

## Volume 8, Number 3

Hipatia Press

[www.hipatiapress.com](http://www.hipatiapress.com)



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# The Researcher in front of The Mirror. Analyzing Economic Phenomena through Your Own Experience

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## Abstract

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Economics is a social science in which it is possible to promote a methodological and disciplinary diversity that is complementary to its theoretical diversity. The methodological plurality goes beyond the interrelation of quantitative and qualitative techniques since it also allows us to reflect on the interaction between the personal and professional trajectory of the researcher in the approach and analysis of the object of study. The objective of this article is to analyze this cross-linking based on the results of the doctoral research developed by the author. The autoethnography resource was used to try to understand the role that reciprocity has in the relations between tenants and landlords living in a popular neighborhood of Bogotá, Colombia. Once the context of the research has been presented, the methodological approach employed to use the experience itself as a source of analysis is presented and it concludes with the conclusions that firstly point to recognizing other possible ways of doing economics not only in terms of interpretation of the economic phenomenon but in terms of assuming an ethical and moral commitment to the problems that arise particularly in housing.

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**Keywords:** methodology, markets, housing, reciprocity, autoethnography

# **El Investigador frente al Espejo. Analizar los Fenómenos Económicos a partir de La Experiencia Propia**

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## **Resumen**

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La economía es una ciencia social en la cual es posible promover una diversidad metodológica y disciplinar que sea complementaria a su diversidad teórica. La pluralidad metodológica va más allá de la interrelación de técnicas cuantitativas y cualitativas puesto que permite también reflexionar acerca del entrelazamiento de la trayectoria personal y profesional del investigador en el abordaje y análisis del objeto de estudio. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar este entrecruzamiento a partir de los resultados de la investigación doctoral desarrollada por el autor. En ella se utilizó el recurso de la autoetnografía para tratar de entender el papel que la reciprocidad tiene en las relaciones entre inquilinos y arrendadores que viven en un barrio popular de Bogotá, Colombia. Una vez presentado el contexto de la investigación se presenta el abordaje metodológico empleado para usar la propia experiencia como fuente de análisis y se finaliza con las conclusiones que apuntan en primer lugar a reconocer otras formas posibles de hacer economía no solo en el plano de la interpretación del fenómeno económico sino en cuanto a asumir un compromiso ético y moral frente a las problemáticas que se presentan particularmente en materia de vivienda.

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**Palabras clave:** metodología, mercados, vivienda, reciprocidad, autoetnografía

**U**na de las principales características metodológicas de la investigación en ciencia económica consiste en la aplicación de un enfoque hipotético-deductivo y del empleo de técnicas cuantitativas. Para analizar un fenómeno económico se procede a la elaboración de premisas o hipótesis y se aislan los fenómenos de su contexto conservando solo aquellos aspectos esenciales. Entre las ventajas de este procedimiento se destacan la posibilidad de aislar cualquier fenómeno particular y la posibilidad de avanzar por partes en el estudio de una realidad compleja. A partir de las relaciones lógicas que se establecen entre esos conjuntos de premisas es posible la elaboración de modelos, casi todos, expresados de forma matemática. Es así como se constituye una ciencia económica en donde predominan las conclusiones científicas sobre las opiniones, valoraciones, intereses o deseos personales (*Cuevas, 2004*).

La valoración de la subjetividad en la producción del conocimiento, no obstante, ha sido un aspecto que se ha ido reconociendo desde inicios del siglo XX y por lo tanto, en algunas disciplinas se ha pasado de la aplicación exclusiva de los métodos experimentales hacia nuevas formas de producción del conocimiento que incluso ponen en debate lo que se puede entender como ciencia. Oliveira (*2002*) en una revisión de literatura sobre este aspecto señala que hay una corriente de pensadores que consideran que la ciencia hace parte del complejo de la cultura. No se trataría pues de la identificación de leyes generales sino de interpretaciones que están asociadas a significaciones.

La economía es, sin embargo, una de las ciencias que menos ha sido influida por este giro en la concepción de lo científico y aún hoy se enseña lo que Polanyi (*2012*) identifica bajo el nombre de definición formal de lo económico en donde la escasez y la gestión eficiente de los recursos le confiere a la economía un rol técnico y científico que aparentemente estaría fuera de las confrontaciones ideológicas o los debates ético-morales. Las posibilidades para desarrollar una “economía interpretativa” demandarían entonces una discusión acerca de la científicidad del conocimiento producido y especialmente de la subjetividad en las significaciones que las comunidades le confieren a los procesos económicos. Esta posibilidad tendría mayores oportunidades desde una definición substantiva, la cual,

estaría más enfocada en reconocer la dependencia del ser humano de la naturaleza y de los demás seres humanos<sup>1</sup> (Polanyi, 2012).

Rodado (2005) denunció la fragilidad científica de la economía e hizo especial énfasis en el plano metodológico. Según él la producción teórica económica producida por los economistas clásicos en el siglo XVIII y XIX tenían como propósito mostrar las bondades del naciente sistema económico capitalista. La producción teórica estaba cargada de sesgos ideológicos y éticos que eran encubiertos gracias al desarrollo teórico y mediante esa teoría se logró legitimar el nuevo orden económico. Una de las mayores inconsistencias se da, por ejemplo, al tratar de entender la forma en que se comportan los individuos. La hipótesis de la maximización racional de la utilidad sería para este autor una aproximación muy pobre para comprender el comportamiento humano. Sin embargo, se sigue usando, por la comodidad que se tiene al vincularla con técnicas como el cálculo diferencial. El resultado de este análisis hace coincidir los resultados obtenidos con intereses individuales y/o de clase así como de una actividad económica con la cual el economista tiene afinidad. Los prejuicios estarían en este caso presentes justamente porque actividades como la producción de la riqueza y la distribución del bienestar humano son difíciles de abordar estrictamente por la lógica.

Es en este contexto que se presenta a continuación los resultados de una investigación que tuvo como objeto de estudio el mercado de arrendamiento residencial en un barrio popular de Bogotá, Colombia. En un esfuerzo por alcanzar un punto medio entre un esfuerzo riguroso por entender las generalidades de este mercado y del otro lado de reconocer la subjetividad del investigador y su posicionamiento frente a la promoción de otro tipo de economía se presenta a continuación la contextualización del problema de investigación y luego el abordaje metodológico haciendo una mención especial al uso de la auto-etnografía. Se finaliza con una serie de conclusiones que van dirigidas hacia el comprometimiento ético y moral del economista como complemento a ese perfil técnico y objetivo que está sobrevalorado en la actualidad.

## **Más Allá del Cálculo Costo-beneficio: Otras Formas de Ver la Reciprocidad en las Relaciones Económicas**

La comprensión del mercado más convencional de arrendamiento residencial parte de los modelos empleados en economía urbana los cuales señalan que es posible un orden urbano como resultado del libre mercado. Se señala la racionalidad que siguen los individuos en la elección residencial y de los parámetros que se toman en cuenta: distancia respecto de un centro donde se concentran las ofertas de trabajo y los costos de transporte que aumentan a medida que se aleja de él. Si un individuo desea vivir cerca de ese centro estará dispuesto a pagar una mayor renta en función de los costos de transporte que evita. La corriente marxista, por el contrario, considera que no existe esa libertad de elección residencial y que ese orden urbano es resultado de la lucha de clases. Una tercera corriente de raíz keynesiana destaca el papel especulativo del mercado inmobiliario y considera que los individuos además de ser consumidores son inversionistas y que sus decisiones de localización dependen de conocer las decisiones de localización de los demás individuos (Abramo, 2010). Es justamente ese carácter estratégico y relacional en la toma de decisiones en el mercado de la vivienda que fue considerado como punto de partida para comprender el arrendamiento residencial en los barrios populares. No obstante, lejos de un cálculo propio de un inversionista se plantea que la interrelación de las decisiones en materia residencial dependían de la existencia de redes de relaciones sociales territorializadas (Granovetter, 1985).

En cuanto a la reciprocidad aparece inicialmente en los estudios de antropología económica (Temple, 2003) pero gracias a corrientes como el neo-institucionalismo comenzó a ser abordada como una norma social determinante para entender los mecanismos de coordinación desplegados por los agentes económicos (Fiani, 2011). En el campo de teoría de juegos, Axelrod (1984) concluyó que la estrategia “ojito por ojito” podía adecuarse a escenarios de racionalidad limitada, es decir, en situaciones donde no hay información suficiente y completa para la toma de decisiones. Lacerda (2011) retoma la teoría de las convenciones para analizar el funcionamiento de los mercados informales de arrendamiento en una favela de Recife, Brasil. Ella hace referencia a lo que llama la convención de confianza –

lealtad que existe entre arrendador y arrendatario y del cómo ellos dejan a un lado sus particularidades y se enfocan en un bien común.

Tabla 1.

*Estructuras elementales de la reciprocidad*

| Estructuras de reciprocidad  | Ejemplos de valores que genera                          |
|--|---|
| <b>Reciprocidad bilateral:</b> relaciones interpersonales de alianza<br>(Matrimonio, compadrazgo, etc.) que se establecen entre individuos, familias y grupos. |   |
| Reciprocidad binaria simétrica (cara a cara)   | Amistad   |
| Reciprocidad binaria asimétrica  | Prestigio para el donador                               |
| <b>Reciprocidad ternaria:</b> envuelve como mínimo a tres partes.<br>Se trata de una reciprocidad transitiva   |   |
| Reciprocidad ternaria unilateral<br><i>Ejemplo: dádiva inter-generacional entre parent e hijos</i>   | Responsabilidad   |
| Reciprocidad ternaria bilateral<br><i>Ejemplo: gestión de recursos comunes</i>   | Justicia y confianza                                    |
| Reciprocidad ternaria centralizada   | Obediencia y obligación con el centro de redistribución |

Fuente: López (2012) con base en Temple (2003)

Autores como Polanyi (2012) se refirieron a la reciprocidad como una forma de integración de los mercados. Estas formas son patrones que garantizan unidad y estabilidad en la economía y están en diferentes niveles y sectores de la economía. La reciprocidad denota movimientos entre puntos correlativos de agrupaciones simétricas y evidencia a su vez las interrelaciones personales. El efecto integrador aquí va más allá de la sumatoria de comportamientos individuales porque está atravesado por arreglos institucionales. López (2012) en un esfuerzo por enriquecer este concepto de reciprocidad retoma esta noción de forma de integración y la vincula con los aportes de Dominique Temple (2003) quién identifica lo que denomina como estructuras elementales de la reciprocidad. A diferencia del enfoque neo-institucionalista que ve la reciprocidad como estrategia para la coordinación de los agentes económicos aquí se la entiende como fuente de

valores humanos y por ende de arreglos institucionales que permiten el encuadramiento de lo económico en lo social.

La tipología de estructuras elementales de reciprocidad está en función de criterios como el número, la posición y el estatus de los participantes que producen y reproducen determinados valores humanos. Además se puede distinguir una reciprocidad positiva que engendra esos valores y una reciprocidad negativa que es conocida como formas alienadas de reciprocidad en donde pasa lo contrario, se destruyen. Es así como se planteó la hipótesis de que las relaciones contractuales entre arrendatarios y arrendadores estaban atravesadas por una reciprocidad generadora –en el mejor de los casos– de valores humanos que servían como marco institucional para encuadrar este mercado. A ese proceso se le denominó como subjetivación de la relación contractual ([Sáenz, 2015](#)).

Este proceso de encuadramiento no podía ser abordado exclusivamente a través de una caracterización de los participantes en el mercado sino que debía enfocarse en sus interrelaciones y su evolución en el tiempo. La aplicación de una encuesta podía en el mejor de los casos señalar la existencia de vínculos basados en el parentesco o la amistad pero no permitía analizar el proceso por el cual las personas generaban un acuerdo inicial de palabra y lo iban ajustando con el paso del tiempo en virtud de los conflictos que surgían o la forma en que lo daban por terminado. El instrumento a emplear tenía que dar cuenta de lo que Lacerda ([2011](#)) llamaba la interpretación y los juicios elaborados por los mismos participantes del mercado que pesan sobre los factores objetivos o su jerarquía en el orden de las decisiones y acciones. Se requería entonces de técnicas cualitativas que permitieran ver la evolución de estas relaciones sociales y económicas que pueden tomar años en consolidarse.

La auto-etnografía fue un recurso metodológico novedoso porque como técnica cualitativa parecía responder a ese desafío ya señalado sobre la interpretación y los juicios pero adicionalmente porque ofrecía la particularidad de que el investigador se mirase en el espejo para comprender ese fenómeno económico y reflexionara y aceptara sus propias consideraciones al respecto y las abordara de forma crítica. Lejos de negar su interés por el desarrollo de una economía más solidaria consideró que el ejercicio auto-etnográfico permitiría ir más allá de una ideología y ver las

dificultades que existen para concretar iniciativas sea desde lo público como desde lo comunitario. La principal inquietud giraba alrededor de una economía popular que existe en la práctica del arrendamiento que no es tomada en cuenta en la política urbana, centrada en ofrecer viviendas sociales que no se pueden usar como fuente complementaria de ingresos. Más allá de las posibilidades que ofrecen a los arrendadores el poder alquilar parcialmente espacios de su vivienda se tiene en este fenómeno económico un aspecto determinante en la generación y fortalecimiento de un tejido social y del fomento de redes de solidaridad que van más allá del plano habitacional ¿no sería eso suficiente para justificar innovar en este campo de las políticas de vivienda?

Desde este enfoque teórico de encuadramiento social del mercado y el empleo de la auto-etnografía como recurso metodológico para reflexionar acerca de una economía popular en el campo de la vivienda se requería examinar en el texto producido la existencia de los lazos familiares y de amistad y la forma en que estos habían servido para subjetivar la relación contractual. En un segundo momento se requería examinar esas formas alienadas de la reciprocidad y sus efectos en materia habitacional. Por último, entender el proceso mediante el cual el tejido social se re-producía en el barrio garantizando que esa economía popular en torno a la vivienda generase también una identidad asociada al territorio.

### **La Auto-etnografía: Una Aproximación Metodológica hacia la Reciprocidad**

La subjetividad en el análisis de este mercado se puede apreciar también cuando lejos de querer ocultar el sesgo ideológico y la relación entre la vida personal y profesional del investigador se trató de hacer una reflexión sobre estos entrecruzamientos. El barrio estudio de caso cumplió con los requisitos objetivos: ser popular y tener una alta proporción de hogares inquilinos, sin embargo, también tuvieron lugar criterios subjetivos: era el lugar donde se había vivido y lejos de querer ocultar ese hecho se trató de hacerlo explícito y de reflexionar sobre la situación en que el investigador también hacía parte de la comunidad de la que hablaba. Se procedió a realizar inicialmente una encuesta para caracterizar el mercado y luego se realizó el ejercicio de auto-

etnografía para comprender como la reciprocidad vista desde ese enfoque de lo comunicativo permitía una subjetivación de la relación económica, es decir, relaciones económicas en donde lo que más importa es el estatus de las personas.

El barrio se llama Patio Bonito I y se localiza en la periferia suroccidental de Bogotá. Surgió a comienzos de los años setenta del siglo pasado y después de varias décadas ha experimentado un proceso de densificación y crecimiento de la población inquilina que llegaba al 65% para el momento de la investigación. En el conjunto de la ciudad este barrio había vivido todo un proceso de mejoramiento y valorización debido a la expansión de redes de transporte y de infraestructura pública y privada (Díaz, 2003). Las actividades económicas ligadas especialmente a su proximidad con una plaza de mercado de escala metropolitana se fueron diversificando al surgir una centralidad de comercio popular y circuitos de economías ilegales, una zona de prostitución, etc.



*Figura 1.* Barrio Patio Bonito I

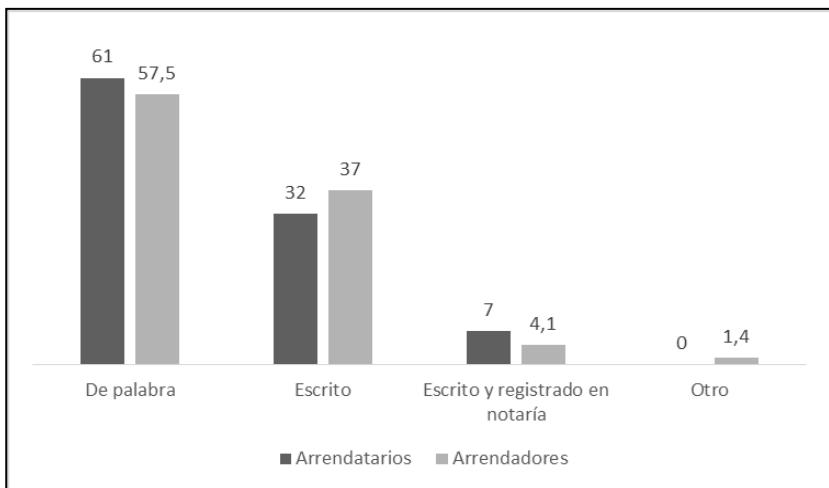
**Fuente:** Google Earth. Imagen obtenida en el segundo semestre de 2013.

El barrio está delimitado por la línea azul.

Se aplicaron 201 cuestionarios de los cuales 74 correspondían a arrendadores (36,8%) y 127 arrendatarios (63,2%). El barrio tiene una extensión aproximada de 15 hectáreas y 43 manzanas que agrupan poco más de 1000 lotes siendo casi nula la existencia de lotes sin edificar. Ha tenido

lugar cambios en los usos de suelo en algunas manzanas donde se ha desarrollado grandes locales de comercio popular (ver figura 1).

Las encuestas permitieron hacer una caracterización de los inquilinos y los arrendadores. Como se puede observar en las figuras 1 y 2 existían situaciones de contratos establecidos de palabra y una red basada en la amistad y los vínculos de parentesco que era muy importante para acceder a la vivienda.



*Figura 1.* Modalidad de contrato entre arrendadores y arrendatarios en Patio Bonito I en 2013

Fuente: Sáenz (2018)

Otros aspectos tomados en consideración para reflexionar sobre la reciprocidad se centraron en indagar por el lugar de nacimiento de arrendatarios y arrendadores, así como del tiempo que llevaban unos y otros compartiendo la vivienda. En suma, ser del mismo lugar de origen, ser amigos o familiares podía servir como un elemento que jugaba a favor para acceder a la vivienda, pero también podía suceder que a partir de una relación completamente anónima surgiera una amistad a partir de esa convivencia (Sáenz, 2018).

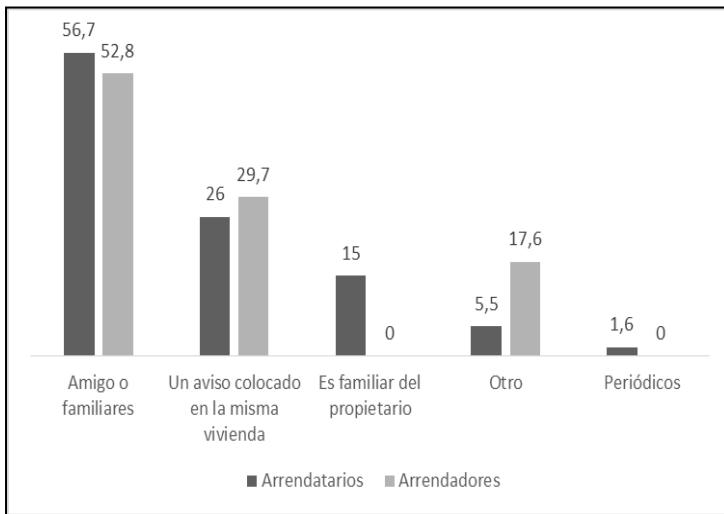


Figura 2. Modalidad por la cual conoció (o divulgó) la oferta de esa vivienda. Patio Bonito I (2013)

Fuente: Sáenz (2018)

Posteriormente se realizó el ejercicio de auto-etnografía. Blanco (2012) señala que se trata de una perspectiva metodológica que sostiene que una vida individual puede dar cuenta de los contextos en que vive, así como de las épocas históricas que recorre a lo largo de su existencia. Se parte de la idea de que es posible leer una sociedad a través de una biografía. Lo particular de este ejercicio está en pensar que es la trayectoria personal del mismo investigador una fuente para comprender esa interrelación entre individuo y sociedad y que un aspecto importante en esa trayectoria es el tránsito desde una postura positivista hacia otra más humanista e interpretativa. El resultado sería la generación de un conocimiento experimental y reflexivo que combina lo literario con lo científico. Bajo esta perspectiva predomina ante todo lo interpretativo, la subjetividad que no excluye su combinación con técnicas que apuesten por la generación de un conocimiento objetivo.

