still holds true in today's globalised world.⁵

Why and against whom are strikes held?

At the end of 2016, the textile giant Inditex had a worldwide workforce of over 160,000. In absolute terms, this was bigger than the number of Civil Servants employed by Bulgaria, or half that of Greece⁶. The company's economic impact was similar to that of many a modern Nation-State. The difference lies in Inditex's clearly global scope, which goes far beyond that of a Nation-State. In reality, Inditex is a fuzzy tangle of companies, subsidiaries and sub-contractors with investments, interests and capital spread throughout over 90 countries, as described by the company's own web site.⁷

Apple Inc., owner of the iPhone mobile phone brand, reached a market valuation of US \$886 billion in 2016.⁸ This figure is equal to or greater than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of countries such as South Africa, Norway, and Sweden. Regarding Apple's structure, we could reach similar conclusions to those applicable to Inditex. The two companies operate in different industries but their global or-

4 The final draft of these Articles was made at the 86th session in 1998 at the ILO's International Conference.

5 Streeck (2017a: 38) notes that this model of making demands reached its zenith in the 1970s. From then on, the advance of Neo-Liberalism (among other factors) reduced its usefulness.

6 Villaécija, E. (March 16, 2017). "Inditex ya maneja magnitudes propias de un Estado." ["The Inditex company is now the size of many a State"] El Mundo. Source: <http://www.elmundo.es>

7 <https://www.inditex.com>

8 BBC News (December 14, 2017). "Las 10 empresas más valiosas del mundo." [The World's Ten Most Valuable Brands] BBC. Source: <http://www.bbc.com>

ganisation exceeds the management capabilities of many Nation States.⁹

Over 150 years have gone by since Thoreau's time and the power paradigm has undergone great changes over this period. Power has steadily been transferred from the structures of Nation States to those of Global Enterprises (hereinafter 'GE' or 'GEs', as the case may be). In this process, power has evolved, shifting away from a centralised modern form to a complex, highly decentralised structure. Although The State still controls some key areas of daily life, in practical terms it is more akin to an entity supporting GEs in their pursuit of profits and business expansion. Often, The State uses other supranational organisations for this purpose, and to which it has likewise transferred part of its management capacity (Fernández Martínez, 2009).

Yet States' management capacity is not only limited by supra-national companies and bodies but also by Neo-Liberalism's relentless drive to globalise economies. Here, the interests of financial capital take precedence over all others, even though this industry only seeks short-term profit (Dierckxsens, 2009: 152) (as do GEs). This clearly spawns the worst kind of speculation, which Carcanholo (2019: 44) has exhaustively described, defining it as 'parasitic'. Only 1% of daily financial transactions create 'new wealth'. Venture Capital Funds (VCFs) acquire firms in the real economy, hoping to turn a fat profit of between 20% and 25% (Fernández Martínez, 2009: 2). This is one of the reasons why economic growth often fails to yield a corresponding rise in employment (Dierckxsens, 2015; Horwitz and Myant, 2015: 9).

These dynamics lead to other perverse effects. Often, the function of supra-national bodies, GEs, and financial agents has been and is to force governments to privatise public services (Arrizabalo, 2013: 9), lower trade barriers, dismantle capital controls, slash public spending, and increasingly limit the scope of social

rights (Streeck, 2017a). In other words, multinationals and financial institutions drive social changes without citizens having the slightest say in them (Fernández Martínez, 2009: 25).

In 2000, *The Meltzer Report on International Institutions* (TMC, 2000) highlighted how the debt of many countries with bodies such as The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, fostered speculation in goods, harming people's rights in the education, health, safety, and work fields. This revealed a dark side to globalisation that many experts immediately confirmed (Mikesell, 2001). In the European case, it emerged that such policies produced the "generation of huge volumes of fictitious capital" (Arrizabalo, 2013: 8). In turn, it became clear that all these structural changes had made cyclical economic downturns a great deal more destructive (Dierckxsens, 2015: 75).

Over time, these changes will continue to "increase economic insecurity when it comes to getting a job" (De Lange, Gesthuizen and Wolbers, 2014: 4). The authors stress that the globalised financial economy spurs demand for a few highly-specialised jobs and makes the prospects for low-skilled workers even bleaker (Dierckxsens, 2015: 77). Here, multi-nationals are given *carte blanche* to exploit the progressive deregulation of labour markets, helping them press for lower wages in every country they operate in (De Lange, Gesthuizen and Wolbers, 2014: 5; Arrizabalo, 2016: 6).

Having set the scene, some of the questions we opened this section with have been answered in whole or in part, while others have not. The reason for calling a strike in the 21st Century is broadly the same as it was in the 19th Century — namely, to resist corporate domination and abuse of labour markets (Gourevitch, 2016: 309). However, today these dominance structures are global in scale so the first challenge is to pin-point whom one should strike against. This requires "exploring new forms of vulnerability" in these structures (Webster, 2015: 7), using new strategies to win the struggle.

⁹ Pozzi, S. (September 3, 2016). "10 empresas más grandes que 180 países." ["Ten Companies are Bigger Than 180 Countries"] *El País*. Source: <http://www.elpais.es>

The economic and legal aspects of strikes

Neo-Liberal globalisation has imposed a hyper-consumerist economic model based on the programmed obsolescence of consumer goods (Dierckxsens, 2015). This model favours de-localisation of jobs to countries with *laissez-faire* labour markets and lax/non-existent environmental regulations. The same model leads to the destruction of well-paid jobs in developed countries (Libaert, 2017: 22 *et seq.*).¹⁰ This is all possible thanks to the ubiquity of GEs and financial capital that flood the world's stores with cheap, shoddy goods churned out by sweat-shop workers paid slave-wages. According to Dierckxsens (2015: 75), this relentless production-driven logic contradicts the system itself.