La auto-etnografía es un tema de reflexión desde los años 70 y 80 del siglo pasado. Citando a Hayano (1982) se define como una técnica aplicada al estudio de un grupo social que el investigador considera como propio ya sea por su ubicación socioeconómica, ocupación laboral o por desempeñar una actividad específica. En cuanto a los requisitos para la elaboración de una autoetnografía se citan los aportes de autores como Ellis y Bochner (1996) quienes destacan ante todo el proceso de reflexión del etnógrafo en ese contexto social y cultural y el peso que tiene el recurso literario (Blanco, 2012).

Para el caso de la investigación citada se optó por la elaboración de un texto que recogía la historia de vida del investigador siguiendo las pautas que autores como Maganto (2010) recomendaban para la producción de este tipo de recursos literarios: la honestidad y el apoyo en materiales fotos y consultas a otros miembros de la familia que proveen información. Se organizó el relato en función de las etapas residenciales que el investigador había tenido y en cada una de ellas trató de relatar el tipo de relaciones establecidas entre su familia y la del arrendador. El resultado final fue una matriz resumen que sirvió para sintetizar la trayectoria personal. En la sección siguiente se presentarán fragmentos inéditos de ese texto. Teniendo en cuenta que se hace referencia a personas próximas al investigador se ha optado por cambiar los nombres para mantener oculta su identidad.

Autoras como Acevedo destacan los campos en los cuales son útiles los relatos autobiográficos siendo uno de ellos la investigación y la formación. Citando a Ricouer (2006) destaca que el autor de la historia se mira, se objetiva y se muestra bajo una nueva luz, re-significa el pasado y el presente así como re-proyecta el futuro. Agrega que contar para sí es reconocerse a sí mismo en las permanencias y en las mudanzas que conforman la propia identidad y que contarse para los otros produce un efecto de reconocimiento mutuo, resultado de la confirmación por la mirada del otro (Acevedo, 2007).

Por último, en relación a los procedimientos para analizar el texto producido por el investigador (y de manera más general los relatos de vida) se identifican las siguientes operaciones para el tratamiento de los datos que se inspiran en el análisis literario: la identificación, la selección y la clasificación. La identificación remite a encontrar indicadores que permitan localizar distintos fragmentos del relato (temas, subtemas, por ejemplo), al

mismo tiempo se hace una selección de la información conservando aquella que resulta de interés para el investigador y borrando lo que se considera superfluo. La clasificación será la ordenación de los datos elegidos de acuerdo a un criterio previamente definido en función de los campos conceptuales que se trabajan ([Acevedo, 2007](#)).

### **Comprender la Reciprocidad en el Mercado Residencial a través de la Auto-etnografía**

El entrecruzamiento de la trayectoria personal con la profesional está presente desde el momento en que se trata de analizar científicamente una experiencia cotidiana como es la de ser inquilino y vivir en un barrio de origen informal. La historia de vida (la historia de mi vida) hace referencia a un hogar que se constituye a finales de la década de los años setenta y que tiene como expectativa tener una casa propia pero que debe vivir en arriendo en diferentes barrios sin legalizar hasta que fruto de la separación de sus padres en los años noventa se verán en la necesidad de apelar a algunos familiares. Posteriormente vendrán los cambios cuando los hijos crezcan y busquen su independencia residencial.

Reflexionar sobre la experiencia propia surge al inicio del proyecto de doctorado a causa de la lectura del trabajo de Mariz, Alves & Batista ([2006](#)) titulado los universitarios de favela en donde se señala cómo a través del ingreso a la universidad tiene lugar un acercamiento cultural entre quienes viven allí y quiénes no. Es un proceso por el cual se rompe el círculo de exclusión y marginación de los hogares de bajos recursos y aunque se puede pensar que se trata de un cambio a nivel individual tiene lugar también una mudanza en las luchas y formas de organización popular en esos lugares. Tiene lugar un ascenso social que puede verse reflejado en un mejoramiento de los ingresos y/o por el status que confiere la educación y lo más importante es el cambio subjetivo que se experimenta ya que surge una nueva visión de mundo, nuevos valores, nuevas posturas políticas y/o nuevas actitudes frente al género.

Autores de base marxista cuestionan el proceso de ascenso social de los jóvenes y apuntan a denunciarlas por su carácter conservador puesto que estaría señalando las posibilidades de una movilidad social negando la

oposición entre las clases, defendiendo un status quo y la opresión social a través de una ideología de “querer es poder”. No obstante, esa lucha por el ascenso social podría entrelazarse a una propuesta de cambio social y viceversa. Los resultados obtenidos en Mariz, Alves & Batista (2006) apuntaron en esa línea ya que más allá de un mejoramiento económico se esperaba por parte de los estudiantes entrevistados responder a preocupaciones de tipo humanitario y político<sup>2</sup>.

Este compromiso con lo comunitario proviene de las experiencias cotidianas que se viven en los barrios y no solo se refieren a los espacios públicos sino a la vivienda misma. El conjunto de relaciones sociales y su regulación está asociada a las convenciones sociales. Eymard-Duvernay (2001) representante de la Escuela Francesa de las Convenciones señala, por ejemplo, que antes que la celebración de los contratos entre seres anónimos se debe pensar en la generación de compromisos entre las partes que realizan una transacción y propuso una serie de etapas para explicarla: 1) la generación de un compromiso mutuo, 2) la interacción a la vista, 3) la explicitación de críticas cuando tienen lugar desde alguna de las partes, 4) la actualización y 5) revisión de los compromisos.

En la trayectoria residencial del autor y en particular en las relaciones establecidas con los arrendadores tuvo lugar un compromiso inicial (un acuerdo de palabra) entre su familia y el arrendador. En los primeros lugares donde se vivió esos compromisos eran asumidos por los padres y en particular por el jefe de familia. No obstante, la interacción a la vista se daba en el día a día y podía referirse más a la mujer por ser ella quién se quedaba en la vivienda. Es más, en algunos casos fue entre las mujeres que se tejía ese lazo de amistad.

El dueño de la casa –don Miguel Ángel- vivía allí mismo con otros hermanos, una hermana y con la mamá. Ellos también venían del campo, creo que del municipio de Guateque. Recuerdo de esa época que mi mamá iba al segundo o tercer piso de la casa y conversaba con la señora Flor que era la mamá de don Miguel Ángel y tomábamos café con leche y mogollas. La relación que tuvo mi mamá con doña Flor fue casi la de una hija con su mamá y cuando ella falleció le dolió mucho esa pérdida. Varios de los hermanos de don Miguel Ángel se fueron independizando y cada uno consiguió su propia casa. Después de que nos fuimos del barrio,

mi mamá perdió contacto con esta familia pero como seguía visitando a doña Luz, pudo después reencontrarse con la hija de doña Flor y visitarla.

Este proceso llevaría también implícito lo que se denominó como una subjetivación de la relación contractual, es decir, que los términos en que se fijaban los acuerdos o compromisos dependían del estatus de las personas. El hecho de ser amigos, familiares o paisanos podía ser determinante en el acceso a la vivienda, en la determinación del precio de alquiler, en las posibilidades de usar la voz para reestructurar los compromisos y convivir en la misma vivienda. Estos vínculos que podían o no pre-existir a la relación contractual garantizarían la confianza necesaria para que la relación se mantuviera en el tiempo sin recurrir a una normatividad oficial.

Por ejemplo:

Creo que uno de los cambios más marcados en mi trayectoria residencial es este. Con la separación de mis padres y la pérdida del lote que se había tratado de comprar, vino la imposibilidad de seguir pagando el arriendo en la casa de doña Pepita en Almenar. Fueron unos familiares de mi padre que trabajaban en Corabastos los que nos recomendaron con el señor Eduardo. Este señor era hermano del esposo de una prima de mi papá y vivía en una casa en el barrio Pinar del Rio que queda al lado de la plaza de mercado. Vivía con tres hijos (Hugo, Fernando y Carlos) mientras que el resto de la familia vivía en el campo, en Pauna.

Retomando los aportes ya citados de Temple (2003) y López (2012) fue importante describir la reciprocidad como fuente generadora del vínculo social, de los valores humanos. Cuando la reciprocidad se da entre personas próximas surge la amistad o mutualidad, el aspirar a hacer comunidad. Sobre la justicia es importante notar que su particularidad radica en definirse en relación al otro y remite a una estructura social en donde la confrontación y la buena distancia o justo medio se alcanzan por medio de la reciprocidad. Existen también las formas alienadas de la reciprocidad que muestran el lado negativo en las interacciones sociales y que fomentarían la enemistad, la violencia, etc. (Temple, 2003).

En la historia personal del investigador, por ejemplo, el acceder a la vivienda implicó independientemente de ser una relación económica cierto sentimiento de gratitud y de deuda con aquellos que habían permitido acceder a un techo. Ese agradecimiento se manifestó a través de las tareas de cuidado.

La casa de don Eduardo era de un solo piso con terraza. Nosotros llegamos a vivir los tres en un cuarto al fondo del primer piso, mientras el dueño vivía en otro cuarto y los hijos en otro. Había un garaje utilizado para un soldador que tenía su negocio allí. Con el paso del tiempo, este señor entregó ese garaje y nosotros pasamos a vivir ahí. Don Eduardo tenía una enfermedad que le estaba dificultando caminar y como los hijos trabajaban en la plaza llegó un momento en que tuvimos que cuidar de él. Yo fui con él más de una vez a visitar un médico en Soacha y era responsable de llevarlo y traerlo.

La reciprocidad también se expresa desde los arrendadores hacia sus arrendatarios pues como se menciona en el siguiente fragmento puede recibirse un apoyo que va más allá de un alquiler barato.

Con el cambio de barrio y ahora cerca de Corabastos le ofrecieron [a mi mamá] trabajar en la plaza de mercado. En ese entonces muchos llegaban a trabajar como informales, montando pequeñas tiendas y negocios en las calles y zonas públicas de este mercado, siempre tratando de huir de los vigilantes que decomisaban la mercancía. Mi hermano y yo íbamos a la plaza a desgranar frijol o arveja y en otras ocasiones nos daban paquetes para ir por la calle vendiendo pero fue algo muy temporal.

Si bien la Escuela Francesa de las Convenciones apela al concepto de compromisos y postula las cinco etapas ya mencionadas no aplica en situaciones en que los conflictos se resuelven de forma violenta. En este mercado habitacional la violencia también está presente y abarca desde enfrentamientos verbales como acciones que atentan contra la integridad de las personas. Los motivos pueden estar relacionados con situaciones como el pago de las cuotas por el servicio de agua, de luz o por la convivencia con otros inquilinos y con los mismos arrendadores.

Mi mamá acostumbraba dar una cuota fija y siempre alegó que nosotros éramos solo tres personas y nuestro consumo era menor que las otras dos familias que eran de cinco y siete personas. Los dueños de la casa trabajaban en Corabastos y salían a las dos de la mañana y regresaban a las tres o cuatro de la tarde, razón por la cual no tenían como saber acerca de los consumos de cada familia y a las siete de la noche ya estaban durmiendo. A veces la cuestión era quién le daba primero la cuota y luego venía don Federico diciendo que era más y como nadie quería después pagar, se formaba el problema que se resolvía al final cuando alguno de nosotros o incluso los dueños asumía el saldo que faltaba para pagar el recibo. En relación a la energía se trataba de evitar las luces prendidas innecesariamente y como no teníamos televisor, ni usábamos mayores electrodomésticos, teníamos un consumo bajo. Ya no cocinábamos con estufa eléctrica y usábamos el gas de cilindro. En relación al teléfono y para evitar los no pagos, se decidió colocar un teléfono monedero que estaba en el corredor del segundo piso. Si bien podíamos dejar el número para situaciones de emergencia casi nunca se hacía porque era muy costoso hacer una llamada en comparación a hacerlo desde alguna tienda del barrio y porque luego empezaron a cobrar las llamadas que nos hacían. Nosotros decíamos que no se cobraban las llamadas que entraban, pero los dueños decían que sí y finalmente preferimos no usarlo... Estos problemas de convivencia nunca se resolvían por la vía del diálogo. Se guardaba silencio y aunque no había peleas, llegaban momentos en los cuales los comentarios lanzados al aire o como se dice las indirectas llegaron a generar momentos en los cuales hubo enfrentamientos verbales.

Soportar por necesidad evidencia el lado negativo de la reciprocidad, es tal vez uno de los aspectos que más influye para que los arrendatarios en la mayoría de los casos deseen ser propietarios de una vivienda para poder alcanzar la libertad que no tiene en cuanto a la forma de disponer de ella. Un aumento y mayor estabilidad en los ingresos del hogar puede entonces servir para romper con esas situaciones de dependencia.

Como la otra familia era muy grande, terminaron saliendo de la casa en busca de un espacio mayor. Se fueron a vivir en una casa de la misma cuadra y sacaron en arriendo un local en el cual montaron una tienda de cerveza. Hubo un tiempo que pasó esa pieza y garaje desocupados y fue finalmente mi hermano quién decidió tomarla en arriendo. Mi hermano ya había conseguido

cierta estabilidad laboral trabajando como distribuidor de los productos fabricados por una empresa de pegamentos ubicada en el municipio de Madrid y se interesó por la posibilidad que tenía para finalmente tener su propio espacio.

El rompimiento violento de esa dependencia puede llevar algunos casos al rompimiento de los lazos familiares y esta es una razón que incluso puede llevar a un deterioro del tejido social. En Sáenz (2015) se observó, por ejemplo, el papel de las instancias de conciliación. Un alto porcentaje de los asuntos abordados correspondían a pleitos entre arrendatarios y arrendadores que además eran familiares. El papel del conciliador era justamente el de apelar a esos vínculos de parentesco para convencer a las partes de resolver pacíficamente los conflictos surgidos por el tema habitacional.

La pre-existencia de los vínculos de parentesco no es el único que puede influir en las relaciones contractuales también lo hacen las relaciones de amistad que surgen justamente cuando se vive en el barrio. Con el tiempo se entablan amistades con los comerciantes del sector, con otras personas que viven en arriendo y con las cuales se cruzan en la calle, en el parque en torno a actividades deportivas, religiosas, comunitarias y es así como esas relaciones de amistad pueden servir para encontrar un lugar en donde vivir. En la historia del investigador se trató de un acercamiento a lo comunitario que surgió justo en el marco de una investigación sobre mercados informales de suelo y vivienda

A pesar de haber residido en el barrio, mis relaciones con otros vecinos eran mínimas, casi nulas. Apenas si saludaba a uno que otro vecino, especialmente a quienes tenían algún comercio como panadería, tienda de abarrotes o una miscelánea o porque eran choferes de la empresa donde trabajaba y que vivían también en el sector... Había buscado contacto con el párroco de mi barrio. La Iglesia se llamaba Santa Luisa de Marillac y alguien me había sugerido hablar con el padre para tratar de identificar otras organizaciones que trabajaran en el sector además de la Junta de Acción Comunal. En el despacho parroquial me dieron la información de un periódico llamado *El Campanazo* que era del barrio. Como nunca iba a misa, no tenía idea de la existencia del periódico, pero decidí anotar los datos de contacto del representante y fue así como conocí a Santiago.

Como fue mencionado en la sección anterior el hecho de un ascenso social puede implicar por un lado el mejoramiento de ingresos que en este caso permita acceder a mejores condiciones de vivienda en el mismo barrio pero llevó paradójicamente a que surgiera aunque tardíamente un cambio en la visión de mundo del investigador.

El Campanazo era un periódico que había nacido en 2002 y en su redacción participaban en su gran mayoría jóvenes que vivían en el mismo barrio o barrios cercanos, varios de ellos estudiantes de universidades públicas como la Distrital y la Nacional. Yo aún estaba trabajando como despachador de buses y me sentí interesado en participar del proyecto y empecé escribiendo una nota que llamé La Economía del Paradero. A partir de ese momento comencé a vincularme más y más y por medio del periódico fui conociendo el conjunto de organizaciones sociales que existían en el barrio y el sector. Cuando me retiré del trabajo de despachador me comprometí aún más y empecé a participar no solo como editorialista sino como reportero comunitario, como vendedor de periódicos los domingos a la salida de misas o en las principales calles del barrio, presentando el periódico a otros comerciantes del sector para conseguir la pauta publicitaria y finalmente aprendiendo a diseñar el periódico cuya publicación era mensual. Mi visión de Patio Bonito cambió en la medida en que empecé a sentirme identificado con este grupo para quienes era importante reivindicar la comunicación alternativa y comunitaria y del otro lado las prácticas populares y solidarias en el barrio. Había residido en el barrio pero siempre con la expectativa de salir de él y ahora quería continuar en la medida en que participaba de este proyecto.

La reproducción intergeneracional de estas prácticas se puede apreciar en el hecho de que las siguientes generaciones también apelan a los vínculos sociales para acceder a la vivienda.

Para ese entonces ya había construido una amistad especial con las personas de El Campanazo, había conocido a don Pedro, miembro de la JAC y también a algunas personas del comercio en el barrio. Les estuve recomendando y me puse a buscar en zonas como Riveras de Occidente que me gustaba y donde tenía algunos amigos a raíz del trabajo realizado con el periódico y la JAC de

ese barrio. Pero fue finalmente en la misma casa donde vivía Santiago que terminé viviendo, porque quedó libre el primer piso. En aquel momento él se había casado con una compañera del proceso llamada Natalia y se fueron a vivir en arriendo al barrio Barranquillita, cerca de la casa donde vivía la mamá de ella. Sin embargo, la mamá de Santiago, doña Violeta, les había ofrecido el primer piso de la casa porque quería que su hijo viviera en la casa para ayudarlos a ahorrar. Era lo que estaba haciendo una hermana de Santiago que vivía en el segundo piso de la casa, pero ellos rechazaron ese ofrecimiento y me dijeron – ¿Por qué no habla con doña Violeta y le dice que le arriende?

Un hecho valorado en la modernidad ha sido el hecho de que los precios sean determinados por el mecanismo de la mano invisible del mercado, pero en estos mercados al estar dichos precios asociados al status de las personas tiene lugar una reciprocidad que recuerda entonces el encuadramiento de lo económico en lo social. Se puede apreciar que el mercado del arrendamiento residencial en estos barrios populares oscila entre la subjetivación y la objetivación de la relación contractual, entre unas formas positivas de reciprocidad y sus formas alienadas y por lo tanto de la re-producción del tejido social como de su deterioro.

Reflexionar sobre la experiencia propia para comprender un aspecto clave en la comprensión del mercado de arrendamiento residencial es pertinente en términos académicos o profesionales para el autor ya que ese ejercicio reflexivo apunta a lo que autores como Maganto (2010) señalan desde el punto de vista sociológico sobre la autobiografía y la biografía ya que a través de ellas se puede informar sobre el significado atribuido a las personas, a las relaciones sociales y a las situaciones en cuanto desde un punto de vista psicológico remite a la interpretación que el propio sujeto realiza de sus experiencias pasadas.

Tal vez no soy propiamente un habitante “popular” en la medida en que existen muchos aspectos que me diferencian de la mayor parte de habitantes del barrio, pero finalmente mi trabajo va orientado a mostrar la heterogeneidad social y evitar caer en generalizaciones exageradas sobre la composición social de estos barrios. Finalmente mi interés tampoco es reclamar una identidad que realmente no es estática o única. Quiero sí reconocer el aporte que ese barrio popular ha dejado en mí, puesto que si

somos fruto de las relaciones sociales de las que participamos, soy resultado de ese universo popular, pero más allá, poco o mucho yo también hago parte de ese universo social y he ayudado a reproducir ese entorno como a transformarlo, sea a través de mis trabajos académicos, como por las actividades comunitarias como por las relaciones cotidianas que practiqué en los momentos en que me dediqué a vivir en el barrio, así como a aquellas que experimenté trabajando en mi tesis y que he consignado en el diario de campo.

En el plano de la investigación social le ha permitido adquirir un compromiso ético y moral que se traduce en un proyecto de investigación dirigido a la promoción de otras formas de economía y en particular con el proyecto antiutilitarista en ciencias sociales que retoma los aportes de Marcel Mauss (2003) quién en su ensayo sobre la dádiva llama la atención sobre el triple movimiento de dar, recibir y retribuir. En dicha propuesta se recogen conceptos como el de sociabilidad primaria y secundaria y derivado de la promoción de esa tesis antiutilitarista se ha adherido al manifiesto convivialista.

### **Conclusiones**

La economía es una ciencia social y como tal está atravesada por discusiones éticas, morales e ideológicas. En un esfuerzo por alcanzar la pretendida objetividad ha abusado de los recursos metodológicos que tiene a disposición. Se requiere entonces la promoción de otra forma más plural de enseñar y practicar la economía si se quiere realmente contribuir en la solución de las principales problemáticas de nuestras sociedades. El tema de la vivienda y en particular el acceso a la vivienda en arriendo en los barrios populares puede ser interpretado efectivamente desde una lógica que sigue anclada a la hipótesis de seres racionales, utilitaristas y egoístas o ser vista desde otros puntos de vista más heterodoxos que recuperen la noción de encuadramiento de lo económico en lo social, de la importancia del lazo social para comprender los mercados y del papel que juega la reciprocidad para la generación de valores y el fortalecimiento de lo comunitario en tiempos en donde predomina la especulación.

Cuando el investigador se ve en el espejo descubre que es posible utilizar su propia experiencia para comprender diferentes fenómenos sociales. Esta reflexividad no solo sería importante para pensar en las conclusiones de un estudio del mercado o en la generación de recomendaciones en materia de política pública sino en la identidad y el posicionamiento ético y normativo que el propio investigador desarrolla en la sociedad en la cual se encuentra viviendo su cotidiano. Rescatar ese lado positivo de la reciprocidad y de su capacidad para generar valores humanos se constituye en una alternativa para salir de una crisis enmarcada por el excesivo individualismo por un lado y del otro por el retorno de discursos autoritarios que eliminan toda posibilidad de libertad individual. Encontrar un punto medio en donde el individuo sea respetado y que este tenga un compromiso hacia lo colectivo es parte de los programas de economía social y solidaria que constituyen el horizonte que el autor posee para ayudar en la generación de ciudades más justas y equitativas.

En el caso colombiano predomina desde la política pública un enfoque que reduce el tema de la vivienda al acceso a la propiedad individual y a través del mercado. La situación del inquilino es vista entonces como la de quienes deben tolerar situaciones de dependencia y de subordinación frente al arrendador y que es la introducción de relaciones cada vez más mercantiles la respuesta para el mejoramiento de sus condiciones de vida. Sin embargo, el escenario no es tan negativo si se identifican los aspectos positivos de estas relaciones recíprocas que van desde la promoción de una economía popular solidaria, pasando por la generación de vínculos sociales y el fortalecimiento de una identidad con el territorio que se habita en contraste con la individualización creciente de formas de vivienda tipo conjunto cerrado. Esta identidad con el territorio es importante en la medida en que tienen lugar cada vez más procesos de renovación urbana que en algunos casos está acompañada de una expulsión de los habitantes que menores ingresos tienen. El compromiso ético está entonces en defender esa reciprocidad y de promover no solo desde la academia sino desde lo cotidiano valores tan necesarios como el de la mutualidad y la convivialidad.

## Notas

<sup>1</sup> Polanyi publicó en 1957 el artículo “The Economy as instituted process” en el libro *Trade and Market in the early empires*. Editado por Karl Polanyi, Conrad Arensbergen y Harry Pearson. Gateway Edition. Chicago. Allí planteó la concepción substantiva de lo económico y la contrastó con la definición formal.

<sup>2</sup> Los autores añaden además que esa motivación humanitaria y social se explica porque el éxito educativo no es importante solo para la vida individual sino para la vida en comunidad (Mariz, Alves & Batista, 2006).

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# Sociological Theory from Dialogical Democracy

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## Abstract

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Despite the long dialogical tradition both in Eastern and Western societies, in recent years the social dialogical turn is more and more evident in many domains of life. Citizens increasingly demand to have a saying in the seeking of solutions for their problematics, and advocate for a more democratic approach to science that fosters the inclusion of all voices and enhances the agency of citizens in social transformation. Therefore, global scientific research is progressively more oriented towards co-creation as a means to ensure social impact. In this context, social theory can provide the theoretical foundations to better address the societal challenges of concern, as well as the mechanisms to properly design research oriented to produce social impact, such as communicative methodology, and to monitor and evaluate such impact. Social theory would then serve its ultimate goal: to contribute to the improvement of societies. Sociology was born as part of the democracies to provide citizens with elements of analysis that would make it possible for them to make their decisions with the prior evidence of the consequences of each option. After a process of democratization, we return to the original sense, but now in a more democratic situation.

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**Keywords:** dialogic democracy, communicative methodology, social impact, co-creation, citizenship

# Teoría Sociológica desde la Democracia Dialógica

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## Resumen

A pesar de la larga tradición dialógica tanto en las sociedades orientales como occidentales, en los últimos años el giro social dialógico es cada vez más evidente en más y más ámbitos de la vida. Los ciudadanos demandan que su voz sea tenida en cuenta en la búsqueda de soluciones para sus problemáticas, y abogan por un enfoque más democrático de la ciencia que fomente la inclusión de todas las voces y mejore la agencia de los ciudadanos en la transformación social. Por lo tanto, la investigación científica global está progresivamente más orientada hacia la co-creación como un medio para garantizar el impacto social. En este contexto, la teoría sociológica puede proporcionar los fundamentos teóricos para abordar mejor los desafíos sociales de interés, así como los mecanismos para diseñar adecuadamente la investigación orientada a producir impacto social, como la metodología comunicativa, y para monitorear y evaluar dicho impacto. Desde este enfoque, la teoría sociológica servirá entonces a su objetivo final: contribuir a la mejora de las sociedades. La sociología nació como parte de las democracias para proporcionar a los ciudadanos elementos de análisis que les permitieran tomar sus decisiones con la evidencia previa de las consecuencias de cada opción. Después de un proceso de democratización, volvemos al sentido original, pero ahora en un contexto más democrático.

**Palabras clave:** democracia dialógica, metodología comunicativa, impacto social, co-creación, ciudadanía

**W**hen Michael Burawoy visited the community of researchers CREA he said, *'I speak of public sociology, but you do not only describe it, you also do public sociology'*. The communicative methodology developed by this research community contributes to a dialogic construction of knowledge that not only eliminates the relevant methodological gap between the researcher and the researched subject, as Habermas had proposed, but also achieves the political and social impact that citizenship in democratic societies demand today. The European Commission, in its new research framework program *Horizon Europe*, has already defined the indicators that will assess the political and societal impact. Moving away from the often wield criticism that such evaluation only favors applied research - anchored in dichotomies already overcome - today, the framework of dialogic democracies demands a sociological theory that is able to support the social creations that make these impacts possible and, in short, that contributes to the improvement of society.

It has almost been forty years since Habermas (1987) raised the issue of the disappearance of the qualitatively relevant gap between the researcher and the person under research. Hence, the hierarchical relationship that placed social theorists as the ones who could see beyond the common sense of researched people disappeared. The social movements of recent years have challenged these hierarchical relationships with slogans such as '*they do not represent us*' or "not in my name". Earlier, as well, in the big demonstrations, the representatives of big organizations, who were also speaking at the final conferences, were in the front row. That is also changing. There are cultural groups, such as the Roma people, who are pronouncing themselves in an increasingly majority way against investigations that are not carried out with communicative methodology; they do not accept others to talk about them without their voices being equally considered. All these changes are part of the progress of dialogic democracy in more and more countries and areas, thus recovering the original sense of democracies as Elster rigorously analyzed. And it is, in fact, in democratic societies and in the demands towards more dialogic democracies, that science becomes in turn more democratic and dialogic following those same movements and processes.

A part of sociological theories is oriented more or less intensely to direct collaboration in this dialogic democracy. The goal of those who are dedicated to it is not to make many conferences, publish many books, some of which, as Giddens said in his last years, were to be sold in airport bookstores. On the contrary, the objective is to make theoretical contributions together which citizenry in order to foster democratic transformations. That objective is what Burawoy (2014) described as organic public sociology, referring to the Gramscian concept of organic intellectuals who make contributions, in this case from sociological theory and research, to foster social transformation. In this line, we define with the concept of social creations (Aiello & Joanpere, 2014; Soler-Gallart, 2017) all those contributions from the social sciences that manage to transform realities, such as creating jobs where there is unemployment, as improving educational results where there is failure, or as generating social cohesion where there was violence. Just as in the medical sciences, where a discovery that enables a new vaccine or a new treatment is made, and thus, creates something new that improves people's lives; in the social sciences there are sociologists who contribute social creations that also contribute to the improvement of the life of all citizens.

Indeed, the emergence of social sciences is linked to that of democracies. Citizens demanded evidence with which they could effectively exert their newly gained freedom. This required science-based knowledge that allowed to understand the consequences of each possible option prior to making a choice. Thus, this dialogic turn reconnects sociological theories with their original aim, by providing new solutions that now incorporate a type of knowledge - the experience of lay people - that has often been disregarded and disdained from science.

However, the dialogic approach does not only exist in Western countries, but also in Eastern countries, even with roots in their ancient cultures, as is the case of the Indian tradition, The Nobel Economy Prize laureate Amartya Sen, in his book *The argumentative Indian* (Sen, 2005), explains that already in the ancient epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the two major epic poems of the Indian culture full of arguments and counter-arguments supporting the continuous debates, contrary antagonistic moral positions and viewpoints were often confronted through dialogue. An example of this are

the doubts and arguments of Arjuna and Krishna, two characters in the Mahabharata. Their discussions are still very relevant in the contemporary world: *one must commit to his/her personal duty; but must he/she do so at any cost?* This idea can be linked to Weber's contribution moving from ethics of intention to ethics of responsibility where, beyond our intentions, the consequences of our acts need to be taken into consideration as well. In the same nature, and delving into the study of dialogue and argumentation, Arjuna and Krishna's debates -and the ways these dialogues led to- can also be linked to Habermas' elaboration of the above-mentioned Webberian concept, making the original contribution more dialogic.

At a political level, the plurality of options and the respect towards all of them also follows a long tradition in the Indian society. This can be seen in the early Indian Buddhists, who highly vindicated dialogue as a means for social progress, as well as on the ruler Ashoka, who in the third century BC formulated one of the earliest rules for public discussion. In a similar vein, Emperor Akbar strongly supported open dialogue based on reasoning as the tool to address disagreements between those with different faiths. Thus, the preservation of democracy or the defense of secularism in India find its roots in the heterodoxy of thoughts and beliefs and the public debate around them that has traditionally been guaranteed (Sen, 2005). In this vein, the dialogic approach and the argumentative nature of the Indian tradition are key elements that allow to explain the seeking of social justice and the overcoming of social inequalities. Indeed, far from being something exclusive of the elites, language and dialogue offer all individuals, even the most excluded ones, the opportunity to have a saying in any matter of concern. In this line, dialogue, when set on an egalitarian basis, puts all participants, no matter their origin, status or studies, at the same level, since the strength of claims is based on the validity of the arguments that support them rather than on rhetorics or power relations.

Moreover, dialogism has also roots in the Chinese tradition. The Analects, one of Confucius (2019) classic works, gathers that one should never '*feel embarrassed to ask and learn from lesser people* (5.15)' (in Chinese: *Bu Chi Xia Wen*) or, in a similar vein, that '*When three people walk together, there must be one person who is a teacher* (7.22)' (in Chinese: *San Ren Xing, Bi You Wo Shi Yan*). These ancient teachings highlight how all

individuals are capable of making sense about the world around them and transmit that knowledge to others. Because of life experiences, each individual's ways and methods of learning and understanding are different. This implies that taking as many different perspectives into account as possible contributes to unveiling new insights of the issue under study. Similarly, the "Book of Documents" (Chinese: *Shu Jing/ Shang Shu*) (Anonymous, 2009), which is the earliest compilation of historical documents in China (Shen & Qian, 2019), highlights that '*someone who likes to ask, will have ample knowledge, but if someone only relies on himself instead of communicating with others, his knowledge will be shallow*' (Chinese: *Hao Wen Ze Yu, Zi Yong Ze Xiao*). Thus, the idea of the intersubjective construction of knowledge was already present in ancient China, were intellectuals following the Confucian teachings understood how a deeper understanding of the world can only be reached in interaction with others.

In line with the dialogic turn of societies (Giddens, Beck & Lash, 1994; Habermas, 1987), this tradition shifts the focus from positions of power - those from lesser positions ought to learn from those in higher stands- to the acknowledgement that everyone has something to contribute and everyone can become a teacher as every person has cultural intelligence (Flecha, 2000). In this context, dialogue becomes the tool to build collective meanings that go beyond the addition of individual understandings. Indeed, communicative interactions allow for intersubjective constructions of knowledge in which the contributions of the participants are collectively shared, contrasted and reformulated into new knowledge that could not have been reached outside of the debate (Flecha, 2000). Han Yu, an important Confucian intellectual who influenced later generations of Confucian thinkers and Confucian philosophy (Shen & Shun, 2008), listed the positive and negative examples in his argumentative writing "Shi shuo". He emphasized that having a dialogue with the teacher was necessary to achieve the purpose of learning and he highlighted that regardless of the status, the age or the location the truth exists where teaching exists, thus acknowledging the potential of any individual to be both teacher and student in communicative interactions.

In the history of China, one of the most flourishing period of schools and thoughts was during the Spring and Autumn period (770 BC - 476 BC) and the Warring States period (475 BC - 221 BC) of ancient China (Tan, 2012). This time is known as the period of “Hundred Schools of Thought”. In its context, the place that promoted the prosperity of different ideas and provided an equal and free dialogue environment was the Academy of the Gate of Chi (Chinese: *Jixia Xue Gong*) which almost simultaneously emerged with the Plato Academy in Greece (Needham & Ling, 1956). The Academy of the Gate of Chi gathered several philosophical schools such as Confucianism, Taoism, Mohist, Legalist, Logicians, all of which have been active in promoting the principles of free debate, mutual absorption, integration and development (Zhang, 2009; Zhao & Chen, 2019). In short, the dialogic approach present in ancient Chinese culture and school reached its peak in that period and it still has a wide impact in China today.

### **Communicative Methodology and Dialogic Construction of Knowledge**

Now, recent changes in all sciences create possibilities for contributing from research to the development of more dialogic societies. Among these, one can find the communicative methodology, its relationship with the concept of co-creation - or dialogic creation of knowledge - and how that process contributes to the advancement of dialogic democracies. As well, the orientation towards social impact and its evaluation in scientific research programs are also discussed as a step forward in this democratic advance of society.

Communicative methodology of research involves in every step of research the people or the communities which are the focus of the study. Following this approach, both researchers and research subjects are invited to participate in an egalitarian dialogue; the former provide the expert knowledge and science-based evidence, will the latter provide their experience and their understanding of the context under study. Thus, communicative methodology seeks and promotes an active participation of citizens in science, including that of those vulnerable groups and minorities which are often excluded from scientific research. This approach has a twofold benefit: on the one hand, it provides tailored evidence-based

solutions that scientists on their own would not have been able to find. On the other hand, it actively engages citizens in the improvement and transformation of their social realities (Gómez, Padrós, Ríos, Mara & Pukepuke, 2019).

Almost two decades after it was first applied, Communicative Methodology has allowed to unveil evidence of transformative and exclusionary practices and elements for the contexts under research, allowing to foster the former and to overcome the latter; informing, in turn, citizens, scientists and policies that then incorporate the generated knowledge to improve people's lives (Valls & Padrós, 2011).

Indeed the fundamental postulates of Communicative Methodology include: language and action as inherent and universal attributes of all human beings; all individuals' capacity of agency and social transformation; the use of language based on communicative rationality to reach understanding, the consideration of lay people's common sense as valid knowledge, the abolition of the interpretative hierarchy based on power relations in favor of egalitarian interpretations, the creation of spaces that guarantee the equal epistemological level of all participants and the understanding of the dialogic nature of knowledge, as a result of intersubjective interactions.

Thus, unlike in ethnographies, participant research or action research (to name a few), the main objective of communicative methodology of research is the dialogue set between the accumulated knowledge in the scientific community and the experience lived from everyday life. Therefore, communicative methodology does not intend to collect the voices of the people being researched, but to dialogue with them in an egalitarian basis. Following this idea, the researcher does not participate in the researched context as if he were an equal, but, being aware of his position of power, he or she establishes the basis for an egalitarian dialogue (in the sense of Habermas, 1987).

The analysis of the communicative acts in the research process shows us how there are power interactions, from the fieldwork to the creation of advisory bodies with representatives of the citizens that are the target of that investigation. Only through the acknowledgement of their existence, these power relationships can be overcome, while, at the same time, the dialogic

communicative acts between researchers and researched subjects can be achieved (Sordé & Ojala, 2010).

### **Co-creation, Impact and Dialogic Democracy**

Encouraging people to engage and participate in science is a practice that falls far in time. Before the emergence in the 19th century of science as a discipline there are some accounts of amateur scientists engaging non-experts in the collection of data around natural history observations (Miller-Rushing, Primack & Bonney, 2012). This type of participation allowed for the building of key collections of animals, plants and minerals, among others, and highly contributed to the advancement of the scientific fields that promoted these practices (Miller-Rushing et al., 2012). In fact, this kind of contributions not only continued with the professionalization of science but also got progressively perfected, providing researchers with extensive amounts of datasets that would otherwise have been impossible to gather through with only the involvement of scientists. Moreover, technological advancements and the development of the Internet and connected devices deeply boosted this collaboration, both in terms of citizens involved and data collected (Bonney, Phillips, Ballard & Enck, 2016). For instance, in medicine (Chrisinger & King, 2018), citizens can now participate in science through monitoring their well-being through the use of modern apps or through the promotion of healthier habits (Chrisinger et al., 2018). However, these kinds of collaborations follow the same style as in the 1900s, where citizens carried out fieldwork, merely observing, taking pictures and counting.

Thus, citizen participation in science needed to be reviewed in order to ensure that the voices of research subjects were included and taken into account in every step of research. This meant actively engaging citizens in finding solutions to their own problems and ensuring to a larger extent the social impact of the outcomes of scientific research. In this context, the concept of co-creation re-emerged with the aim to give citizens the spot they deserve in scientific research, not as passive providers of data, but as active agents in the creation of scientific knowledge.

However, and once again, this idea is not exclusively a Western development. In ancient China, the participation of different schools of thought in the period of “Hundred Schools of Thought” had an effect not only at the time where the knowledge developments were taking place, but also in contemporary China. The impact is not only at an intellectual level, but also at a social one. Gu Yanwu (2017), who follows the ideology of Confucianism emphasizes the responsibility of all citizens to construct a better society. The author states the difference between “Desperate country” (Wang Guo) and “Desperate society” (Wang Tian Xia) and he also emphasizes the consistency of the individual and society, understanding society as the enlargement of the family. In *Ri Zhi Lu*, he suggests the idea that the ‘rise and fall of a society rests with every one of its citizens’ (Chinese: *Tian Xia Xing Wang, Pi Fu You Ze*). Therefore, any citizen has the inherent capacity to contribute to the improvement of the society in which he or she lives. These ideas are linked to the concept of co-creation.

Co-creation refers to the participation of citizens in the creation of scientific knowledge together with those who work professionally in this task. The first example of scientific research with social impact based on co-creation principles within the European Framework of research is that of WORKALÓ (WORKALO Consortium, 2001-2004). WORKALO was an FP5 research project, coordinated by CREA, which incorporated in all phases of research the participation of subjects traditionally excluded from the scientific community and debates, as the Roma community. In one of the training seminars organized within its framework, Professor Michele Wieviorka was presenting his concept of mixed identities. He explained how people whose families shared different origins experienced different identity fractions. According to the professor, someone who had different or shared different origins from the country in which he or she lived could feel, for instance 50% Algerian and 50% French. In that same seminar, attended by citizens of different cultural groups, a young Roma woman raise her hand to intervene in a forum with scholars and other stakeholders and told him ‘I do not agree with your statement because I am Roma and French and I do not feel 50% Roma and 50% French, but 100% Roma and also 100% French’. To this intervention, the sociologist replied, ‘I will have to check my concept’. When research and the subsequent process of knowledge

production follow these dialogic processes, sociological theory contributes to social improvements that impact citizens and the societies involved. Thanks to this process, non-academic Roma people made key contributions to the WORKALO research project, the results of which were approved by the European Parliament in 2005 and by other parliaments of member states that have made possible concrete policies and programs that have led to direct improvements in the life of Roma people.