Furthermore, the individual is told that his or her life is based on 'consumer freedom' (Hardy, 2014: 51) to purchase this cornucopia of junk products. This dynamic thus closes the vicious circle of power production (Foucault, 2004), which is constituted and reinforced through corporate speeches. Citizens (whose jobs are ever worse and badly-paid) are driven to buy the trinkets thrust before them (De Lange, Gesthuizen and Wolbers, 2014: 9). One might well suspect that this is all part of an over-arching strategy, honed to perfection by ruthlessly effective advertising and political marketing machines. According to Latouche (2013), advertising excites the desire to consume; if credit is needed, it provides the means. Meanwhile, programmed obsolescence creates an endless but false 'need' for new fripperies. From a broader but complementary perspective, Streeck (2017b: 10) has defined the recent boom in the gushing dissemination of these Neo-Liberal narratives as part and parcel of 'The Post-Factual Age'.

¹⁰ An interesting point bearing on this concept is that it used to be so that one's profession was one of the values reaffirming the individual's identity for both himself and for his fellows (Fernández Martínez, 2009; Jones, 2013). The cultural and social implications of this statement need to be borne in mind in any analysis of the impact of economic Neo-Liberal globalisation.

What then is the economic and legal framework of strikes as a tool for reclaiming lost or damaged rights? The first variable to take into account is that the right to strike was recognised in relation to the Nation-State paradigm (Fernández Martínez, 2009). The second important issue is that such recognition also included the right to damage the employer's interests. This is explicitly contemplated in many laws, since the purpose of a strike is to drive the owner of the means of production into a "new relationship of forces that improves the workers' lot" (Céspedes Muñoz, 2017 : 270).

The legal system allows and tolerates so-called 'licit damage' caused by a strike. "The regulatory system, whether expressly or tacitly, accepts the possibility of workers inflicting economic damage on their employers in exercising certain rights and power, providing these fall within the scope of legislative policy" (Céspedes Muñoz, 2017: 250). Next, the author, citing various texts, maintains that lawful damage is something that the legal system not only accepts but that in certain circumstances embraces. If, as we have stated, the paradigm of power in the 21st century has changed from a local context to a global one, how far have these rights been maintained and how can they be exercised?

Internal limits were set where strikes were deemed: (1) abusive (because of their harmful potential), or (2) illegal (either because the strikes were unrelated to their purpose or because they flouted the procedure set out by Law (Céspedes Muñoz, 2017: 273). The external bounds to freedom to strike were set by the rights of Third Parties (moral order, public order, or the general security of The State) and arose from a clash with Constitutional rights or other higher-ranking laws (Céspedes Muñoz, 2017: 275).

In many countries, the economic problems arising from globalisation have been used to undermine workers' rights to strike and in other work-related fields (Arrizabalo, 1993: 64; Espinosa Meza and Chible Villadangos, 2015: 57 and following sections); Santos Azuela, 2015: 480). As a result, the labour

market is increasingly unfair, with the system being rigged to put workers at a disadvantage (Gourevitch, 2016: 315; Jansen, Akkerman and Vandaele, 2017: 101). In the Spanish case, Horwitz and Myant (2015: 6) highlighted the disastrous 2012 Labour Reform, which limits workers' ability to negotiate collective agreements and gives companies the final say in setting employment terms. Arrizabalo (2016; 2019: 275) attributes the precariousness of the labour market to States' relentless de-regulation.

The trend towards States making their legal frameworks more 'corporate-friendly' (together with measures to make labour markets more flexible) are blunting the value of strikes. "The subtlest form taken by structural domination [in the 21st Century] is the fear of being fired or of not being hired in the first place" (Gourevitch, 2016: 314). In their analysis, Jansen, Akkerman and Vandaele (2017: 101) find that while greater flexibility does not lessen worker mobilisation, it does affect other factors such as levels of union membership and job satisfaction.

This overall pattern (with differences here and there) is repeated to a greater or lesser extent in all local economies. Gupta (2017) noted that long stoppages in India have become well-nigh impossible. There, workers lack either the savings or other sources of income that would let them make ends meet without their wages in long strikes. De White (2018) has coined the term *job insecurity* to describe the way Europe's labour markets have changed since the 1990s. Today, taking part in a strike takes a lot of guts and entails big financial risks. That is why ever fewer people are willing to go on strike.

Many of these readings highlight the bounds placed on unions as mediating bodies. As we pointed out at the beginning of this paper, governments have also intervened directly by controlling and crippling unions (Santos Azuela, 2015: 492) and by institutionally protecting the market economy. As a result, unions have been hobbled in representing workers (Streeck, 2017a: 75). A general conclusion one can draw is that our institutions have not adapted to

the structural changes enshrining the new paradigm springing from the globalised economy (Boix, 2007: 132; De Lange, Gesthuizen and Wolbers, 2014: 4). Indeed, it is often the institutions themselves that are driving such changes by yielding to external pressures.

The communication factor in strikes

The notion that strong labour protection would lead to higher unemployment rates gained ground when the OECD took up the idea in 1994 (Horwitz and Myant, 2015: 10). Many authors consider the 1990s to be the decade in which the Second Neo-Liberal Revolution took root, bringing such ideas into the public arena. Here, we fully concur with Naomi Klein's analysis (2001 and 2007). She describes how, throughout the last decade of the 20th century, global companies occupied an ideological space from which they had hitherto been absent. Among other things, this led to multi-nationals foisting a series of force-concepts¹¹ on society, dialectically disarming Left-Wing discourses. As a result, unions were lambasted by Neo-Liberal interests, tarnishing their public image. This opened the door to "normative proposals consolidating government repression [of unions] through wide-ranging financial penalties" (Baylos Grau, 2014: 17).