Co-creation became already a keyword in *Horizon 2020* and it is now at the very core of the Horizon Europe framework programme, informed on social theory. Indeed, in *Horizon Europe*, one further step is taken, since citizen participation is considered an essential part of social impact. Hence, this participation becomes evaluable and decisive for the approval of projects *ex-ante*, as well as *in-itinere* and *ex-post*. In fact, placing social impact at the core of research puts us on the path to a transformative relationship between science and society based on the improvement of society through the results and findings of research projects. This brings up a new scenario in which sociology and especially social theory, become particularly relevant and necessary. However, there is a part of sociological theory that does not agree with that process and will continue to make contributions to the social sciences and society from other perspectives. But there is also another part of sociological theories that not only addresses that challenge but is already co-directing the current transformations of all sciences and their consequences for the transformations of society.

The European Commission has decided to guide its new research framework program, Horizon Europe, following the document “Monitoring the impact of EU Framework Programs” (van den Besselaar, Flecha, & Radauer, 2018) in which the foundations on how to collect scientific, economic, political and societal impacts in science are laid. The pathway impact indicators highlight the path to the UN sustainable development goals - global goals for all citizens - and the path for citizens to be able to benefit from the knowledge created and research results. This social impact is achieved in the short, medium and long term. The short-term refers to the process of co-creation of knowledge with citizens; the medium-term to the use that citizens make of that knowledge beyond the research project, and the long-term, to the appropriation of knowledge and social improvements

experienced by the citizens themselves. The sociological theory that is linked to this dialogic co-production of knowledge based on a communicative approach is already in line with what is now a priority in Europe, as well as in advanced sciences in general.

The orientation of research towards social impact is part of the transformation of science within the framework of societies that want to be increasingly more democratic. Indeed, a new wave is now democratizing the scientific system with the concepts of "open access" and "open science" - including FAIR principles (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable) that alludes with a pun to what is 'just' for science and humanity. There are top-level scientific journals such as PLoS that in two weeks can make a scientific discovery available not only to colleagues in their discipline, but to all citizens. Movements such as scientific literacy (which are not new, but now recovered) or the "march for science", are realities that indicate that citizens want to know and want to participate when they see that science improves their lives.

However, these advancements rely in many cases on ancient practices and classic social theory contributions. For instance, Sen (2005) explains that in the introduction of the first ever printed book with a date, an 868 Chinese translation of a Sanskrit text (Dimond Sutra, 402 CE), it could already be read that the book could be freely distributed. Also, as mentioned above, one of the essences of the Confucian learning methods is communicative interaction. In this vein, learning and the development of knowledge and though highly depend on dialogue with intellectuals as well as with lay people.

More recently, in the nineteenth century Weber stated that social theory is necessary to orient social research. Weber's (2004) *Ethics of Responsibility* is a highly relevant concept when considering social impact. This concept gives us a key to orient our work since it reminds us that is not the means we use in our research what matters most but is the results it produces. As well, the science system that Merton (1968) studied, with its functions and dysfunctions, has undoubtedly been an advance at the service of humanity, surpassing what was once sacred, opaque or incomprehensible to the majority and in the service of a few. Moreover, Merton's (1968) *Ethos of science* is behind current scientific advancements such as the open access

movement or the emergence of repositories such as the Social Impact Open Repository - SIOR, the first scientific repository in which research projects with social impact are indexed. Merton's contributions also remind us that even if technocrats want to narrow the approach to social impact to rankings and indicators, what it is truly necessary is to return to theoretical contributions and build from those, on the shoulders of giants.

Nevertheless, the contributions of social research to social impact have not only been top-down, from theory to practice, but also bottom-up. An example of this is that of *Real Utopias*, conceptualized by Erik Olin Wright (2011). Following this idea, social theory can provide the keys to understand the conditions under which these realities emerge, so they can be replicated and transferred to other contexts. An example of how this emancipatory social sciences approach can be applied to research is that of the research project SOLIDUS ([Solidus Consortium, 2015-2018](#)). In this case, theory and a rigorous methodological design allowed for the identification of the indicators of transformative solidarity actions through the case study of solidarity actions in Europe.

Another case of bottom-up contribution to social impact from social theory is Burawoy's public sociology, aforementioned. This sociological approach, directed at providing answers for social needs, has succeeded at making sociologist aware of the need to consider societal concerns and provide an explanation from research. This contributes to the creation of new knowledge around SSH that emerges directly from societal problematics as an answer to those problematics. An example of these are all the research within the field of sociology that are being produced in order to give an explanation to the social determinants around cases of gender based violence, for instance, or the focus on the UN's SDG.

### **Collective Contributions to Theory and Democracy**

Today the creation of knowledge, in all disciplines, is not understood without collaborative teamwork, without collaboration with the other colleagues who are on those same issues around the world based on open knowledge. But moreover, nowadays the demand is focused on the collaborative work of social theorists and scientists in dialogue with citizens,

establishing co-creation processes that have the potential to transform social realities or which are already doing it.

Creating knowledge nowadays in any scientific discipline is more than ever the result of interaction, of different scientists from also different disciplines, providing their knowledge, but also creating new one, through their cooperation. Knowledge has become more open and free and anyone can add onto others' developments through different means for the sake of scientific progress. There are many initiatives based on an open dialogue meant to improve science and also our lives such as the Wikipedia dynamic process of knowledge creation and improvement, or the European Union's public consultations on a wide array of topics. All these initiatives aim at responding to citizen's expressed needs ([Consultations, 2019](#)).

Interaction and cooperation have always improved knowledge, although the current moment is the best one in history in terms of increased contexts of interaction that facilitate this progress. What is now facilitated through online open dialogue and collective creation of knowledge, was once extraordinary. In a seminar with Ulrich Beck, a bachelor student alerted him that he was saying just the opposite of what his own book said. When he replied inquiring about the reasons why she said that, she indicated the specific page where he had written it. Instead of getting angry, he exclaimed: '*Where is the miracle?*'. The student had read all of his books and was also part of a Seminar With the Book in Hand where researchers from different disciplines, academic categories and professions, read the main works of social sciences and other sciences (eg Weber's *Economy and Society*, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Sen's *Idea of Justice*, Kandel's *Principles of Neuroscience*, Einstein's *Evolution of Physics*, etc.) debating from specific paragraphs.

Habermas has made great contributions to sociological theory that have been key pieces and especially in the face of the postmodern and neoliberal offensive of the eighties of the twentieth century, have been key pieces. But working individually has increasing limits in current societies. In this seminar, reading and debating the Theory of Communicative Action and the Speech Acts of Searle, we discovered that Habermas had not understood the Searle's contributions to the theory of speech acts and only partially understood the contributions of the creation of this theory, Austin. Later, we

had the opportunity to have long and profound talks with Searle. He criticized Habermas for writing a lot about his theory and the theory of his professor and friend Austin without understanding both and making simple mistakes. The same happens, among others, with the theory of Parsons. One member of CREA had the opportunity to talk with Merton about the mistaken analysis. Habermas knows very well several books of Parsons but not at all the last ones, the ones in which he develops his idea of societal community. This lack made Habermas to get angry with Parsons' theory, abandon his contribution of societal community and replace it by one of the worst concepts elaborated by Habermas: the patriotism of constitution.

If even the best present sociological theorist has this kind of errors, which ones could make the others if we insist on working individually? The future of sociological theory and its contribution to society is promising because an increasing number of young theorists are already working collectively. We are aware that one of us cannot read seriously and profoundly all the books and papers that need to be taken into account in order to elaborate a real social theory. Besides, we are working closer to researchers from other sciences where it is very common the collective work; papers from some sciences are signed by many authors, while in social sciences still most of them are signed individually.

The Seminar *With the Book in Hand* has been one of the main sources of theoretical and social creation of the research community mentioned in this paper. It involves both professors and undergraduate students as well as people outside the university. The only requirement is that to speak you have to reference the page which your idea comes from. This principle of equality, which is in the line of open science and the democratization of science, has made the contributions to the debate much richer. As mentioned before, great intellectuals, like Habermas, however much he has read, cannot cover everything. However, a working team, with people from very different disciplines, occupations, experiences, cultural backgrounds, religions, political options, sexualities, interests, working in a dialogical way can create much more.

## **Conclusions**

In this paper we have argued that the dialogic approach has long been present in both Eastern and Western societies. Intellectuals from both traditions have widely pointed at the capacity of humans to learn from one another, beyond status, educational level or age, and to collectively build their understanding of the world. More recently, modern societies have started to experience a dialogic turn that incorporates these traditional ideas in an attempt to further improve democratic societies. In this context, more and more citizens, including those belonging to vulnerable groups, are demanding the inclusion of their voices in different fields, so their experience and viewpoints are also taken into account in the seeking of solutions to overcome the social challenges of our era. This turn is visible in scientific research, where scientists are more and more demanded to plan for the social impact of their research and to gather evidence of the extent to which that impact was achieved. In this scenario, methodologies such as the communicative methodology of research, become increasingly relevant, since they promote the inclusion of all voices and the co-creation of scientific knowledge which citizens as a means to improve both science and society. Drawing on this methodological approach, citizens not only contribute their knowledge at every step of the research but become agents of social transformation. Social sciences were born with democracies, so that citizens would have the necessary knowledge to rule over themselves. Through the principle of co-creation and with scientific impact at the very core of its design, scientific research is serving citizens more than ever, with social sciences leading the shift.

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# **Networked Gatekeeping and Networked Framing on Twitter Protests in Mexico about the Ayotzinapa Case**

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## **Abstract**

This research focuses on a Twitter protest about the disappearance of 43 students in Mexico in 2014 –known as the Ayotzinapa case– which used the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43. Social network analysis, interviews and thematic analyses of 3,616 tweets were conducted to investigate how networked gatekeeping and networked framing processes occurred within this networked public. Results show that on this digital protest, elite and non-elite Twitter users were in charge of gatekeeping activities, collaborating to maintain the discussion of the topic of the missing students. The analysis of frames revealed that the protest sought to: humanize the case emphasizing the life of the students; assign responsibility; and portray itself as a way to take an active role and coping emotionally with the disappearance. This work contributes to the literature on networked publics, combining network analysis with interviews to look beyond the digital footprint of the protest to listen to the perspectives of protesters, providing an insight into the dynamics of gatekeeping and framing within a network. Given the porosity, openness, and permanence of Twitter, results from such collaborative relationship of elite and non-elite voices to protest about an issue are now harder to ignore in the public sphere.

**Keywords:** Ayotzinapa, networked framing, networked gatekeeping, social network analysis, social protest, Twitter

# **Networked Gatekeeping y Networked Framing en las Protestas en Twitter sobre el Caso Ayotzinapa-Méjico**

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## **Resumen**

Este estudio aborda una protesta en Twitter sobre la desaparición de 43 estudiantes en México en 2014, el caso Ayotzinapa, con el hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43. Se realizaron análisis de redes sociales, entrevistas y análisis temáticos de 3,616 tuits para investigar los procesos de gatekeeping en red y framing en red dentro de este público en red. Los resultados muestran que, en esta protesta digital, usuarios de Twitter de élite y no élite se encargaron de actividades de gatekeeping, colaborando para mantener la discusión sobre los estudiantes desaparecidos. El análisis del framing reveló que la protesta buscaba: humanizar el caso enfatizando la vida de los estudiantes; asignar responsabilidad; y retratarse a sí misma como una forma de asumir un papel activo y hacer frente emocionalmente a la desaparición. Este trabajo contribuye a la literatura sobre públicos en red, combinando el análisis de red con entrevistas para ver más allá de la huella digital de la protesta para escuchar las perspectivas de los manifestantes.. Dada la porosidad, la apertura y la permanencia de Twitter, los resultados de esa colaboración de voces de élite y no élite para protestar sobre un problema ahora son más difíciles de ignorar en la esfera pública.

**Palabras clave:** Ayotzinapa, networked framing, networked gatekeeping, análisis de redes sociales, protesta social, Twitter

**O**n September 26th of 2014, a group of Mexican students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' School was on its way to Mexico City to commemorate the anniversary of the mass killing of students by the Mexican government four decades before. However, 43 of the pupils never made it to their destination. Instead, they were attacked by local police, arrested, and disappeared. In the aftermath of the disappearance, the event generated widespread political protests in Mexico and was the focus of debate on social media. This study examines a daily protest that for years has occurred on Twitter about the Ayotzinapa case. This demonstration, known as *Pase De Lista 1 al 43* (Roll Call 1 to 43), entails a roll call with the names of the students every day at 10:00 pm. The hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 is used to invite Twitter users to join in by retweeting the protest.

Twitter has been used to protest against government repression or negligence in authoritarian contexts such as China (Leung & Lee, 2014) and Egypt (Papacharissi, 2014). Mexico is a democracy that celebrates free elections to pick its political leaders, but social and political institutions still maintain authoritarian practices, remainders of over 70 years of non-democratic regime in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the possibility for voicing criticism of the government through digital means presents an advantage for a public that considers that spaces available to express dissent are limited. Individuals not usually represented are able to introduce and frame narratives about certain events, maintaining the issues in the public eye. Yet, the commercialization of social media and the contestation for spaces for participation difficult these empowerment processes, furthering the “need to look more closely at how social media shapes these political engagements as well as the possible ways of building more productive avenues for social change” (Nikunen, 2018). The use of the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 to protest the 43 students’ disappearance resulted in the emergence of a networked public, in which technological affordances informed the practices to distribute information and social acts regarding the Ayotzinapa case on the Twitter platform (boyd, 2010). This study analyzes how networked gatekeeping and networked framing processes occurred within that public.

This investigation found that in the protest about the Ayotzinapa case, gatekeeping activities were in charge of a group of elite and non-elite Twitter users that collaborated to maintain the hashtag in use, and as a result,

the discussion of the topic of the missing students. This collaboration of elite and non-elite users consolidated prominent frames in the protest. The analysis of frames prevalent revealed that the protest sought to humanize the case underscoring students' lives; it also sought to assign responsibility, blaming the federal government; and portrayed the online demonstration as a way to take an active role on the case and coping with the disappearance. Although Twitter is praised for its immediacy for delivering information and opinions, these findings indicate that Twitter can house a long-lasting public that seeks to challenge dominant political narratives, allowing non-elite users to be gatekeepers and frame the messages in the stream using a specific hashtag. This works contributes to the literature on networked publics, providing an insight into the dynamics of gatekeeping and framing within a network, from the perspective of participants of Twitter protests.

### **Networked Gatekeeping and Networked Framing**

As the dynamics for information flow have evolved in digital environments, scholars have looked to adapt gatekeeping theory and framing theory to account for these changes. Gatekeeping investigates “the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited numbers of messages that reach people each day” (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 1). Through this mechanism, media shape social reality (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Nonetheless, with social media, this top-down transmission structure has transformed into a networked-based structure, as the news diffusion process “now occurs through the fluid relational interplay between the various incumbent and emergent players in networked gatekeeping process” (Ernste, 2014, p. 13). The public is “empowered with more choices in news content, direct channels to speak to the press, and the ability to mobilize online crowds” (Xu & Feng, 2014, p. 431).

Consequently, in a networked context, actors with non-elite status offline can become influential online. These online networks are structured according to what is called scale-free distribution, where few actors which “have relatively high centrality but who generally have low overall cohesiveness to the rest of the network” exist side-by-side to “many network actors, usually members of the general public that “tend to have relatively low centrality but high cohesiveness to a small number of acquaintances”

(Ernste, 2014, p. 16). To understand the dynamics in which elites and nonelites negotiate the flow of information in these new circumstances, scholars have developed the concept of networked gatekeeping, a process where “actors are crowdsourced to prominence through the use of conversational, social practices that symbiotically connect elite and crowd in the determination of information relevancy” (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013, p. 158).

However, this perspective does not understand network structures as flat and absent of hierarchies (Ernste, 2014, p.14). Xu and Feng (2014) analysis of Twitter interactions between traditional gatekeepers (Twitter accounts of US journalists) and citizens evince a disparity between types of actors. Their results show that networked gatekeeping is pluralist, involving people of different levels of political involvement and background. Nonetheless, citizens that are not politically active possessed limited political power in the network, having fewer followers and fewer messages retweeted.

Similarly, traditional framing theory focuses only on how news reports’ portrayals of an issue influence audiences (Jiang, Leeman & Fu, 2016), without accounting for the role of audiences in framing construction. Framing theory claims that the way that news reports characterize an issue will influence how the audience understands that issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). A frame refers to the selection of certain aspects of perceived reality to be made more salient in a text by defining a problem, its moral evaluation, causes, and solutions (Entman, 1993). Political elites use certain frames about issues to neutralize or render unimportant alternative interpretations of issues (Neuman, Guggenheim, Jang & Bae, 2014).

However, changes in the media landscape have impacted power dynamics between newsmakers and news consumers, who can now participate in framing an issue (Xu & Feng, 2014). Scholars developed the concept of networked framing, “that relies on the interactions between elite and nonelite users and algorithmic aggregations afforded by new digital platforms” (Jiang, Leeman & Fu, 2016, p. 97). This concept takes into account the relationship between elite actors and crowds to bring salience to issues (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013), as well as the impact that algorithmic aggregations can have in bringing a frame to prominence (Jiang et al., 2016), for example, with hashtags or retweets. Moreover, social media users can

revise the frames shared by original posters, going beyond the mere replication of an original message, to advance other communicative functions such as the analysis, interpretation, sharing opinions, and expression of emotion about the issues in question (Nip & Fu, 2016). For instance, research shows that the same themes about the refugee crisis in Finland were framed differently on social media in terms of its more pronounced focus on emotional aspects, affective words, and incivility with respect to traditional media (Pöyhtäri, Nelimarkka, Nikunen, Ojala, Panti & Pääkkonen, 2019).

### #PaseDeLista1al43 as a Networked Public

The protest #PaseDeLista1al43 is led by a famous TV producer in Mexico, Epigmenio Ibarra, who every night at 10 pm posts individual tweets with the face and name of each of the 43 missing students, along with hashtags claiming for justice. These 43 tweets get retweeted each night by the followers of this online demonstration. Besides, as a prelude to invite people to join the roll call, he and other followers utilize the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 to discuss the case and other situations that are considered grievances caused by the government. Although the protest has evolved over time, this hashtag is still active. In this study, the use of this hashtag by this group of people is considered as giving way to networked publics, publics that are restructured by networked technologies, which at the same time constitute a space and an imagined collective (boyd, 2010). As such, the aim of this work is to explore the processes of networked gatekeeping and networked framing within this public. The following research questions are posed:

- RQ1. *What are the structural characteristics of the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter networked public?*
- RQ2. *How does the process of networked gatekeeping unfold in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter networked public?*
- RQ3. *What are the frames used in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter network?*

### Methods

This study took a mixed methods approach to respond to the research questions above. Tweets using the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 were acquired from the company Follow The Hashtag; additionally, I conducted interviews with participants of the protest. A total of 166,927 tweets that contained the term “PaseDeLista1al43” were collected. To narrow down this amount, I selected five different moments from January 2015 (origin of the hashtag) to September 2017, using a purposive sampling approach, taking some of the most material moments throughout the protest to observe information-rich episodes of this demonstration. Each moment includes a seven-day range of tweets beginning at a specific starting point. Moment One was the beginning of the use of #PaseDeLista1al43 hashtag, on January 15, 2015 (01/15/2015 - 01/21/2015). Even though the event of the disappearance occurred a few months before (on September 2014) and the Twitter protest began around November 2014, the use of this specific hasttag started on January 15, 2015. Before that, other similar competing hashtags were used (e.g., #Los43, #nosfaltan43), until #PaseDeLista1al43 was selected as representative of the Twitter protest by the protest organizer Epigmenio Ibarra. A total of 1,071 tweets were posted during that week.

Moment Two is marked by a press conference by the Mexican government presenting the results of an investigation of the students’ case on January 27, 2015 (01/27/2015-02/02/2015). At this press conference, the Mexican Attorney General reported that the students had been killed and burned in a dumpyard by a drug gang, and argued that these findings were the “historical truth.” This declaration was controversial and the phrase “historical truth” was commonly criticized in tweets belonging to the roll call. During that week, 533 tweets were posted using the hashtag. Moment Three was the first anniversary of the students’ disappearance on September 26, 2015 (09/26/2015 - 10/02/2015). In total, 679 tweets were posted using the hashtag during that Moment. Moment Four is the date of the release of the last report of the group of independent investigators of the case developed by the Organization of American States, the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI), on April 24, 2016 (04/24/2016 - 04/30/2016). A total of 492 tweets used the hashtag during that period. Moment Five is the second anniversary of the disappearance, on September

26, 2016 (09/26/2016 - 10/02/2016). During that week, 841 tweets were posted. In total, 3,616 tweets were analyzed from the five moments selected.

Besides the tweets collected, the analyses for this study were based on interviews with participants of the protest. Fifteen in-depth interviews with protest participants were conducted between 2016 and 2018 via Skype. In total, nine participants identified as male and six identified as female; thirteen interviewees were Mexican, one was Scottish, and one Dominican. Their average age was 50 years old. They were reached via snowball sampling technique. This research followed the Institutional Research Board protocol for the protection of human subjects of the institution of adscription of the author at the time of its execution (University of Missouri). Interviewees were promised anonymity for their participation, which was maintained by omitting the use of their names and being identified as “Interviewee #”. Audios and transcripts of these conversations are saved in a password-protected computer accessed only by the researcher.

For RQ1 social network analysis (SNA) was conducted. SNA focuses on relationships, and in the patterns of connections among people, groups, and things that emerge from such relationships (Hansen, Shneiderman, & Smith, 2011). A key axiom in SNA is the idea that structure matters, as it can affect the performance of the actors in the network (Borgatti, Mehra, Brass, & Labianca, 2009). To answer RQ1, the tweets metadata was utilized to map the structure of the networked public with Node XL, an open-source template for Excel to develop network graphs. The current study followed the approach used by prior research on Twitter networked publics (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2012; Papacharissi, 2014). Therefore, the analysis of the tweets using the hashtag [#PaseDeLista1al43](#) focused on the linkage data of two Twitter markers, mentions and retweets, to illustrate the overall links between nodes and to observe which are the most important nodes within the network in terms of how many mentions and retweets they got ([Hanneman & Riddle, 2005](#)).

For RQ2 the main goal was to understand the process of networked gatekeeping in the protest. Two steps taken towards that goal were 1) identifying what type of Twitter users participated in the protest and 2) establishing the most popular users in the network according to the amount of retweets and favorites in the tweets they created. First, following procedures from prior research ([Jiang et al., 2016](#); [Xu et al., 2014](#)), I

conducted a descriptive content analysis of the profiles of all Twitter users ( $N=908$ ) that utilized the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 during the five moments analyzed. Taking into account users self-disclosed affiliations and information in the Bio section of their profile, each user was coded to establish their identity. These identities were coded as: non-elite actors (i.e., regular Twitter users), elite actors (i.e., journalists, media outlets, or celebrities), activists/non-governmental organizations, bloggers/blogs, and bots. Also to address RQ2, a descriptive analysis of frequencies of retweets and favorites was conducted to determine who were the most popular Twitter users in the protest. For each moment analyzed, two lists of 10 Twitter users with the highest number of retweets and favorites in a tweet, respectively, were identified.

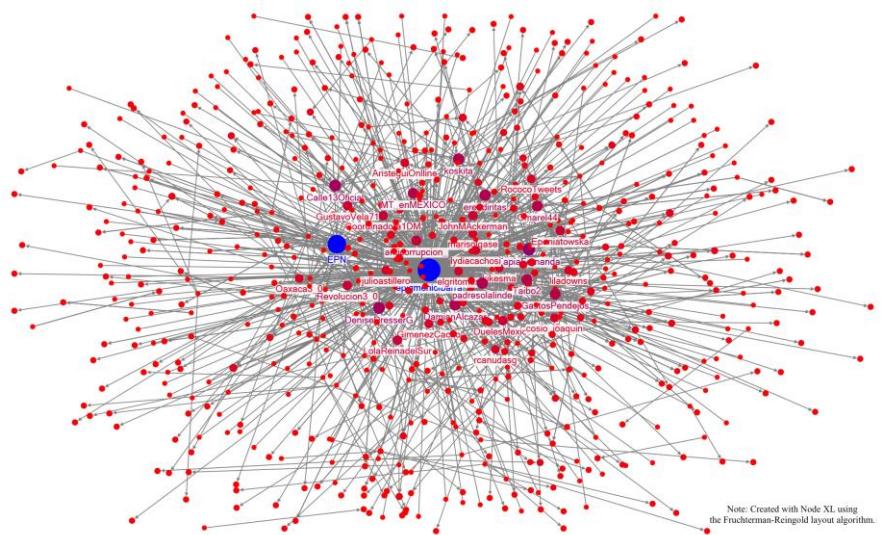
I conducted deductive (for RQ2) and inductive (for RQ3) thematic analyses to systematically investigate the themes in the transcripts from interviews and in the tweets. Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information where the goal is to identify themes from the data (Boyatzis, 1998). Themes were examined using procedures from the constant comparative method (CCM), a technique that allows for the reduction of data through coding and recoding until reaching saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Memos were used to organize the information and group the themes emerging from these analyses.

## **Results**

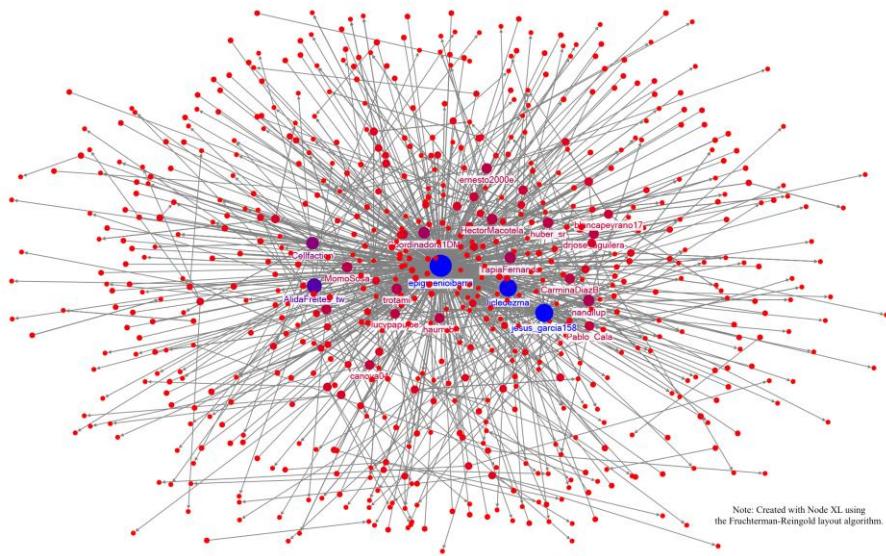
### **Social Network Analysis**

This research question addressed the structural characteristics of the Twitter protest as a networked public, focusing on two types of interactions between Twitter users who posted messages with the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43: mentions and retweets. The analysis was conducted using Node XL. Figure 1 and 2 present the network of mentions over the five moments selected for study. These networks illustrate the instances when a user tagged someone else's Twitter handle to directly address a tweet to that person. The network has 668 vertices (Twitter users), 463 unique edges (connections between Twitter users), and 2,988 edges with duplicates, for a total of 3,451 edges.

The density of the network (the percentage of connections that occur in the network out of the potential connections that could be made) is 2%. This low density, in addition to the large amount of edges that are duplicates, indicates that there are primarily a few Twitter users who are communicating with most of the Twitter users involved in the network. Similarly, reciprocity between vertices is 4%, indicating that communication within the network is not back and forth in the form of a conversation between users, but is instead unidirectional. Thus, the overall network is characterized as a broadcast network, where mentions are connected to few particular hubs with little interaction with each other (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015).



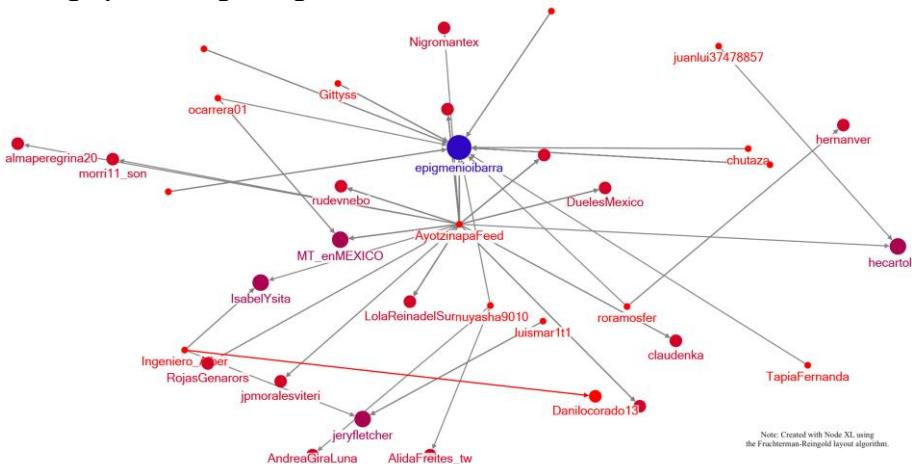
*Figure 1.* Network of Mentions in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter Protests. Nodes are sized according to their in-degree centrality and are colored in a scale from red to blue such that those nodes with lower in-degree are red and those with higher in-degree are blue.



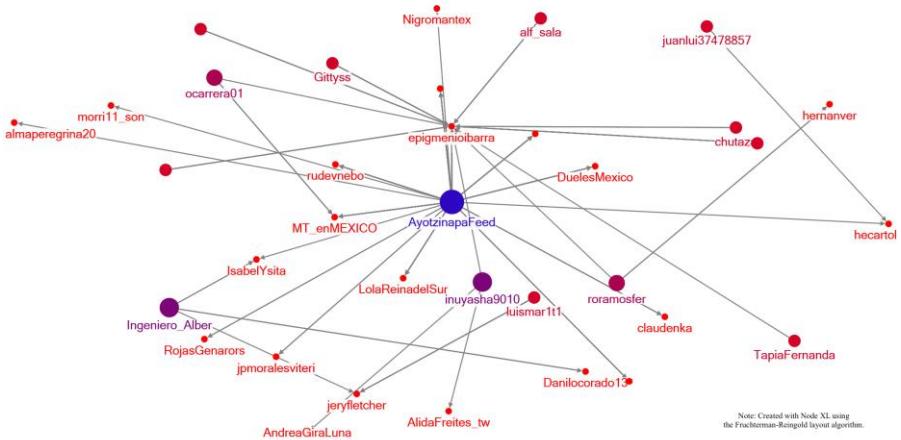
**Figure 2.** Network of Mentions in the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter Protests. Nodes are sized according to their out-degree centrality and are colored in a scale from red to blue such that those nodes with lower out-degree are red and those with higher out-degree are blue.

Figure 1 and 2 portray two types of influencers or prominent users in the network. Figure 1 emphasizes vertices according to their in-degree centrality, which is the amount of connections pointing inward to a vertex. The center shows a clear main actor in the network, the protest organizer @epigmenioibarra. The other vertex that received attention in the form of mentions is Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto (@EPN). As for the rest of the vertices, there is a diversity of singers and actors, journalists and media outlets, blogs, and citizens in the network. In turn, Figure 2 shows the same network but emphasizes vertices with higher out-degree levels, which are nodes that have more connections pointing outward (users tagging others, not being tagged). In this case, the main Twitter user is once again, @epigmenioibarra, who composes many tweets inviting others to join the protest. However, the rest of the vertices are mostly non-elite Twitter users

(e.g., @jesus\_garcia158, @licledezma, @AlidaFreites\_tw). Citizens do most of the mentioning, attempting to gain more attention for the #PaseDeLista1al43 hashtag. Figures 3 and 4 show the network of retweets during the five moments studied. This network has 35 vertices, 135 edges in total, including 12 unique edges and 122 edges with duplicates. The density of this network is 2%, and reciprocity is 0%. Thus, similar to the mentions network, retweet interactions on this network are unidirectional and limited to only some users replicating what a few others posted rather than a network of interactions across all users. As such, the structure of retweets as addressivity markers also has the features of a broadcast network, in which retweets are emerging from few central sources. Figures 3 and 4 emphasize the degree centrality of the main users in the network. These graphs display that the protest organizer @epigmenioibarra received more retweets within the network, but he does not retweet others. As shown in Figure 4, which emphasizes the vertices with higher levels of out-degree centrality, the actor that does more retweeting is @AyotzinapaFeed, a Twitter account dedicated to spreading news about the Ayotzinapa case. Most of the larger vertices in both graphs belong to regular Twitter users.



*Figure 3.* Network of Retweets in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter Protests. Nodes are sized according to their in-degree centrality and are colored in a scale from red to blue such that those nodes with lower in-degree are red and those with higher in-degree are blue.



*Figure 4.* Network of Retweets in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter Protests. Nodes are sized according to their out-degree centrality and are colored in a scale from red to blue such that those nodes with lower out-degree are red and those with higher out-degree are blue.

### Networked Gatekeeping Processes

Research question 2 sought to understand how different type of users (elite and non-elite crowds) interacted with each other in the gatekeeping process, who were the main gatekeepers in this Twitter protest, and how these interactions led to the development of a crowdsourced elite in charge of maintaining the online #PaseDeLista1al43 conversation.

**Type of users.** The first step to answer RQ2 was to determine the type of users that participated in the protests. Thus, the 908 Twitter accounts of each user who tweeted at least once during the five moments were categorized. Results show that the majority of the participants were non-elite users, with 81% ( $n = 734$ ) regular citizens posting with the hashtag. In turn, only a small percentage of the overall participants, 7.7% ( $n = 70$ ) were elite users. Given the topic in question –a case related to human rights violations– activists or NGOs were expected to have more participation in the protest, but their

presence was overall low throughout the periods studied ( $n = 60$ ). Blogs dedicated to disseminating information and creating awareness about social issues in Mexico also had minor participation in the digital protest ( $n = 25$ ). Finally, a small fraction of accounts were bots ( $n = 19$ ).

**Most popular users.** The amount of retweets and favorites further explicates the gatekeeping process that took place on this network because these two addressivity markers point to the popularity of certain actors. Table 1 shows the users with the highest number of retweets and favorites in a single tweet. The table presents two lists per moment and two lists for the aggregate of the 5 moments, each one indicating the 10 users with the highest number of retweets and favorites in a tweet. The table only shows the highest number of retweets and favorites an actor received in a tweet, regardless of whether that actor had other tweets with a high number of retweets and favorites. As expected, the producer who leads the protest, @epigmenioibarra, was at the top of most of these lists, and in fact, he had dozens of tweets with hundreds of retweets and favorites throughout the five moments. @epigmenioibarra is an elite user who constitutes the main gatekeeper of this protest. Another user who gained prominence in the #PaseDeLista1al43 protest is @DeniseDresserG, a famous Mexican intellectual with many followers (almost 4 million). @DeniseDresserG received the most favorites and retweets in a single tweet for the five moments analyzed. Other elite users who had popular tweets were radio show host @TapiaFernanda, movie actress @marisolgase, journalist @julioastillero, and intellectual @JohnMAckerman. Popular Mexican news blogs such as @MT\_enMEXICO, @AnonymousMEX\_ and @GastosPendejos also had prominent tweets. The popularity of these Twitter users illustrates the role of elite actors, particularly of @epigmenioibarra and @DeniseDresserG, in disseminating certain messages in the #PaseDeLista1al43 protest. However, non-elite crowds including non-famous citizens with Twitter accounts also have a role as gatekeepers of this networked public. As shown on Table 1, tweets by non-elite users also had popularity in the form of favorites and were also highly disseminated through retweets. What stands out about non-elite users is that they gradually emerged as recurrent popular users in the discussion. Certain non-elite Twitter users gained and maintained notoriety as the use of the

hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 persisted throughout two years. Table 1 shows how non-elite Twitter users reappeared among the most popular users in the network in Moment 3, Moment 4, and Moment 5 (e.g., @hekglez, @alexabreο22).

Table 1.  
*Actors with Highest Number of Retweets and Favorites in a Tweet*

| <i>Moment</i> | Retweets<br><i>Actor (Type of Actor)</i> | Frequency | Favorites<br><i>Actor (Type of Actor)</i> | Frequency |
|---------------|--|-----------|---|-----------|
| M1            | epigmenioibarra*                         | 338       | epigmenioibarra*                          | 128       |
|               | luisrg01                                 | 84        | AcaTovarish                               | 24        |
|               | koskita                                  | 62        | marisolgase*                              | 24        |
|               | jc_esquivel                              | 61        | Buendia_Tunel                             | 21        |
|               | fotoartesanos                            | 59        | luisrg01                                  | 21        |
|               | CarminaDiazB                             | 52        | koskita                                   | 21        |
|               | GastosPendejos**                         | 50        | CarminaDiazB                              | 20        |
|               | DuelesMexico                             | 49        | TapiaFernanda*                            | 19        |
|               | 1404mati                                 | 47        | 1404mati                                  | 17        |
|               | AcaTovarish                              | 47        | FLORISABELACRUZ                           | 15        |
| M2            | epigmenioibarra*                         | 361       | epigmenioibarra*                          | 132       |
|               | TapiaFernanda*                           | 96        | TapiaFernanda*                            | 25        |
|               | umbaldi                                  | 72        | umbaldi                                   | 24        |
|               | koskita                                  | 72        | AnonymousMex_**                           | 24        |
|               | AnonymousMex_**                          | 64        | koskita                                   | 21        |
|               | CarminaDiazB                             | 60        | DuelesMexico                              | 17        |
|               | ernesto2000e                             | 55        | alejandradiaza8                           | 16        |
|               | DuelesMexico                             | 49        | Wolverine_IPN                             | 15        |
|               | alejandradiaza8                          | 44        | Abigail_HdzM                              | 14        |
|               | Wolverine_IPN                            | 41        | CarminaDiazB                              | 13        |
| M3            | DeniseDresserG*                          | 693       | DeniseDresserG*                           | 452       |
|               | epigmenioibarra*                         | 429       | epigmenioibarra*                          | 141       |
|               | DuelesMexico                             | 99        | DuelesMexico                              | 43        |
|               | lizmorag                                 | 95        | JohnMACKerman*                            | 38        |
|               | julioastillero*                          | 80        | lizmorag                                  | 35        |
|               | hekglez                                  | 75        | hekglez                                   | 30        |
|               | BrendaH2O66 ***                          | 75        | BrendaH2O66***                            | 30        |
|               | alexabreο22                              | 71        | julioastillero*                           | 27        |
|               | Buendia_Tunel                            | 69        | postkneejerk                              | 25        |
|               | JohnMACKerman*                           | 67        | AnonymousMex_**                           | 21        |

Note. \* Elite User; \*\* Blog or Blogger; \*\*\* Activist or NGO; No \* Citizens.

Table 1.

*Actors with Highest Number of Retweets and Favorites in a Tweet (continued)*

| Moment       | Retweets<br>Actor (Type of Actor) | Frequency | Favorites<br>Actor (Type of Actor) | Frequency |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| M4           | DeniseDresserG*                   | 629       | DeniseDresserG*                    | 666       |
|              | epigmenioibarra*                  | 304       | epigmenioibarra*                   | 173       |
|              | julioastillero*                   | 152       | hekglez                            | 67        |
|              | AlbaniaOC                         | 145       | julioastillero*                    | 59        |
|              | alynmon                           | 145       | alynmon                            | 56        |
|              | alexabre022                       | 130       | alexabre022                        | 56        |
|              | hekglez                           | 106       | AlbaniaOC                          | 52        |
|              | canallasforever                   | 105       | Loe_25sept                         | 41        |
|              | DuelesMexico                      | 102       | DuelesMexico                       | 36        |
|              | Mboe55                            | 92        | Mboe55                             | 31        |
| M5           | DeniseDresser*                    | 901       | DeniseDresserG*                    | 934       |
|              | epigmenioibarra*                  | 528       | epigmenioibarra*                   | 339       |
|              | alexabre022                       | 177       | alexabre022                        | 99        |
|              | AlbaniaOC                         | 174       | AlbaniaOC                          | 83        |
|              | hekglez                           | 145       | JOSEFRANCISCO01                    | 66        |
|              | canallasforever                   | 135       | alynmon                            | 65        |
|              | alynmon                           | 119       | hekglez                            | 63        |
|              | Loe_25sept                        | 114       | canallasforever                    | 60        |
|              | JOSEFRANCISCO01                   | 107       | Loe_25sept                         | 60        |
|              | julioastillero*                   | 101       | julioastillero*                    | 58        |
| 5<br>Moments | DeniseDresserG*                   | 901       | DeniseDresserG*                    | 934       |
|              | epigmenioibarra*                  | 528       | epigmenioibarra*                   | 527       |
|              | AlbaniaOC                         | 177       | alexabre022                        | 360       |
|              | alexabre022                       | 174       | AlbaniaOC                          | 234       |
|              | julioastillero*                   | 152       | JOSEFRANCISCO01                    | 104       |
|              | hekglez                           | 145       | alynmon                            | 102       |
|              | alynmon                           | 145       | hekglez                            | 101       |
|              | canallasforever                   | 135       | canallasforever                    | 92        |
|              | Loe_25sept                        | 114       | Loe_25sept                         | 90        |
|              | JOSEFRANCISCO01                   | 107       | julioastillero*                    | 86        |

Note. \* Elite User; \*\* Blog or Blogger; \*\*\* Activist or NGO; No \* Citizens.