How come companies can force workers to accept ever worse working conditions yet get away scot-free? How come GEs and finance capital can get away with great profit margins without the public being aware of how this is steadily undermining the commonweal? How come the very idea of the common good¹² has become so dreadfully cheapened? How come union membership levels and public acceptance of strikes is

11 In this process, Streeck (2017b: 7) highlighted the imposition of the TINA concept (There Is No Alternative) as a cross-cutting idea in the so-called 'Neo-Liberal Turn'.

12 Here we use the term 'common good' in the sense of "the management of goods and services for all with to consume or own" and the need to distribute such goods equitably (Tirole, 2017: 36 y 66).

dropping?¹³ We believe that one of the main sources of these problems lies in the social and structural control wielded by media and communication companies over the technological-communicative public space (López-García *et al.*, 2018: 779).

A worldwide concentration of the mass media began in the 1990s. This trend has led to growing links between multimedia, content, telecommunications and Internet companies (Hardy, 2014: 86). According to this author, one of the keys to grasping the impact of industry concentration is the way it leads to a loss of plurality, and even flagrant bias. Leaving the media to the mercy of market forces has not led to viable alternatives (Hardy, 2014: 62 *et seq.*). Over a quarter century of industry concentration has put the global communication and media fields in the hands of very few corporate players (Llorca-Abad and Cano-Orón, 2016).

In other words (and by contrast with the traditional paucity of information in the analogue media age) the new digital paradigm features a cornucopia of content that spreads virus-like throughout digital communication spaces. McNair (2006) sees the phenomenon as a shift away from control and towards chaos. However, it is a mistake to see the trend as either a shift from concentration to dispersion, or as one of control to mayhem. That is because the process has paradoxically led to greater industrial concentration and control. Thus criticism should not only be levelled at the production side of the industry but also at content distribution and consumption strategies. At the same time, massive use

of digital communication technologies has led to the emergence of less plurality and more 'fake news' than ever before (Virilio, 1996).

Media empires have drawn up strategies and taken measures to ensure that they also dominate the Internet market. Here, the most striking thing is that companies which hitherto focused on managing the communication infrastructure have now entered the content business sphere (Noam, 2016). While they do not yet fully control the new communicative sphere, they do strongly influence the way many people symbolically build their worldview¹⁴ (Winseck and Jin, 2012: 123). We see this as a good reason for not limiting the meaning of 'domination' to the distribution and ownership of content (Gourevitch, 2016: 312).

Against the background of the foregoing processes, one should also note the crisis in political institutions' legitimacy has gravely undermined strikes as both a concept and a practice (Streeck, 2017b: 8). In the case of labour markets, there is a yawning gulf between the sundry agents of social dialogue, which in turn has boosted the 'representation deficit' (Fernández Martínez, 2009: 20). We can say that the balance formerly struck between power structures and workers has now been greatly tilted in the former's favour. Jones' analysis (2013) on this score is especially incisive.

Baylos Grau (2014: 17) proposed two examples that nicely explain the paradox of strikes in the 21st Century. The General Strikes called in Spain in 2012 and 2013 were a success in terms of turnout. However, "union effectiveness [was] nil when it came to making worthwhile changes in labour relations." The strike no longer strongly alters daily life when it comes to shopping, withdrawing money, or social life. This

13 Gourevitch (2016: 307) explains that strike activity has fallen by roughly 90% since the 1970s. Streeck (2017a: 106) illustrates this drop by calculating the number of strike days per 1,000 workers over the period 1971–2007. Streeck (2017b: 8) also notes the collapse of trade unions — a trend that began in the early 1980s. Jones (2013) has described how Neo-Liberal communication campaigns set out to put the working class in a bad light. Klein (2007) has exhaustively covered the ideological measures that were used to throw the world's population into a state of shock. This strategy was cynically used to stop workers reacting to the brutal impact of putting Neo-Liberal policies into practice.

14 This focus continues the Sociology tradition in which the media are seen as socialising entities (Wolf, 1992; Berger and Luckmann, 2002) and as shaping 'reality' through a conceptual construct that accompanies the media's messages (Mills, 1963; Bourdieu, 1998).

turns strikes into merely a ritual lacking any practical effects. Put baldly, it is no longer an effective way of pursuing labour demands" (Baylos Grau, 2014: 18). This is why The State allows strikes because it knows that they seldom come to anything, and have very little impact on daily life.

The upshot is that it is becoming harder to explain to citizens what strikes are and what they are for. Despite a world of apparent pluralism of communications in which we are told that "everything is on the Internet", being able to access information does not mean that we can harness it for the common good (Morozov, 2012; Winseck and Jin, 2012: 108). This is so because new habits stemming from social networks trap users in an ideological bubble (Pariser, 2013; Mahrt, 2014: 130) within which it is hard to voice critical or analytical thinking and to take opposing positions.

In the 1970s, Gerbner and Gross (1976) came up with "Crop Theory." Their starting hypothesis was that greater exposure to television content tended to distort how viewers' see the world around them and that their vision was largely shaped by the medium's stance. The theory took up the analytical threads of critical approaches to the media since 1950. In our view, Pariser's 'Bubble Model'(2013) seems to build on some of Crop Theory's basic assumptions. The media then and the spaces of communication now give us the frame that we then project on the real world. However, its contents and behaviour "are not solely shaped by the way property is structured" (Winseck and Jin, 2012: 106) and micro-studies should be added to problematise the question of cultural production.

Repression through mass communication goes hand-in-hand with physical forms of the same. Thoreau's words (2017: 26) again ring down the years, revealing how governments resort to and instrumentalise violence when it suits them: "It [The State] is not armed with superior wit or honesty, but with superior physical strength." This strength is something that The State does not hesitate to use to serve the interests of hegemonic power, which in the 21st

century is global in nature (Klein, 2007). In other words, coercive power and symbolic power combine to control society (Winseck and Jin, 2012: 196).

DISCUSSION AND PROPOSAL

A change in strategy

What do we have so far? In the foregoing sections we noted the crisis assailing Nation States as they lose power to GEs. Here, we stressed the steady undermining of political legitimacy (and thus of democratic power) (Streeck, 2017a: 97), and of the modern institutions embodying it. Unions have a strong bearing on our analysis, as do strikes for making workers' demands and pressing for rights that have been repressed, annulled, or otherwise impaired. We also examine the communication structures controlled by GEs in this sector. These GEs not only condone rights imbalances but also openly foster a Neo-Liberal ideology that sunders communication among individuals (Virilio, 1998; Gitlin, 2005; Morozov, 2012 and 2013; Pariser, 2013). Taking all these factors into account, it is little wonder that citizens find hard to say just who the foe destroying their social and labour rights is.

From complementary perspectives, Castells (1996) and Standing (2010) have explained that the labour force should strive to meet the challenges posed by globalisation regarding work and other social rights. Given that Neo-Liberal globalisation has weakened traditional control and power (and the bodies that used to wield them), then the main goal of any resistance movement should be to find out who are what is now in the saddle (Horvat, 2020). This approach ties in with the idea of pinning down the weaknesses of the new control paradigm dominated by GEs, financial capital and the rump apparatus of Nation States mentioned earlier.

As we see it, the change in strategy could be anchored in the theoretical proposal for a "networked society", described by Castells (2003). Insofar as Nation States

form networks, (in which they act as subsidiary and legitimising nodes of a new superstructure that they do not really control), the interactions among them should reveal how their nature has changed. Castells, in turn, states that networks must be fought with other networks operating from within and from outside the system. Here, social movements, trade unions, and Development NGOs could organise to co-ordinate their actions, incorporating new strategies and tools in the struggle.¹⁵ To the extent that power lies with us, we must defend the idea of unions protecting workers against exploitation (Castells, 2003).

Could we think of GEs as forming a kind of global network, the shutdown of which would have an impact similar to the shutdown of factories in Nation States in the 19th and 20th centuries? Instead of calling on millions of people to join a General Strike in a given country, one could instead carefully co-ordinate a long strike of key workers. These key workers might number only a few thousand (or even a few hundred) in GEs such as Apple, Inditex, and McDonald's. Clearly, lots of questions need to be answered first. Yet from a 'communication' standpoint, it would be much easier to convince a small group of key workers than the population at large (notwithstanding the latter's growing disenchantment with the system).

On the one hand, such a strategy requires international co-ordination. On the other hand, the strike mobilisation message needs to be personalised for each recipient. 19th Century French revolutionary trade unionism already "conceived and fostered the idea of a revolutionary General Strike, suspending all work at the same time on an international scale" (Pérez López, 2015: 216). The difference is that in the 21st Century, it is international structures that decide the fate of millions of people around the

world — something that was much less true in the 19th Century. However, unlike the old French idea of a strike, there would be no need to stop everyone from working — just a core of key workers would be enough. It is "easy to imagine [...] that economic globalisation can also have a globalising impact on trade unions' organisation and workers' struggles" (Santos Azuela, 2015: 477).¹⁶

Webster (2015) confirms that the soaring number of protests around the world have played a key role in identifying weaknesses in the new domination structure. For example, workers on grape farms in North-Eastern Brazil have managed to maintain high wages and permanent employment by exploiting the pressure exerted by European distributors on farm owners. Johannes (2016: 302 *et seq.*) has highlighted the success of repeated, long strikes by miners in South Africa. The success stems from much the same reasons as for the strikes in Brazil. Many other examples could be cited (Selwyn, 2012). Might it be possible to extend this strategy to goals that are global in nature and scope?

Should the communication strategies linked with 'net-strikes' prove successful, one could launch public awareness campaigns. This would help roll back the influence of Neo-Liberalism. The two strategies are not mutually exclusive. One could thus seek ways of challenging power through the media, incorporating the goals of net-strikes in the official discourse, or by fostering alternative media and forums (Hardy, 2014). In this respect, one of the main concepts worth repackaging and explaining to the general public is that of 'justifiable damage' since a new interpretative framework is needed if we are to tackle GE abuses.

Net-Strikes

Every State, by virtue of its membership of the ILO, must comply with the organisation's binding principles

15 Martell (2015: 234-235) has put forward an interesting synthesis of this strategy: "Each struggle is unique given that it has its own features. That is why one needs to study each case first [...] but there are also many common features with other struggles so it is worth drawing up a vision of the whole based on previous knowledge".

16 The 2011 Athens Congress of European Trades Unions (CES) began consideration of co-ordinated union action against European monetary policies (Baylos Grau, 2014: 15). At the time of writing, little progress seems to have been made in this direction.

on strikes and other worker rights. This international regulatory framework, though weakened by many local laws (Fernández Martínez, 2009: 19), could serve as an umbrella for unions calling net-strikes. This would most certainly require a redefinition of unions in those countries where their activity is already highly regulated. It would also mean redefining kindred entities in those nations where unions are currently forbidden, prosecuted, and even punished.

Most people would agree that revolutions should be peaceful (that is to say, ones that do not goad The State into resorting to violence).¹⁷ Yet one should never submit to an unjust government or system on utilitarian grounds. Sometimes a group or an individual must do what is fair, no matter what the cost (Thoreau, 2017). While a strike should be the last resort when negotiations have failed (Espinosa Meza and Chible Villadangos, 2015: 67), certain forms of violence should be allowed to safeguard the right to strike (Ruay Sáez, 2017).