### **Interactions Between Elites and Crowds**

A deductive thematic analysis of interview responses was executed, utilizing concepts from networked gatekeeping theory to identify how the process panned out in this particular protest (See Table 2).

***The role of elites.*** The protest was not the result of a planned strategy by a large group or an activism organization. Instead, it emerged from individual citizens who resorted to Twitter to express their grievances about the sudden disappearance of 43 students. An interaction between an elite Twitter user, Epigmenio Ibarra, and a citizen who was a Twitter novice evolved into a systematic online demonstration. The participant who started the roll call explained how the idea emerged:

“In the marches (*on the streets*) we say the numbers 1 to 43 and we yell ‘justice’ at the end, and at some point he (*Epigmenio Ibarra*) said, why don’t we invite people to do 43 tweets using the numbers? [...] And at some point he began to set a fixed time, it was around November (2014) when he started doing it systematically at 10 at night” (Interviewee 1).

The informant emphasized that she purposefully sought to get attention from a celebrity in order to disseminate the images of the students’ illustrations taken from a group of artists website, Ilustradores con Ayotzinapa. This story of the beginning of the protest illustrates the role that elite users with a large following can have on the success of a conversation about an issue on Twitter. Although some other popular figures have taken part in the online demonstration, in the #PaseDeLista1al43 protest, the leadership of Ibarra has been key to the continuation of the use of this hashtag. Beyond the nascence of the roll call, other interviewees often refer to the importance of this elite actor’s influence in their involvement on the protest. For protesters on this demonstration, gaining attention from this celebrity solidified their commitment to the cause of Ayotzinapa and specifically to their contribution to #PaseDeLista1al43.

***Crowdsourced elites.*** Some of the most active participants in #PaseDeLista1al43 reported that they gained prominence on Twitter thanks to their contribution to this discussion. In addition to the attention from elites

such as Ibarra, the main way in which interviewees assess their prominence is by the amount of Twitter followers they have. Protest participants joined the Twitter conversation organically, with the goal of airing their opinions about the case. However, according to their accounts, they ended up developing expansive connections with people congruent with their views and even became relatively popular actors in the network.

**Networked gatekeeping.** As committed gatekeepers in this networked public, crowd-sourced elites assumed certain functions within the protest. One important function was making sure the hashtag –and with that the Ayotzinapa issue– maintained an online presence. Keeping this hashtag active is important in light of what they perceive to be systemic attempts to minimize the strength of the hashtag in the social network. Similarly, another way to maintain the hashtag is inviting other users via the mention addressivity marker, so that friends on their network or public figures take part of the conversation.

An additional function that these gatekeepers assume is to curate the topics that are talked about in the conversation, making sure that relevant aspects of the case do not escape public attention. For example, an interviewee mentioned a situation in which she suggested that two students that were assassinated on the night of the disappearance of the 43, should also be remembered in the protest. This participant reached out to the protest organizer to influence the #PaseDeLista1al43 conversation, and the students were added to the roll call. In this way, non-elite and elite Twitter users in the protest interacted to filter and configure the topics discussed in the protest.

Participants not only share opinions about the case but they gather and share new information about it from sources they trust (usually left-leaning media). Some protesters merely attach photos or news links, but others create their own images with editing software and attach them to tweets. Some images include information about coming events, fragments of news stories with screenshots from media websites, others take pieces of information about the case and include their own perspective on the story. Thus, protesters appropriated Internet and social media affordances to have a more active role on the roll call, by acting as curators of news stories about

Ayotzinapa, disseminating news through Twitter, and creating their own content with images from the web.

Table 2.

*Networked Gatekeeping: Themes and Exemplars from the Analysis of Interviews*

| Theme                 | Frame  |
|-----------------------|--|
| The role of elites    | <p>“I was tagging Epigmenio Ibarra who at that time had more than 180,000 followers, right? And Epigmenio Ibarra, without knowing me, as it is the issue with networks, he saw that I uploaded these images and came to send some tweets in which he said ‘I invite my followers to retweet this’ (Interviewee 1).”</p> <p>“He (<i>Ibarra</i>) sent me a direct message and he said, ‘hey, I see that you are not here’, back then I was not in Mexico, but then (<i>he said</i>) ‘I would like to ask you to continue to help us, if you can do it daily well do it’, because he noticed that, in a way, the daily impact was receding. Then I said ‘yes’ and then I assumed the commitment to say, ‘well, I have to do it’ (Interviewee 5).”</p>   |
| Crowdsourced elites   | <p>“I had very few followers, I had about 150 followers, now I’m at about 3,000, when I started to be active in this movement, I must be around 3,000 [...] This is as the arms of an octopus, they keep growing, you know a person and that person connects you with another, and that person knows another one, and so it goes (Interviewee 11).”</p>  |
| Networked Gatekeeping | <p>“There are government people who are blocking the hashtag, to stop them we do new ones, that’s where the new ones come from, the new hashtags, so that we do not get bots” (Interviewee 3).</p> <p>“In the roll call of Epigmenio Ibarra, they (<i>2 students killed during the police persecution</i>) were not contemplated [...] But well obviously my impact on Twitter is not compared at all to that which Epigmenio has. So then I told him, well I’ve been doing the roll call to these two boys who were executed, but I think it would be better if you did it, because it is you who has responses (Interviewee 9).”</p> <p>“I try to find the news of the day about Ayotzinapa and post it before the roll call. A message with the story of the day, or on a topic of interest, or if there was an exhibition [...] So in the absence of what really happens in Mexico through the open communication media, both radio and television, I intend to send, at this level now, global, what I, as a simple citizen, notice” (Interviewee 5).</p> |

## Themes and Frames

In order to elucidate the main frames used to talk about the Ayotzinapa case in the *#PaseDeLista1al43* protests, a thematic analysis of tweets was conducted. The three broad themes in the tweets were: the Ayotzinapa case involving the disappearance of 43 students, discussion of the social and political conditions in Mexico, and the Twitter protest using the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43*. These themes were framed to humanize the case and assign responsibility for it; to contextualize the disappearance positioning it as part of a larger problem in Mexico; and to discuss the protest as a way to deal with the case in terms of seeking justice and coping emotionally with the situation (See Table 3).

### The Ayotzinapa Case

***Humanization of the Case.*** Tweets on the digital protest emphasize the humanity of the 43 missing students by portraying their physiognomy and names. Messages with drawings of their faces include information about their lives, for instance, features of their personality, their nicknames, celebrations of their birthdays, and details about their family. Students are talked about in endearing terms, as “our brothers” or “our friends”. Twitter users express familiarity with the students, arguing that they personally have been affected by their disappearance, with claims such as: “I miss him,” “I want to hug him,” and “I want to know where he is”.

***Assigning Responsibility.*** A consistent frame regarding the case refers to the federal government’s responsibility on the disappearance. Tweets reject the official version of what happened to the students –that they were killed by a drug gang–, labeled by Mexican attorney general, Jesús Murillo Karam, as the “historical truth.” A counterframe that emerged refers to such official version as the “historical lie.” The government is depicted as an adversary, responsible for the disappearance of the students. One of the most repeated phrases in the tweets is “It was the State”.

## **Sociopolitical Conditions in Mexico**

***Contextualizing the Case.*** Discussants in the protest often referred to aspects of Mexico's sociopolitical context not directly connected to the Ayotzinapa case. For instance, protesters shared concerns regarding violent conditions in Mexico. More specific tweets addressed the large number of missing people in Mexico besides the students. By mentioning Mexico's sociopolitical context, tweets convey that the disappearance was not an isolated case. Moreover, the #PaseDeLista1al43 hashtag was used to talk about other high profile cases involving government's negligence or repression.

### **#PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter Protest**

***Citizens' Role in the Case.*** Tweets using the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 also referred to the Twitter protest itself, underlining the role of online protesters in the Ayotzinapa case: how they are impacted by the disappearance and what they can do about it. These messages addressed different aspects of the daily roll call, for example, when does it occur, invitations for others to join, or tagging celebrities to encourage them to invite people in their network. Other tweets show street demonstrations (e.g., depicting crowds on the streets, protests signs, close-ups of protesters), connecting those with the #PaseDeLista1al43 protest. Thus, for the protesters, tweets of the online protest are embedded in the overall Ayotzinapa cause.

Several tweets focus on the reasons to participate in the #PaseDeLista1al43 conversation. Among the motivations to take part of the protest, the tweets expressed the need to demand justice for the students and show solidarity with the students' parents. Another strong motivation was fighting misinformation about the case and furthering social awareness on the issue.

Additionally, participation was prompted by the idea that anyone in the country could be the next victim, and by the need to cope with certain feelings about the case. Tweets convey how the authors suffered personal emotional repercussions due to the disappearance, which motivates them to

continue expressing their feelings. As such, these emotional demonstrations allowed protesters to feel their way into the story: positioning themselves as part of the events and taking action about it.

Table 3.

*Themes, Frames and Exemplars from the Networked Framing Analysis*

| <b>Theme</b>                        | <b>Frame</b>               | <b>Tweet Exemplar</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| The Ayotzinapa Case                 | Humanization of the Case   | “@epigmenioibarra to demand justice and remember our brothers, there are not times nor schedules, we will be attentive to #PaseDeLista1al43” (trota mundos, 2015).  |
|                                     | Assigning Responsibility   | “@epigmenioibarra uf a little late I join #PaseDeLista1al43 because I DON’T forget, DON’T let go and I think that it is a historical LIE the investigation (Cadena, 2015).”   |
| Sociopolitical conditions in Mexico | Contextualizing the case   | “DeniseDresserG: Here #PaseDeLista1al43 to protest against the country of graves that we have become” (lapoliticamexico, 2016).<br>“@epigmenioibarra #PaseDeLista1al43 + more than 25000 missing in this country of impunity #NoForgivenessNoOblivion” (Soto, 2015).<br>“#México Remember ... We are missing #43 and thousands more. May our voice be heard at the #PaseDelista1al43 @epigmenioibarra” (Buendia, 2015). |
| #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter protest   | Citizens’ role in the case | “We overflowed the streets. We overflowed the net. Vs Oblivion and silence PaseDeLista1al43 10pm Who and why join... fb.me/6mhvFrTZL” (Sánchez-Reyna, 2015).  |

Table 3.

*Themes, Frames and Exemplars from the Networked Framing Analysis (continued)*

| Theme   | Frame                                     | Tweet Exemplar   |
|---|---|--|
| #PaseDeLista1al43<br>Twitter protest<br>(continued) | Citizens' role in the case<br>(continued) | <p>"@epigmenioibarra may my voice keep alive the hope that the parents keep looking until they found them PaseDeLista1al43 10 pm (SAGM, 2015)."</p> <p>The 44 could be you, me, or your close family #PaseDeLista1al43 (Yagaxovich, 2016)."</p> <p>"Each day that I do #PaseDeLista1al43 I feel + and more sadness! We have to do this reflection every day! And do more! Thanks @epigmenioibarra (Gasé, 2015)."</p> |

## Discussion

In networked publics—publics that are restructured by networked technologies (boyd, 2010)—members of the public “can be reactors, (re)makers and (re)distributors, engaging in shared culture and knowledge through discourse and social exchange as well as through acts of media reception” (Ito, 2007, p. 3). This study focused on the characteristics of the networked public emergent in the #PaseDelista1al43 Twitter protest to further understand processes of framing and gatekeeping within that public. First, the analysis focused on relationships formed in the network and the patterns of connections among Twitter protesters. Results from SNA showed that the #PaseDelista1al43 networks formed based on retweets and mentions had low reciprocity (no back and forth conversation) and low density (the Twitter users on the network are connected only to few other users in the same network). These characteristics point to a type of network known as a

broadcast network, in which individuals “connect to a single or a small number of actors for the majority of the flow of information” (Himelboim, Smith, Raine, Shneiderman & Espina, 2017, p. 8). Only a few Twitter users in the network, and one in particular (the protest organizer Epigmenio Ibarra), stand out as hubs of information. This structure is similar to the way that information flows in a traditional mass communication model. Yet, the nature of the network becomes more complex when looking at the other main hubs. Unlike typical broadcast networks, which usually have users such media outlets, pundits, and organizations at the center, in the #PaseDelista1al43 network members of the public acquired prominence in the network. Although power is concentrated in a few hubs, these hubs are not exclusively the usual popular actors (e.g., media outlets, pundits, celebrities) but some of them are regular citizens.

Gatekeeping activities were in charge of a group of elite and non-elite Twitter users that worked in collaboration to maintain the hashtag in use, and thus, the discussion of the topic of the missing students. These dynamics are indicative of networked gatekeeping, in which the diffusion of information and the determination of information relevance occurred in a fluid relational interplay between incumbent and emergent players (Ernste, 2014). The analysis of the type of actors in the network showed that a majority were regular Twitter users, considered as non-elite actors. However, there were elite users involved in the digital protest, a TV producer (the protest leader), intellectuals, actors, radio hosts, journalists, and a politician. Despite the fact that they were outnumbered in terms of the amount of users in the network, the prominence of the elite group was evident considering the number of favorites and retweets they achieved. Yet, non-elite users also achieved prominence as the digital protest persisted through time. As such, on the #PaseDeLista1al43 public, few users with high centrality but who generally have low overall cohesiveness to the rest of the network –elites who rarely retweet others or that have conversations with very few within the network– coexist with many network users, likely members of the general public that may have lower centrality but high cohesiveness to a small number of acquaintances (Ernste, 2014). The gatekeeping process in this networked context is, thus, more plural. People with non-elite status offline can author content that achieves prominence and become influential in the network (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013).

Nonetheless, the fact that there are opportunities to become prominent in the network for non-elite users did not completely erase differences in hierarchies. These differences were pointed out by participants interviewed about #PaseDeLista1al43 protests. The interviewees underscored the leadership of Epigmenio Ibarra in the creation and maintenance of the protest, and how his celebrity status contributed to preserve the demonstration. Similar to findings from Papacharissi and De Fatima Oliveira (2012) who investigated the protests in Egypt in 2011, this analysis identified that hierarchies still matter in social media protests. For this protest, the daily efforts of its leader, an elite Twitter user, were decisive to maintain the hashtag in use. However, the use of Twitter to protest also allows a ‘crowdsourced’ form of leadership rewarding committed users who reported and curated information on the network (Papacharissi & De Fatima Oliveira, 2012). From the beginning of #PaseDeLista1al43, these non-elite Twitter users were motivated by the attention they got from an elite user to continue with the daily efforts of retweeting the tweets of the protest. Interviewees claimed to have acquired popularity thanks to their participation on the demonstration, gaining up to thousands of followers. In light of that growth within the #PaseDeLista1al43 network, this crowdsourced elite has attributed itself gatekeeping responsibilities, such as protecting the persistence of the hashtag in response to bots attacks; attracting more elite users to the protest; and curating the information that flows in the network. Notably, this investigation contributes in our understanding of how networked gatekeeping occurs, giving place to a symbiotic relationship between elite and non-elite users. This study looks beyond the digital footprint of the protest and listens to the perspective of protesters, who explained the nature of their participation, their motivations, and the dynamics they perceive within the network.

Moreover, the coexistence of elite and non-elite users in the network resulted in their mutual collaboration for the process of networked framing. Narratives about the Ayotzinapa case in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter protest were articulated by “the networked interactions between elites and non-elites, supplemented by algorithmic aggregations” afforded by Twitter, mainly the use of the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 and the use of the retweet feature (Jiang et al., 2016, p. 97). The frames that emerged from these crowd

and elites efforts indicate that the protesters rejected a dominant narrative that the Mexican government sought to promote regarding the 43 students' disappearance (mainly, that the case had been solved already). The analysis of tweets with the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 showed that, for people participating on this stream, the government is an adversary whose account of the events they strongly reject. Another important frame that appears on this protest is the humanization of the victims by emphasizing the students' faces and names, features of their personalities, and the suffering of their families. These tweets are imbued with emotions about the missing students and their parents, ranging from affection and love for the victims to sadness and outrage about their situation. Furthermore, the authors of the tweets in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter protest reveal a sense of identification with the students and their disappearance. The protesters argue that, because of the general conditions of violence in Mexico, they could potentially be victims of a crime like the students were.

Thus, the analysis of the frames prevalent in the #PaseDeLista1al43 protest evince an interest of protesters to talk about the case, updates on the investigation, and details about the victims' lives, however, the protesters also talk about themselves and their emotions derived from the disappearance of the 43 students. Instead of just representing an event, the tweets in the #PaseDeLista1al43 protest took content from mainstream media and remix it with opinions and feelings about the Ayotzinapa case. In that way, Twitter users utilizing the #PaseDeLista1al43 hashtag position themselves in the story of the disappearance, as opposed to just remaining witnesses of it. Therefore, the protest constituted an opportunity for these Twitter users to feel their way into the 43 students' story. Notably, the reiteration of certain frames, via retweets and favorites, shows the intensity of the endorsement of those frames (Papacharissi & De Oliveira, 2012). Consequentially, the collaboration of elites and crowds to consolidate frames in this networked environment allows the members of this public to portray the news about the disappearance as a mix of facts, opinions, and emotions (Papacharissi, 2014). Despite academic concern about digital activism becoming shielded to avoid harassment (Nikunen, 2018) and for its limits as a form of merely connective but not collective action (Papacharissi, 2016), this study finds that this group of protesters, which emerged with support of

Twitter's technological affordances, is capable of collectively constructing frames that were sustained over time on Twitter discourse.

This study has some limitations. First, the amount of interviews conducted can be deemed small ( $N=15$ ). Nonetheless, the overall #PaseDeLista1al43 protesters population is potentially small, based on two considerations: 1) the amount of retweets that the students' roll call get daily is about 80-100, 2) the estimation from some participants about how many of them contribute to the protest (from 100 to 200). Additionally, the subjects interviewed represented different types of participants of the protest, for example, protesters that do a roll call of their own besides the one conducted by Ibarra, people that just retweet the original roll call, participants that create their own images to curate the content in the protest, participants that are not Mexicans citizens, and Mexicans in another country. This diversity in the type of participation and the demographic characteristics of the protesters indicate that there is variation in the range of participants interviewed. An additional limitation of these interviews is that they were conducted in different periods of time, which could impact participants' responses. However, responses of the subjects interviewed in the first period coincided with those interviewed later during the project.

## **Conclusion**

Hashtags act as a social awareness stream in which subjectivity and objectivity are combined, representing a user-generated collaborative argument about a certain topic (Papacharissi & De Oliveira, 2012). The hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43, consistently used to discuss the Ayotzinapa case since 2014, has consolidated as a social awareness stream that serves as an online home (Papacharissi, 2016) or a long-running epistemic community (Segerberg & Bennett, 2011) for the protest. The narrative constructed by the #PaseDeLista1al43 networked public represents another layer of the Ayotzinapa event. The stories told about Ayotzinapa on the #PaseDeLista1al43 protest constitute another perspective that stands next to others perspectives about the event, for example: "as it is unfolding on the ground, the event as broadcast via television, the event as depicted through the conventions of newspaper storytelling" (Papacharissi, 2016, p. 316).

Protesters highly value the possibility to portray the Ayotzinapa story in their own terms through Twitter. By participating in the online protest, the protesters embrace the opportunity to challenge the narrative that, in their perception, the government is trying to impose.