Here, one should note that we define net-strikes as work stoppages carried out by between a few hundred and a few thousand key workers chosen for their strategic roles in a GE's overall operating structure. Unions and other staff associations would wage a communication campaign before these workers went on strike and would also give them any legal, financial, and social support they needed. The stoppages should be continued until lawful damage had been inflicted on the firm. Such damage ought to be both quantifiable and foreseeable, forcing the GE to change corporate policies hurting workers and/or the environment.

Over the last few years, sundry groups have carried out work stoppages and strike actions that bear upon our definition of a 'net-strike'. However, they all lack a truly global dimension — a feature we consider vital. None of the stoppages/strikes exhibit all the aspects of a net-strike — a caveat that should be borne in mind in considering the examples given below.

¹⁷ Thoreau (2017) speaks of the unleashing of State violence.

- Many international entities were involved in stoppages at McDonald's UK burger chain in 2017. The strike not only sought wage rises for the multinational's workers in Britain, it also took account of McDonald's indirect economic impacts abroad.¹⁸ This example clearly shows the organisational potential of sundry entities working at the international scale when the strike aims are well defined.
- The strike at 19 nuclear power stations in France in 2016 forced the Macron government to negotiate a general plan for the whole of the nation's energy industry.¹⁹ One can imagine a strike of this kind at the European level in which the costs of an industrial dispute were borne by multinational power companies. The value of the example lies in the strike's scope for paralysing a strategic sector and thus inflicting huge illicit damage on other sectors of the economy.
- Stoppages by Spain's dockworkers in 2017 brought the country's ports and trade to a standstill,²⁰ even though only 7,500 people work in the sector. One can just imagine the impact of a similar, co-ordinated strike across Europe lasting for two weeks. As in the foregoing example, the power of a small group of people to wreak havoc would be even greater if wielded at the global scale.
- In early 2018, some 800 workers at Amazon's logistics centres in Spain held a strike against

¹⁸ Wilkinson, A. (August 22, 2017). "La lucha por un salario justo en McDonald's se hace internacional." ["The struggle for a fair wage at McDonald's goes international"] *elDiario.es*. Source: <http://www.eldiario.es>

¹⁹ Yáñez, C. (May 25, 2016). "Las 19 centrales nucleares se suman a la oleada de protestas en Francia." ["19 Nuclear power stations join France's wave of protest"] *El País*. Source: <http://www.elpais.es>

²⁰ Agencia EFE. (February 14, 2017). "Los estibadores mantienen los paros tras una nueva reunión sin acuerdo." ["Dockworkers' strike continues after no agreement in latest talks"] *elDiario.es*. Source: <http://www.eldiario.es>

the new collective agreement.²¹ Imagine the impact of such a co-ordinated strike throughout Europe, involving just a few thousand workers and lasting more than two days.

- The feminist strike on the 8th of March 2018 marked International Women's Day, and it was held in 23 nations. In addition to the strike's runaway success in countries such as Spain,²² one should also note the plethora of associations and movements co-ordinating the strike internationally. The values and rights stressed by the strikers were global ones, showing that there are universal problems that need tackling.

Given this perspective and the issues, the mission must be to improve international communication and co-ordination. This not only requires a change in strategy but also a new mindset. Here, one should realise that in a globalised world, the whole economy is interconnected. Accordingly, the actions of workers in one country have a much wider impact on society. That is why we can no longer stay blinkered by the fictitious limits of Nation-States when it comes to planning strikes. Yet we continue to identify concepts such as wealth, economy, prosperity, and *job insecurity* with Nation States even though power has shifted from them to a new Capitalist framework (Arrizabaló, 2016: 9-10). Quite simply, the structures of today's corporate matrix dwarf those of even the biggest Nation-States. In a turbo-charged Capitalist global economy, strikes too need to operate on the same scale.

21 Agencia EFE. (March 12, 2018). "Los trabajadores convocan dos días de huelga en el mayor centro logístico de Amazon en España." ["Workers call a two-day strike at Amazon's biggest logistic centre in Spain"] *elDiario.es*. Source: <http://www.eldiario.es>

22 Newspaper editorial (March 8, 2018). "La prensa internacional se hace eco de la huelga feminista 'histórica' y 'sin precedentes' en España" ["The Foreign Press reports the 'historic, unprecedented' feminist strike in Spain"] *La Vanguardia*. Source: <http://www.lavanguardia.com>.

CONCLUSIONS

The historical arena for labour disputes featured players that now hold positions differing greatly from those they held in yesterday's world. These players are: The State; companies; political parties; trade unions; the working class. A firm grasp of the changes is key to redefining the role of strikes in the 21st Century. The State retains only a fraction of its former coercive power. Meanwhile, the power of large global companies and the investment funds on which States depend now reach far beyond national borders.

Political parties and trade unions have been racked by a crisis of legitimacy and representativeness for decades. This is because they have failed to adapt to the demands of a world that has altered out of all recognition from the one in which they were founded. Meanwhile, the working class has become less well-defined and has been hard hit by; (1) changes in the labour market itself and; (2) the influence of Neo-Liberal ideology, which has ridden roughshod over workers. Of these two factors, the second carries more weight. This ideology imbues all discourses and is reinforced through corporate propaganda, which stresses exclusive values such as individualism, competition, and self-interest.

It is no secret that "multinational corporations now wield more influence than four fifths of Mankind and are only controlled by their shareholders" (Fernández Martínez, 2009: 43). At some point corporations will wholly undermine States' ability to act. From the communication standpoint, the situation requires strategic refocusing so as to: (1) correctly identify and reveal the real holders of power in the 21st Century; (2) build the net-strike concept in its most global sense; (3) recognise and take advantage of the system's structural weaknesses; (4) reverse the trend towards the isolation of the individual fostered by current media and digital communication practices.

So far, we have argued that all these changes call for a root-and-branch reflection on what trade unions are and the purpose they serve (Brinkmann *et al.*, 2008). The same is true of other organisational structures (Lucerga, 2013) and the new demands for waging

the social struggle. The challenges posed by today's globalisation require better understanding of the framework in which people's economic and social activities take place. A global context where everything is interconnected also demands global actions.

The net-strike concept is one that gives priority to efficiency criteria in drawing up communication

campaigns for supporting a strike or a stoppage. Labour mobilisation in the 21st Century should force the powerful to ditch their destructive economic policies and to bear the full cost of their 'slash and burn' version of globalisation (Dierckxsens, 2009). That said, efforts to achieve these aims in the medium to long term do not preclude resort to traditional strikes and stoppages.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Author guidelines for *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society*

Author guidelines

Authors submitting papers for publication to *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society* should first verify that their submission complies with the following requirements:

Different types of work will be accepted:

- **Articles** must be original, complete, and fully-developed theoretical or empirical works.
- **Viewpoint articles** should take the form of an essay, in which an innovative view is put forward dealing with a debate in the field of study of the journal, or providing analysis of a current social or cultural phenomenon.
- **Reviews:** book reviews.
- **Profiles:** interviews or comments on an intellectual figure of special relevance.

Work should be submitted in *OpenOffice Writer* (.odt) or *Microsoft Word* (.doc) through the magazine's website. No other means of submission will be accepted, nor will correspondence be maintained regarding originals submitted outside the portal or in any other format.

Non-textual elements (tables, charts, maps, graphs, and illustrations, etc.) contained in the work will be inserted in the corresponding place in the text. In addition, editable graphs in *OpenOffice Calc* (.ods) or *Microsoft Excel* (.xls) format and maps, illustrations or images in .jpg or .tiff formats at 300 DPI should be sent separately as a supplementary file. All the elements must be numbered and titled, specifying the font at the foot of the illustration or graph, and an explicit reference to it must be made in the body text.

Any work submitted must be unpublished and cannot be submitted for consideration to other journals while undergoing the review process at *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society*. In exceptional cases, the Editorial Board may decide to publish and/or translate a previously published text for reasons of scientific interest and/or to circulate particularly noteworthy contributions.

Monographic issues

Debats may publish monographic issues. This section is also open to proposals from the scientific community. The acceptance of a monographic issue is subject to the presentation of a suitable project which fits the objectives and topics of the monographic issue as well as a detailed list of the expected contributions or a method(s) to enable the call for manuscripts. In the event that the proposed monographic issue is accepted by the Editorial Board, the director of the monographic issue will be responsible for requesting or calling for and receiving the original works. Once received, the articles will be submitted to the journal for review. The review process will be undertaken by experts in the field following a double-blind review method. All works sent to *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society* will be reviewed according to the strictest possible scientific quality criteria. For more detailed information on the process of coordination and peer review of a monographic issue, those interested should contact the Editorial Board of *Debats*.

Languages

Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society is published in its paper-print version and its digital version in Valencian–Catalan and Castilian Spanish.

The submitted work must be written in Valencian–Catalan, Castilian Spanish or English. Should an article receive a positive review by anonymous reviewers and be approved by the Editorial Board, *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society* will undertake the Valencian–Catalan or Castilian Spanish translation.

The monographic issues will also be translated into English and a print issue containing this monographic content will be published yearly.

Format and extension of the journal

The articles and papers proposed for publication in *Debats* must be accompanied by a cover letter specifying the following information:

- Title, in Valencian–Catalan or Castilian Spanish, and in English.
- Name of the author(s).
- Institutional affiliation(s): the authors' university or centre, department, unit or research institute, city, and country.
- An e-mail address. All correspondence will be sent to this e-mail address. Should the submitted article(s) have multiple authors, the corresponding author should be specified.
- A short biographical note (60 words maximum) specifying the highest qualifications awarded (and by which university) of the contributing authors, and their current position and main lines of research. *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society* may publish this biographical note to complement the information related to the corresponding article.
- The Open Researcher and Contributor Identification (ORCID) code(s). Should the authors lack this ID, *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society* recommends they register at <http://orcid.org/> to obtain their ORCID code.
- Acknowledgments. If acknowledgments are included in the submitted work, these must be placed after the abstract and must not exceed 250 words.

The main text of the article will be preceded by a summary of 250 words maximum (which clearly and concisely state the objectives, methodology, main results, and conclusions of the work) along with a maximum of 6 keywords (which are not used in the title and which must be internationally accepted terms for the scientific disciplines in question and/or expressions which are commonly used in bibliometric classifications). If the text is written in Valencian–Catalan or Castilian Spanish, the abstract and the keywords must also be included in English. If the original text is written in English, the Editorial Team will translate the title, abstract, and key words into Valencian–Catalan and Castilian Spanish if the author does not provide this translation.

Submitted articles must be anonymised: all citations, acknowledgments, references, and other allusions that may directly or indirectly allow author identification must be redacted (under an anonymity label). The Editorial Team at *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society* will ensure that all texts fulfil this requisite. If the article is accepted for publication, *Debats* will request a non-anonymised version of the manuscript, should it differ from the one sent previously.

Except in exceptional cases, articles should be between 6,000 and 8,000 words long, including footnotes but excluding the title, abstracts, keywords, graphics, tables, and bibliography.

Viewpoint articles are texts approximately 3,000 words long each, including footnotes and excluding the title, abstracts, keywords, graphs, tables and bibliography. One of the texts should introduce the contribution which is subject to debate, and must be written by the author themselves or by the coordinator of the debate.

Book reviews shall not exceed 3,000 words and the following information must be specified at the beginning: the author, title, place of publication, publisher, year of publication, and number of pages. It should also include the name and surnames, institutional affiliation, and the e-mail address of the author of the review.