Communication scholars must continue to look at digital protests to analyze the implications for the practice of activism and citizenship, given the current media landscape. Importantly for this study, the persistency of the use of the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 over several years made the identification of regular participants of the online demonstration possible, in order to get their account about the nature of their participation and their motivations to protest. Their responses reinforced findings from previous literature on the symbiotic relationship between elite and non-elite users and the functions that each have on networked gatekeeping and networked framing processes. Given the porosity, openness, and permanence of Twitter, results from such collaborative relationship of elite and non-elite voices to protest about an issue are now harder to ignore in the public sphere. The potential impact of Twitter networked publics to permeate to mainstream narratives beyond the platform should be further investigated.

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# Water Management in the Media and Research: Dissemination in Catalonia and its Capture by Private Companies

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## Abstract

As a vital resource for human well-being, drinking water is considered a public good worldwide. However, big companies are sometimes in charge of its management leading to an interested distribution of benefits. One of the mechanisms of power that these private companies employ to retain access to water management is the control of the dissemination of information. Thus, the objective of this study is to evaluate the influence of big companies on the dissemination of water management in Catalonia by focusing on two groups of actors: the general public and experts. Accordingly, we analyse the association of big companies with mass media and research institutions. First, we scrutinise local newspapers for the period 2010-2016 to compile news about water management and companies whose activity is related to water. We found some interesting correlations between the amount and subject of the news, the editorial lines and relevant facts. Second, we search scientific articles about water management written by authors from Catalan research institutions. We analyse the production, research topic and funding. In this sense, we found that technological centres are the most funded by private companies and that public funding is more related to topics related to the ecosystem functioning.

**Keywords:** dissemination, mass media, private companies, research production, water management

# **La Gestión del Agua en los Medios de Comunicación e Investigación: La Divulgación en Cataluña y Su Secuestro por La Empresa Privada**

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## **Resumen**

Como recurso vital para el bienestar humano, el agua potable es considerada un bien público en todo el mundo. Sin embargo, grandes empresas privadas a veces se encargan de su gestión y distribución interesadas por los beneficios que eso conlleva. Uno de los mecanismos de poder que emplean estas empresas para retener el acceso a la gestión del agua es el control de la divulgación de información. Así, el objetivo de este estudio es evaluar la influencia de grandes empresas en la divulgación de la gestión del agua en Cataluña, poniendo el foco en dos grupos de actores: el público en general y los expertos. En consonancia, analizamos la relación de las grandes empresas con los medios de comunicación y las instituciones científicas. Primero, revisamos los periódicos locales por el período 2010-2016 para recopilar noticias sobre gestión del agua y empresas cuya actividad está relacionada con el agua. Encontramos correlaciones interesantes entre la cantidad y el tema de las noticias, las líneas editoriales, y hechos relevantes. En segundo lugar, buscamos artículos científicos sobre gestión del agua escritos por autores de instituciones científicas de Cataluña. Analizamos la producción, el tema de investigación y los fondos de financiación. En este sentido, encontramos que los centros tecnológicos son los mejor financiados por la empresa privada, y que la financiación pública está más relacionada con el estudio de los ecosistemas.

**Palabras clave:** divulgación, medios de comunicación, empresa privada, producción científica, gestión del agua

The obvious fact that freshwater is indispensable for life (biologically, societally and economically) made water gain the consideration of public good worldwide (Acreman, 2001). Moreover, since 2010, access to drinkable water and sanitation is considered a Human right. Almost everywhere in the world, water responsibility and ownership fall into public administrations, although Chile is one of those hurtful exceptions due to the social tensions that private ownership has historically brought (Budds, 2004). Despite the public copiousness, it is not rare that many public administrations have relied on private companies to manage specific processes, such as capture, transportation and treatment that are part of the hydro-social cycle (Linton & Budds, 2014). As in other areas of the administration (education, health, etc.), management is given to private companies because of the lack of financial mechanisms and management capacity of the government, but also due to external pressures, ideology of the government party and self-benefit (Ogden, 1995; Swyngedouw, 2005). Nowadays, about 90% of the population receives water from public enterprises or administration (McNabb, 2017; Platz, 2009). However, this percentage was bigger before the decade of 1980. It was during the debt crisis of impoverished countries that took place during the decades of 80 and 90's that the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) enhanced the participation of private companies in cooperative projects concerning drinking water (World Bank and Center for Public Integrity Analysis). In 1990, less than 20% of WB loans required privatisation of water services while in 2002 this value increased to almost 90%.

Many of the privatisation processes that took place in South America during that period ended up in institutional and social conflict, being the case of Cochabamba one of the worst experiences (Nickson & Vargas, 2002). Fare increases, reduction of investments and contract breaches were some of the reasons of those tensions. Finally, 62% of the concessions were ceased and a 57% of those got back to public control (Basteiro Bertolí, 2008). These conflicts illustrate the value of social awareness towards water.

Meanwhile, there is a question to pose: do private companies manage water to serve public interests? Although this is the objective for the management of public goods, it is too often demonstrated that private

companies look at their own interests first. Dams have often been built with private capital but without the local support, rivers become overexploited, ignoring the welfare that a well-preserved river provides (e.g., Ojeda et al., 2008; Willis & Garrod, 1999), the same industry that benefit from such over-exploitation pollute the public resource and it is usually the general public who has to pay – through taxes – the water treatment, ending in the privatisation of benefits and socialisation of costs, or cost externalisation. Many countries have examples of such cost externalisation. In Catalonia, the most visible cases are the salted water collectors and desalination treatments payed with public funds to reverse the impact of salt mining (Gorostiza et al., 2015) and the contamination of land, aquifers and springs from pig feces landfill derived from agroindustry (Vitòria et al., 2008).

Technology, capital, labour and knowledge are shared mechanisms of power that big companies exercise to directly gain and maintain their access to water management (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). Precisely the control of information and knowledge, via the control of the dissemination canals, is at the same time crucial to understand the acceptability of the society towards certain water policies and focus debates that have to decide the future of water policies. While a lot of case-study-based research has been done relating neoliberalism, power and water management (e.g., Bakker, 2000; Budds, 2004; Otero et al., 2011; Swyngedouw, 1997), there is less knowledge specifically focused on the control over the dissemination means.

The objective of this paper is then to account for the influence of big companies on the dissemination of information and knowledge regarding water management. Because dissemination has an effect on different layers of the society, this study attempts to analyse the dissemination towards both the expert public and the general public in the region of Catalonia. Catalonia (NE Spain) is one of the European regions with more water services managed by private companies (Aiguaesvida, 2015) and has abundant conflicts related to the overexploitation of water resources and to corporative impunity (Gorostiza et al., 2015; Jorda-Capdevila, 2016; March, 2014).

Regarding the dissemination to the general public, this study analyses mass media during the privatisation processes of two public companies that took place during the 2010-2016 period. Mass media has often collaborated with the discourses that assert that water crises are fruit of natural events (e.g., droughts) rather than political decisions, so accordingly only technical

solutions can be used for coping such crises, favoring the role of big companies in the governance of water decisions (Linton, 2004). A similar idea is spreading throughout research institutions, where the unequal level of funding between research groups can bring to the specialisation towards technical and “apolitical” fields, omitting the study of political economic power relations that influence the current water management (Swyngedouw, 2009). Thus, this study also complements previous works that analyse the tentacles of big companies that penetrate through research institutions in order to control of the dissemination among experts (D’Elia et al., 2016; Vilà Miró & Yvon-Leroux, 2017).

In summary, this paper analyses how much influenced are research and the media by corporations related to water management in Catalonia. Section 2 describes the main actors on water management in Catalonia and explains the methodology used for data acquisition in newspapers and scientific journals and data analysis. Section 3 describes the main findings from the analyses of the mass media and research institutions and discusses the results. Finally, Section 4 presents the conclusions of the findings.

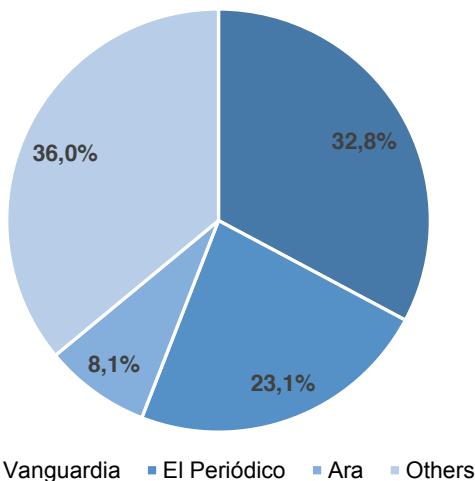
## **Methodology**

As described in the introduction, this study analyses the influence of big companies on the dissemination of information by mass media and research institutions.

The analysis of mass media focuses on the news about two privatisation processes that have been occurring in the water management sector since the political strategy change of the Catalan Government in 2010 towards a more liberal market. First, the public company Aigües Ter-Llobregat (Waters of Ter-Llobregat, ATLL), the one in charge to capture, treat and transport water throughout the entire metropolitan region of Barcelona, was transferred to a private group for 50 years. Acciona and Agbar were the leading companies that competed in the tender process. Acciona’s group won, although Agbar put the process on trial, yet without a definitive resolution. Agbar has historically been the most important company to manage the water at a municipal level and is the main actor of the second privatisation process. In 2010, some activists and water users realised that Agbar was supplying

drinking water to the Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, AMB) without a proper contract. The Government of the AMB hurried then to constitute a new company for the water supply using a public-private partnership: 70% Agbar, 15% Criteria-CaixaBank, 15% AMB. This new company became real in 2014 and its constitution is also on trial. Criteria-CaixaBank is, by the way, the biggest bank in Catalonia, which also owns some shares of Agbar.

The methodology employed here consists in collecting all news related to water in different newspaper's libraries for the 2010-2016 period and analysing the number of publications that contains certain keywords related to the privatisation and the struggles against the process: 'privatisation', 'remunicipalisation', 'municipalisation', 'licence', 'win', 'awards', 'good', 'bad', 'positive', 'negative', 'sentence', 'public', 'private'. The newspapers considered are the three most read in Catalonia according to the 2017 Political Opinion Barometer ([CEO, 2017](#)): La Vanguardia, El Periódico and Ara.cat. As shown in figure 1, they represent about two thirds of what people reads and are actually those receiving more funding from the Catalan Government for their publications in Catalan ([DOGC, 2015](#)). Each journal also has a network of private funders despite the difficulties for bringing that information to light ([Media.cat, 2015](#)). As far as we know, La Vanguardia – part of the Grup Godó holding, which controls several radio and TV channels – and El Periódico are somehow funded by CaixaBank; while the president of Ara.cat also belongs to the Board of Directors of Acciona ([Sibina & Dante-Fachin, 2014](#)). In order to contrast our findings from mainstream journals to another one less dependent on big private companies and more interested in extensive reports instead of breaking news, we also selected Crític. Crític is a newspaper that does investigative journalism and is not funded by big private companies. In its webpage, it is totally transparent and provide detail of funding: 15% from sponsorships, basically from the public administration. Moreover, Critic is publicly recognised as a good journal, since has lately received the National Award in communication 2019 in the category of digital journal" ([Crític, 2019](#)). Finally, we also analyse the publications for the World Water Days (WWD, every March 22) of the last years.



*Figure 1.* Distribution of most read newspapers (CEO, 2017).

In relation to the influence of private companies on the research production and dissemination, we analyse whether the topics of the articles published in Catalonia about water management depends on the funding source. We also look at the role that some companies (especially big corporations, such as Agbar) have in different stages or organisms related to the research production and dissemination.

We search at the ISI Web of Knowledge all articles on ‘water management’ published between 2014 and 2016 and with one of the four provinces in Catalonia (Barcelona, Girona, Lleida and Tarragona) in the address of the first author. In fact, we exclude all publications whose first author is not from a Catalan institution. From each publication, we extract the abstract, in order to analyse the content of each article, and the affiliation of the first author and the funding sources, as variables to consider in our analysis. As all articles included public funding sources, we classified them according to the sources of additional private funding (e.g., banks, water companies, agroindustry, NGOs).

Once we have the data collected, we perform the analysis in two phases. First, we cross both types of variables (institutions and funding sources) to

see the research of what universities is more captured by private companies. Second, we use IRaMuTeQ – an R-based software that provides statistical analysis on text corpus – to classify the articles in different classes in relation to the words appearing in their abstracts. IRaMuTeQ also uses statistical multivariable methods to significantly relate variables to the created classes.

## Results and Discussion

### Association Between Companies and Newspapers

Historically, media has spread deceptive discourses that benefit corporations from ‘natural’ disasters and subsequent reconstruction activities ([Kaika, 2003](#); [Kallis, 2008](#)). In Catalonia, discourses have also been used for promoting inter-basin water transfers – like the one about the water flow wasted when draining into the sea or the use of euphemistic concepts like ‘inter-territorial solidarity’ – or hydropower production – thanks to the use of ‘clean’ or ‘green’ energy ([Jorda-Capdevila, 2016](#)). Moreover, although they should provide information, big companies have the power to silence some critical news, such as the court sentence that declared illegitimate the water management by Agbar in the AMB, which was classified as the second most relevant media silence in Catalonia in 2011 ([Balasch, 2012](#)).

Our study indicates that news about water in the three most read newspapers appear in a relatively constant way over time. However, a first overview to the apparition of keywords suggests different approaches to information related to water. In fact, figure 2 presents that Crític is the newspaper that mentions license, privatisation and municipalisation issues more often in relation to the number of articles published related to water, which is actually reasonable due to its condition as an investigative journal. This may also be partially explained because high impact newspapers usually include other general information such as weather forecast and international events.

Table 1 shows the overall data, to understand the numbers. In Table 1, La Vanguardia, which is the newspaper with more articles related to water, and El Periódico, to a lesser extent, do not pay a lot of attention to municipalisation and remunicipalisation processes, being the ones that

mention these keywords fewer times. Note that, apart from tackling these two keywords less times, they do it even considering that they publish and incredibly higher number of articles regarding water issues (which is why the percentages in figure 2 are almost unnoticeable). Moreover, they seem to deliberately deviate the discussion to privatisation. On the other hand, Critic and Ara.cat seem to clearly spend more energy in these topics, hence having either more articles regarding remunicipalisation or a higher percentage of articles with these keywords in relation to the published water-related articles.

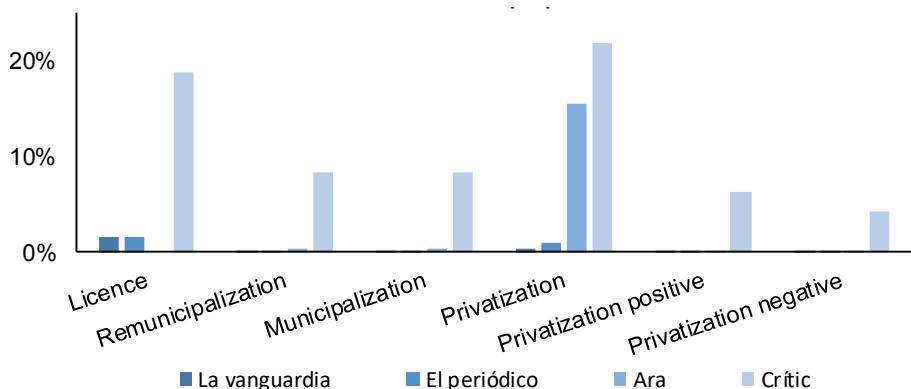


Figure 2. Appearance of water and keywords on news for each analysed journal.

The analysis of the apparition of ‘Agbar’, ‘ATLL’ and ‘AMB’ on these newspapers shows how they are treated according to each journal. It is interesting to notice that Agbar doubles (or more) the number of news having its name and, curiously, almost half of the them involve the Agbar Tower – the symbolic headquarters’ building, which has become part of the skyline of the city (figure 3A). Moreover, La Vanguardia and El Periódico act similarly, not mentioning the word ‘sentence’ – and when they do it, it is for mostly informing that Agbar won a trial – and mentioning visibly more the keyword ‘public’ than ‘private’. There may be confusion regarding ‘public’ and ‘private’ adjectives associated to water, since the ownership is public but the management has almost always been private. Agbar, whose name means Aigües de Barcelona (Barcelona Waters), has usually taken

advantage of that confusion for marketing purposes. For example, Agbar writes about “water is a public good” in its webpage but does not write that it is privately managed; it has social bonus for people in poverty risk, and also provides certificates of sustainable cuisine for restaurants, as the public administration could do ([Agbar, 2019a](#); [Agbar, 2019b](#)). On the contrary, Ara.cat takes a totally opposite direction, mentioning ‘sentence’ in many cases and ‘private’ more often than ‘public’. This goes in line with the participation of CaixaBank in Agbar and in La Vanguardia and El Periódico; and the relationship between Ara.cat and Acciona, the rival company of Agbar in the privatisation of ATLL.

Table 1.

*Number of news that contain each keyword.*

| Keyword           | La Vanguardia | El Periódico | Ara.cat | Crític |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|---------|--------|
| Water             | 30,747        | 20,597       | 13,808  | 96     |
| License           | 450           | 307          | 0       | 18     |
| Remunicipalisatio | 1             | 7            | 35      | 8      |
| Municipalisation  | 5             | 10           | 45      | 8      |
| Privatisation     | 108           | 204          | 2,132   | 21     |

The apparition of ‘ATLL’ in the media substantially increased since 2012 due to the privatisation process of the company and the judicial conflicts that surrounded it. The competition between tenderers might explain why almost half of the news include either ‘Agbar’ or ‘Acciona’ (figure 3B). In contrast to the previous case, La Vanguardia does mention ‘private’ much more often than ‘public’, although ATLL was a public company before 2012. All other newspapers proceed inversely.

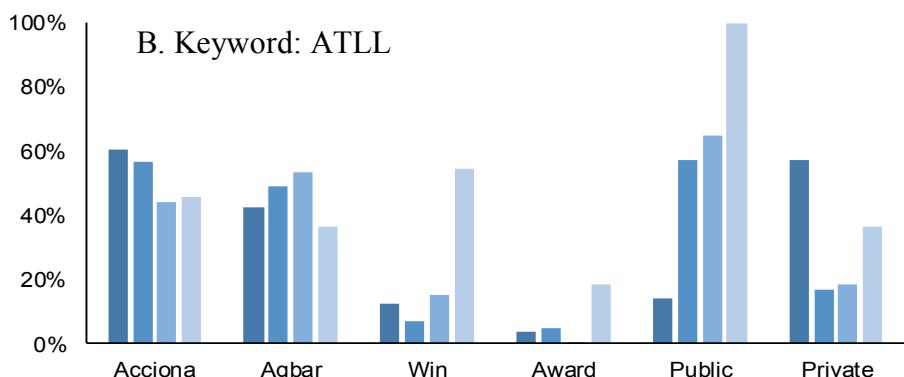
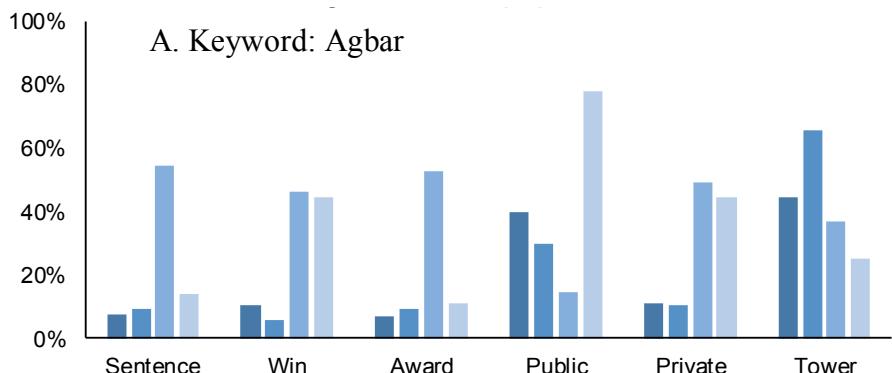
Finally, figure 3C shows the same keywords apparition regarding the ‘AMB’. This inter-municipal association gathers other aspects than just water, thus, results are dispersed in comparison to the previous analyses. Nevertheless, all newspapers enhance its public role in front of the private co-optation done by Agbar in 2014, which might be explained by the fact

that the word ‘private’ might be diluted by the concept of a mixt company and because the privatisation was recently executed. Again, Critic is the journal that more clearly states the privatisation.