Interviews or Profiles must not exceed 3,000 words, and at the beginning must specify the place and date of the interview and the name and surnames of the interviewee or profile subject, as well as their institutional affiliation(s). It must also include the full name, institutional affiliation, and email address of the author of the interview or profile.

Text formatting should be as follows:

- Font type and size: Times New Roman 12.
- Text with justification and spacing of 1.5, except footnotes.
- Footnotes must be consecutively numbered at the bottom of the page, not at the end of the text. We recommend minimising the use of footnotes, and they should be explanatory and not contain bibliographic citation(s).
- The pages must be numbered at the foot, starting with number 1 on the Abstract page (the cover sheet with the author information should not be numbered).
- Do not indent the beginning of paragraphs.
- Define all abbreviations at their first use in the body text.

Do not number the text headings and use the following format for each heading level:

- **BOLD, UPPERCASE LETTERING, SPACED ABOVE AND BELOW.**
- *Italic, spaced above and below.*
- *Italic, spaced above and below.* The text begins after a space.

Text body citations/references are based on the APA (American Psychological Association) guidelines.

- Citations/References will appear in the text and footnotes with a purely bibliographic purpose must be avoided.
- Citations/References must appear in parentheses, including the surname of the author and year; for example, (Bourdieu, 2002).
- When the year of publication of two works by the same author coincide, distinguish them with lower case letters after the year; for example, (Bourdieu, 1989a).
- If there are two authors, their surnames should be joined by 'and': (Lapierre and Roueff, 2013); when there are more than two authors, the surname of the first author should be followed by 'et al.' (Bennet et al., 2005), although in the final bibliographic references must include all the authors.
- If there are two or more references inside the same parenthesis, separate them with a semicolon: (Castells, 2009; Sassen, 1999; Knorr and Preda, 2004).
- Verbatim quotations must be enclosed in double quotation marks and followed by the corresponding reference in parentheses, which must also include the cited pages, thus: (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 76–79); should a quotation exceed four lines of prose, it should be transcribed separately from the main text on a new line, without quotation marks, and using a 1.27 cm indentation and a 10 pt font size.

The complete list of bibliographic references is placed at the end of the text, under the heading 'References' and written according to the following guidelines:

- Only works cited in the text should be included, and all cited works must be referenced in the final list.
- Place all references with a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) at the end.
- The citation list must be listed in alphabetical order according to the first author's last name. Where there are several references by the same author, arrange them chronologically according to the year of publication. Additionally, use the following order for citations by the same author: first, the author's individual work; second, work compiled by the author; and third, work by the author in conjunction with other co-authors.
- Use 1.27 cm hanging indents for all references.

Adopt the following format, based on the APA (American Psychological Association) guidelines, for the different citation/reference format types in complete bibliographic references:

- **Books**
 - **One author:** Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

- **Two to five authors:** Rainie, L., and Wellman, B. (2012). *Networked: The New Social Operating System*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
 - **More than six authors:** Follow the first six authors by 'et al.' in the reference.
 - **Journal article:**
 - **One author:** Hirsch, P. M. (1972). Processing fads and fashions: An organization-set analysis of cultural industry systems. *American Journal of Sociology*, 77(4), 639-659.
 - **Two authors:** Bielby, W. T. and Bielby, D. D. (1999). Organizational mediation of project-based labor markets: Talent agencies and the careers of screenwriters. *American Sociological Review*, 64(1), 64-85.
 - **Three to seven authors:** Dyson, E., Gilder, G., Keyworth, G., and Toffler, A. (1996). Cyberspace and the American dream: A magna carta for the knowledge age. *Information Society*, 12(3), 295-308.
 - **Book chapter:** DiMaggio, P. (1991). Social structure, institutions and cultural goods: The case of the United States. In P. Bourdieu, & J. Coleman, (ed.), *Social theory for a changing society* (pp. 133-166). Boulder: Westview Press.
- Pamphlets, monographs, manuals, and similar material are considered as books.
- **Internet references:**
 - **Online documents:** Raymond, E. S. (1999). *Homesteading the noosphere*. Accessed on the 15th of April 2017 at <http://www.catb.org/~esr/writings/homesteading/homesteading/>
 - Generalitat Valenciana (2017). Presència de la Comunitat Valenciana en FITUR 2017. Accessed on the 15th of April 2017 at http://www.turisme.gva.es/opencms/opencms/turisme/va/contents/home/noticia/noticia_1484316939000.html
 - **Online journal articles:** Ros, M. (2017). La «no-wash protest» i les vagues de fam de les presonereres republicanes d'Armagh (nord d'Irlanda). Una qüestió de gènere. *Papers*, 102(2), 373-393. Accessed on the 15th of April 2017 at <http://papers.uab.cat/article/view/v102-n2-ros/2342-pdf-es>
 - **Online newspapers articles. With author:** Samuelson, R. J. (11st April 2017). Are living standards truly stagnant? *The Washington Post*. Accessed on the 15th of April 2017 at https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/are-living-standards-truly-stagnant/2017/04/11/10a1313a-1ec7-11e7-ad74-3a742a6e93a7_story.html?utm_term=.89f90fff5ec4. **Without author:** *La Veu del País Valencià* (11 st April 2017). Els valencians són els ciutadans de l'Estat que més dies de treball necessiten per a pagar el deute públic. Accessed on the 15th of April 2017 at <http://www.diarilaveu.com/noticia/72769/valencians-pagar-treball-deutepublic>

Authors of original work must to adapt their bibliography to follow the APA guidelines. Texts that do not conform to these guidelines will be returned to the authors so that they can make the necessary changes.

Selection and publication criteria

Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society publishes academic papers of rigorous theoretical and empirical research in the fields of social sciences and the humanities in general. However, some monographs may incorporate some contributions from other disciplines related to the theme of culture, power, and society, such as history, political science, and cultural studies.

Peer-review will be undertaken by expert academics and will follow the double-blind method for the articles in the monographic section entitled *Quadern* and in the miscellaneous research articles entitled *Articles*. All of the work in these sections sent to *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society* will be evaluated according to the strictest scientific quality criteria.

Formatting and presentation errors, non-compliance with the journal's standards, or spelling and syntactic errors may lead to rejection of the work prior to review. On reception of a text meeting all the formal requirements, receipt will be acknowledged and the review process will begin.

In a first phase, the Editorial Team will carry out a general review of the quality and appropriateness of the scope of the work and may directly, without external review, reject works that are of an ostensibly low quality or that make no contribution to the scope of the journal. In this initial review, the Editorial Team may require assistance, if deemed necessary, from the members of the Editorial Board or the Scientific Board. The proposals put forward for discussion may be accepted after passing this preliminary review phase without the need for external peer-review.

The articles that pass this first review stage will be sent to two external reviewers who specialise in the corresponding research field or topic. In the event that the evaluations are discrepant, or for any other reason deemed necessary, the Editorial Team may send the text to a third reviewer.

According to the reviewers' reports, the Editorial Team may make one of the following decisions, which will be communicated to the author:

- Accepted for publication in its current version (or with slight modifications).
- Accepted for publication subject to revision. In this case, publication of the manuscript will be subject to the author making all the changes requested by the Editorial Team and the reviewers. The deadline for making said changes will be one month, and a short report should be attached upon resubmission explaining the changes made and how they fit the requirements of the Editorial Team. The proposed changes may include the conversion of a proposed article into a research note / bibliographic note, or vice versa.
- Non-publishable, but with the option of rewriting and resubmitting the work. In this case, the re-submission of a new version will not imply any guarantee of publication and the review process will restart from the beginning.
- Rejected as non-publishable.

In the event that a paper is accepted for publication, the author must revise the galley proofs within a maximum period of two weeks.

Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society annually publishes a list of all the anonymous reviewers as well as the statistics for article acceptance, acceptance upon revision, and rejection and the average length of time between receipt of an article and communication to the author of the final decision.

Publishing ethics, good practices, and detection of plagiarism and/or scientific misconduct

Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society is committed to complying with good practices and ethics in publication. These are understood as:

- **Authorship:** in the event of multiple authorship, the participation of all the authors must be acknowledged, all authors must agree upon the submission of the article, and the lead author must ensure that all authors approve the revisions and the final version.
- **Publication practices:** the author(s) must make known any previous publication of the article, including translations, or simultaneous submissions to other journals.
- **Conflict(s) of interest:** authors must declare financial support for the research and any commercial, financial, or personal relationship that may affect the results and conclusions of the work. In these cases, a statement should be included in the article stating such circumstances.
- **Review process:** the Editorial Board must ensure that the published research papers have been reviewed by at least two specialists in the field, and that the review process is fair and impartial. Therefore, it must ensure confidentiality of the review at all times and the absence of reviewer conflicts of interest. The Editorial Board shall base its decisions on the reasoned reports prepared by the reviewers.

The journal will implement at least two mechanisms to detect plagiarism and/or scientific malpractice. Plagiarism is understood as:

- Presenting others' work as your own
- Adopting words or ideas from other authors without due recognition
- Absence of quotation marks in a literal quotation
- Providing incorrect information regarding the true source of a citation
- Paraphrasing a source without mentioning it
- Abuse of paraphrasing, even if the source is mentioned

The practices constituting scientific malpractice are as follows:

- Fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism or omission of data
- Publication duplication and self-plagiarism
- Claiming individual authorship of collectively-authored work
- Conflicts of authorship

Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society may make scientific malpractices public should they be discovered. In these cases, the Editorial Board reserves the right to withdraw those previously published articles when, subsequent to its publication, a lack of reliability due to involuntary errors or to fraud or the aforementioned scientific malpractices is determined. The objective of such a withdrawal is to correct any previously published scientific production, ensuring integrity of the remaining works. The conflict of duplicity, caused by the simultaneous publication of an article in two journals, will be resolved by determining the date of receipt of the work at each journal. If only a part of the article contains an error, it can be corrected subsequently by means of an editorial note or admission of errata. In the event of conflict, the journal will ask the author or authors for explanations and relevant evidence for clarification, and will make a final decision based thereon.

The journal will publish a communication in its printed and electronic versions regarding the withdrawal of a particular text, stating the reasons for taking this measure, in order to distinguish malpractice from involuntary error. Likewise, the journal will notify the withdrawal to the officials of the institution to which the author(s) of the article belong(s). As a preliminary step to the final withdrawal of an article, the journal may publish a communication of irregularity, providing the necessary information in the same terms as in the case of withdrawal. The communication of irregularity will be maintained for the minimum time required, and will conclude with its withdrawal or with the formal retraction of the article.

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Checklist for preparing submissions

As part of the submission process, authors must check that they fulfil all of the following conditions:

1. The submission has not been previously published or submitted to another journal (or an explanation has been sent via 'Comments to the publisher').
2. The submission is filed as an OpenOffice or Microsoft Word document.
3. Wherever possible, a DOI has been provided for each of the references.
4. The text spacing is 1.5 lines; font size is 12 points, and italics are used instead of underlining, except for URLs. All of the illustrations, figures, and tables are placed in the text in their corresponding positions, rather than at the end of the text.
5. The text meets the bibliographic and style requirements described in the 'instructions to the author' section in the author's guidelines.
6. If the submission is sent to an expert reviewer, all instructions should be followed to ensure anonymous review.
7. The author must comply with the ethical standards and good practices of the journal, in accordance with the document describing these which is available on the *Debats* website.

The files should be sent to: secretaria.debats@dival.es

In the event these instructions are not followed, submissions may be returned to the authors.





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