The analysis of the WWD illustrates the surveillance of water companies towards the production of news. La Vanguardia did not have any specific publication until 2012, when privatisations were scheduled and remunicipalisation movements started gaining public support. Since then, they published a monograph of around 15 pages every year. The first year, the monograph began with a full-page advertisement from Agbar and then presented general aspects related to access and water scarcity. Then, some interviews with representatives and initiatives of private companies appeared. ATLL and AMB – both still under public control – were mentioned for the rumours of their forthcoming privatisations. In 2013, the monograph had a similar format but included a half-page interview to Pedro Arrojo, who actually is quite critical towards privatisation. In 2014, the full-page advertisement was from Acciona. It announced that the first citizen initiative ever presented to the European parliament was focused on water management, it had a half-page of the privatised ATLL and then it continued presenting the role of Agbar in the water cycle. 10 essential points were presented for water sustainability, which interestingly enough included aspects such as corporate social responsibility, contact with interest groups and the client – not user – orientation among others. In other sections, the newspaper had a full-page advertisement of the private initiative WeAreWater. Surprisingly, a full-page advertisement of the privatised ATLL was published the day before. Last year, 2016, followed a similar pattern but only mentioned Agbar, as if there were no other actors.

El Periódico’s publications in 2010 during the WWD presented some activities in the city of Barcelona, for example, a debate in the Politecnical University of Catalonia (UPC), and the projection of the film FLOW organised by Enginyeria Sense Fronteres (Engineering without borders), organisation that actually opposes privatisation. The following years, 2011 and 2012, this newspaper presented general and official aspects on water conflicts and summarised the key points of a debate that they organised involving private and public companies, engineers’ associations and the Institut Català de Recerca de l’Aigua (Catalan Institute for Water Research,

ICRA). This was followed by interviews with Agbar and Acciona representatives. Additionally, in 2012 they also included the citizen initiative that social movements wanted to present to the European parliament and published an article entitled: “Austerity or social sabotage”. This newspaper had no more relevant publications on this day until 2015, when they published a seven-page report facing the different challenges related to water scarcity, including a brief presentation of the Agbar museum. Finally, in 2016, *El Periódico* published why Barcelona walks towards remunicipalisation, an article written by water activists that, since 2015, are present in the government of the city. In the same day, this newspaper published an article on water access and poverty and presented some actions of the private foundation WeareWater, Esagua (from Agbar), and Acciona.



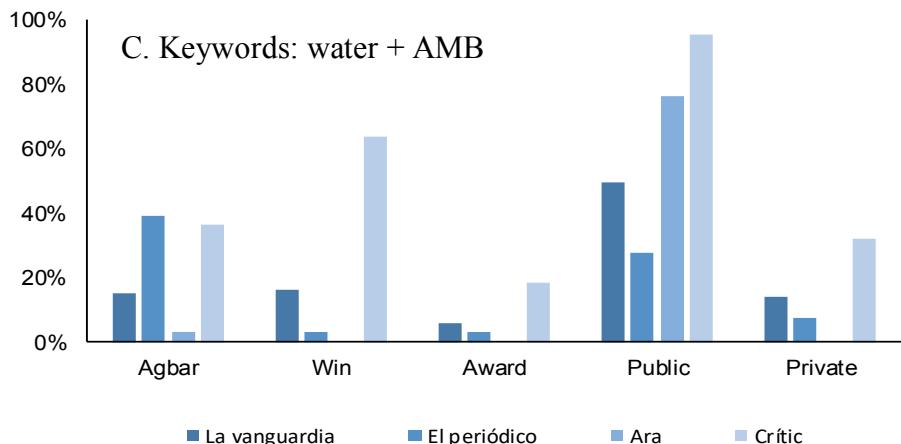


Figure 3. Percentage of appearance of keywords related to Agbar, ATLL and AMB on the analysed newspapers from 2010 to 2016.

Regarding Crític and Ara.cat, the former published nothing special for the WWD, while the latter had some articles only in 2013 and 2016. Ara.cat explained the citizen initiative presented to the European parliament and remarked that the privatisation of ATLL brought a noticeable increase of water prices. In 2016, there was a one-page report on access to water.

From the analysis of the WWD we see some empirical evidences that link the funding of newspapers with the political content in relation to water management. La Vanguardia gradually passed from emphasising the private sector by omitting remunicipalisation or conflicts on water management in Catalonia and ended up only responding to Agbar's interests. Meanwhile, it is more difficult to identify if El Periódico has had publication directives due to the multiple-focus orientation of the publications. Finally, the lack of advertisements in Ara.cat makes the assignment of any influence difficult.

One last relation between private companies and journalism is found in ATLL. This recently privatised company organises since 2014 the ATLL Award on Water Journalism by the hand of the Journalist's Association, the Catalan Water Agency and the Department of Territory and Sustainability of the Catalan Government.

## Association Between Companies and Research Institutions

The media can also uncover the power relationships between big companies and research institutions through their funding ([Altarriba, 2017](#)). Actually, it has been difficult to analyse the funding of a paper by a big corporation because in many times this happens through intermediate foundations or projects.

When we looked at scientific publications, 133 papers appeared in the search accomplishing the proposed criteria: on the topic ‘water management’, led by an author whose affiliation is a Catalan institution, and published between 2014 and 2016. Figure 4 shows the distribution of publications according to the institution of the first author and the funding source additional to the public. Actually, two thirds of the publications were only funded by public resources; 14% of the publications have big corporations such as Agbar, Acciona or CaixaBank as contributors; the 5% is supported by the agroindustry (e.g., Codorniu, Dow Chemicals, Monsanto), especially when the institutions research about agriculture (IRTA and UdL); another 5% is funded by innovation and development small companies (e.g., Eurecat, IsardSAT), which usually correspond to the affiliation of the first author; big NGOs not funded by those other private sources (e.g., Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Oxfam Intermón) has contributed to 4% of the articles; and the funding sources of 8% of the publications is unknown.

An especial attention deserves the funding of UPC (which includes UPC-CSIC consortiums) publications, as 62% of it includes private sources, the largest percentage in this study. This is partially due to a consortium created by UPC, CSIC and Agbar called CETaqua. Two works elaborated in the Master's degree in Sustainability Science and Technology, at the UPC examine the penetration of Agbar (and other companies) in the research groups of the UPC (D'Elia et al., 2016; Vilà Miró and Yvon-Leroux, 2017). Agbar – through CETaqua –, not only funds part of the research done by the UPC, but also monopolise the water-related subjects of research, dominates the social network of scientists and research groups, and even controls the higher education by running the UPC Master degree on water management.

The analysis of the 133 abstracts by using IRaMuTeQ software shows a distribution of keywords in six different classes according to their apparition

in either the same or different texts. IRaMuTeQ represents the variety of words of those six classes in a 2D diagram according to two factors that explain the maximal variability (figure 5). Then, the software analyses what variables can be significantly correlated to each class. Factor 1 seems to illustrate the variation between particular (e.g., vineyard, isotope, stomatal, n-15) versus generalist topics (e.g, problem, tourism, society, validation, case-study); while factor 2 moves from socio-political keywords (e.g., society, governance, policy, alternative) to technical ones (e.g., simulation, operate, control-oriented, overflow).

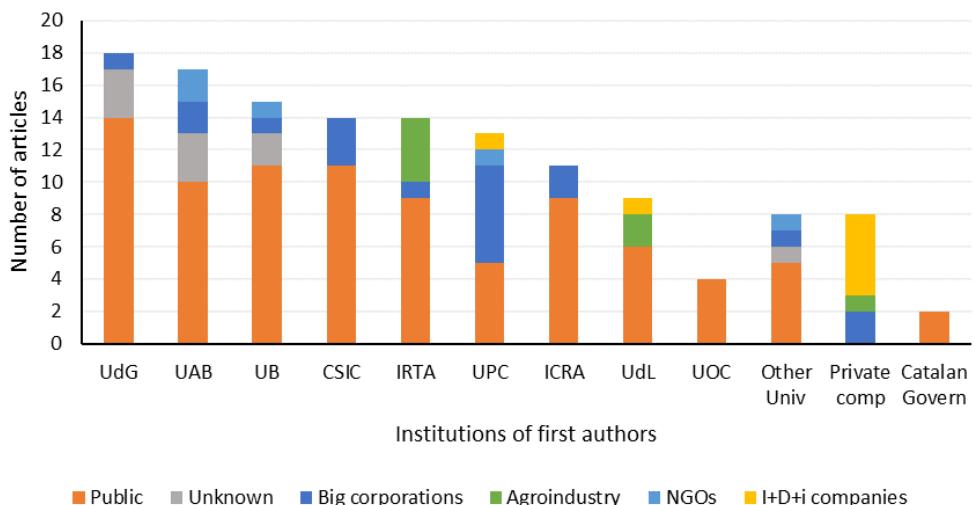


Figure 4. Presence of private companies in the funding sources of different articles about water management led by scientists from Catalan institutions published in the period 2014-2016.

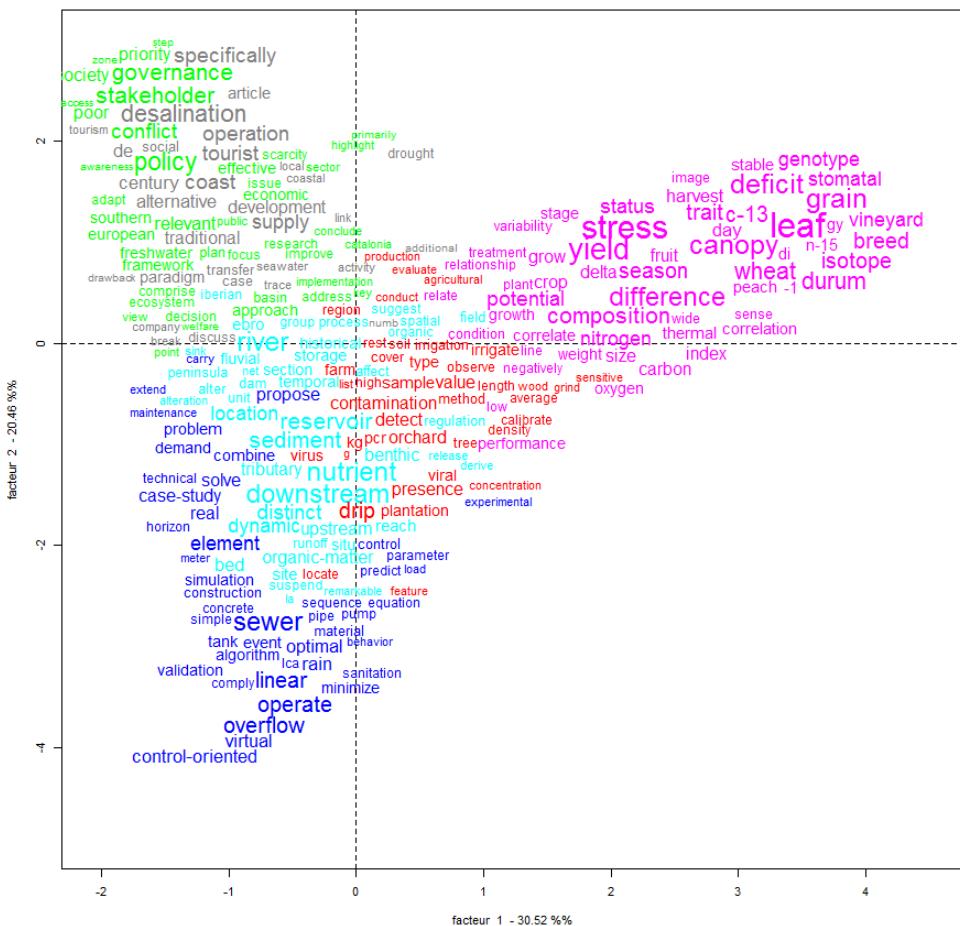
While half of the classes is not correlated with any funding source, the other half is. Thus, big corporations' contribution is correlated with problem-based studies about water demand, operation of sewers and overflows, which include control, simulation and validation processes; the agroindustry is reasonably correlated with agriculture, physiological needs and water stress and deficit; and only-public sources with ecosystem functioning: river,

temporal, sediment, nutrient, organic matter (see Table 2). Considering that big corporations are usually less interested in river conservation than in making profit, it is logical then that they do not invest in this type of research.

Table 2.

*Classes of keywords that appear in the abstracts of articles about water management and the correlated funding sources and research institutions.*

| Class | Keywords used in the classification   | Correlated institutions                  | Correlated funding sources        |
|-------|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1     | Drip, orchard, contamination, value, sample, irrigate, plantation, virus, landscape, forest, farm, irrigation, dose, bacterium, tree, soil, density, calibrate,   | UB<br>(P=0.0171)                         |                                   |
| 2     | Desalination, tourist, operation, coast, supply, development, geographical, drought, social, climate change, industry, sustainability, paradigm, seawater         | UOC<br>(P<0.0001)                        |                                   |
| 3     | Policy, stakeholder, governance, conflict, authority, priority, intervention, society, poor, economic, freshwater, effective, Southern, adapt, decision,          | Catalan Government<br>(P=0.0045)         |                                   |
| 4     | River, downstream, nutrient, sediment, reservoir, dynamic, organic matter, tributary, benthic, bed, community, reach, temporal, Ebro, storage                     | ICRA<br>(P=0.0011)<br>CSIC<br>(P=0.0132) | Public institutions<br>(P=0.0241) |
| 5     | Sewer, overflow, operate, linear, virtual, control-oriented, rain, optimal, propose, solve, problem, tank, simulation, validation, minimise, demand,              | UPC<br>(P<0.0001)                        | Big corporations<br>(P<0.0001)    |
| 6     | Leaf, stress, yield, grain, deficit, canopy, wheat, durum, composition, isotope, conductance, breed, season, nitrogen, vineyard, stomatal, physiological, harvest | IRTA<br>(P=0.0004)<br>UB<br>(P=0.0412)   | Agroindustry<br>(P=0.0550)        |



**Figure 5.** Keywords present in the abstracts of 119 publications classified by IRAMUTEQ in 6 classes.

Big corporations not only have an influence on research through the funding, they are also present in advisory boards of research institutions. We have already explained the relationships between Agbar and the UPC and CSIC through CETqua. Another example is the Public Administration and

Business Mixed Committee in ICRA, where Acciona and CETaqua – among other companies – are present ([ICRA, 2013](#)). The main purpose of this committee is “to ensure the applicability and usefulness of the research conducted from ICRA, so that it is oriented towards market need”. The previous aims are then attributed only to the public administration and private companies, but not to other type of expertise that could be useful for ensuring applicability such NGOs that work on water management. Other means of influence are the participation in awards on water research or on research communication, given by public institutions like the University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia or the Catalan Society for the Scientific Communication ([UVIC-UCC, 2013](#); [ACCC, 2016](#)), but with the contribution of Agbar.

## Conclusions

Big companies are very present in the public dissemination of information about water management. In this study, we use the case of Catalonia as a clear example where big private companies have an influence on the information published for the general public through mass media and for the experts through research institutions. Although it is difficult to demonstrate specific directives for the publication of news, reports and scientific articles, we have seen multiple mechanisms through which these companies have power enough – capital, labour, knowledge and technology – to exercise such influence. First, we have mentioned executive officers that are part of the executive boards or advisory committees of both water companies and either research institutions or newspapers. This makes obvious conflict of interests especially in scientific publications where results should be neutral. Second, the mentioned corporations fund specific reports through advertisements (e.g., in the WWD) and scientific publications through grants or through donation of material and labour. Third, private companies also constitute private-public consortiums that monopolise research, such as CETaqua, making difficult to undertake research delinked from private companies, especially in engineering institutes. These last points skew the public interest that the research done in public universities and the journalistic comments in inclusive newspapers should have. Finally, private companies even take part in the organisation committees of public awards of

journalism and scientific communication about water management. Under such circumstances, and considering that private companies basically respond to private interests, how can we research about socially, environmentally and economically sustainable management of water resources?

### **Acknowledgements**

D. Jorda-Capdevila acknowledges the support from the Economy and Knowledge Department of the Catalan Government through Consolidated Research Group (ICRA-ENV 2017 SGR 1124) and from the CERCA. The Juan de la Cierva contract of D. Jorda-Capdevila (ref<sup>a</sup> FJCI-2017-34977) is funded by La Agencia Estatal de Investigación del Ministerio de Ciencia Innovación y Universidades.

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# Review

Diamond, L. (2019). *Ill Winds: Saving Democracy from Russian Rage, Chinese Ambition, and American Complacency*. New York: Penguin Press.  
ISBN: 9780525560623

Larry Diamond offers a thorough and thought-provoking account of the pervasiveness and risks of the ongoing democratic recession in *Ill Winds*. Blending a remarkable number of cases Diamond not only reflects on the most talked about cases (e.g., Poland, the Philippines, Turkey) where democracy has been on a sharp decline but delves into the US case and the implications of its declining democratic capital. While many studies treat the US as an exception due to its institutions, Diamond challenges such an assumption fiercely by placing the US experiences under a global lens. Countering the voices of those who look for better and more resilient “institutional designs” as exits from the democratic recession in the US and beyond, Diamond warns against quick fixes, drawing attention to the failure of Thailand’s constitutional court, due to political pressure despite its meticulous design. Casting the analytical net wide and the theoretical scale deep, *Ill Winds* explains how democracy draws on multiple constituencies and the fetishization of any of its parts (e.g., institutions, judicial review or international community) as a panacea against anti-democratic forces can be highly simplistic and misleading.

Diamond challenges those who see the current context a hiccup on the global march to democracy. What makes the recent global slump of democracy is not necessarily the number of countries but the appearance of anti-democratic forces in regions where democracy was once seen as safe. While the death of democracies has been sudden with coups or authoritarian captures, in the current wave anti-democratic forces gradually numb the deep tissues of the democracy (e.g., constraints of independent courts, free media, business community pg. 55) thus making timely and precise assessment of democratic decay in some countries challenging. The specific events and processes that bring about anti-democratic regimes may change (e.g., Putin's successful removal of rival oligarchs differs from Chavez' constitutional reforms) but the outcomes are often the same—autocratization of regimes under populist leaders where basic rights are curtailed drastically, and elections become a performance to lend legitimacy to the ruling parties.

As the *Ill Winds*'s subtitles hint, Diamond contends that in the current global context hegemonic powers work differently. Russia's ability to utilize free spaces and democratic institutions in other countries and its flexing of military power where the stakes are high makes it a global anti-democratic force. Yet, how China's power and impact work may be less visible and more effective in the long term. China's technological advances enable it to collaborate with many authoritarian states while it also creates alternative institutions such as New Development Bank or Asian Infrastructure Investment bank forging a new global system. China's "sharp power" differs from Russia's due to its ability to commit \$1.41 trillion (in contrast to the \$103 billion commitment of the Marshall Plan in today's dollars) to its global projects (pg133).

The analyses offered in *Ill Winds* is not limited to an empirical survey of the existing global context. Instead, Diamond reviews theoretical debates such as the conditions for democracy and carefully debunks many myths about democracy. Among others, *Ill Winds* critically engages with class and culture-centered accounts of democracy. While the apathy of the poor towards democracy cannot be understood without placing it within the framework of corruption (pg. 31-32, 154), *Ill Winds* shows democracy is still favored over other methods of governance and authoritarian leaders in regions where

democracies are most challenged, including the Arab World and Africa (pg. 159).

The variety of issues covered in *Ill Winds* not only bridges some insular debates but also calls for better conceptual and theoretical terms to analyze national and transnational processes simultaneously. For instance, while many study “corruption” in distinct countries, Diamond argues that the global surge of authoritarianism rides on *kleptocracy*—the movement and laundering of stolen money across national boundaries, which involves various actors ranging from governments and business to lawyers (pg. 192-198). Dimond’s 10 step program seeks to close loopholes by not allowing anonymous shell companies and real estate purchases or empowering institutions such as the treasury department, financial crimes enforcement networks and investigative journalism, ending practices like "golden visas" given based on investments etc.. Diamond is aware that his policy suggestions might sound too ethnocentric or misplaced (pg. 202). Addressing such critiqued he emphasizes the importance of not imposing a singular American model and treating freedom as a universal not a regional value or opposing the use of violence to promote democracy as it was used in the case of Iraq. Though some argue that democracy is an outcome of some policies he warns that democracy is not the outcome of fast growth and failing to focus on it as a separate sphere leaves many in the hands of oppressive regimes. By including cases like Burma's democratization, Diamond shows how some democratic leaders (such as Aung San Suu Kyi) might cave in to violent policies yet others (like Zin) thrive against all odds often with the support of international recognition.

In the sections on reasons behind the declining quality of US democracy Diamond leaves no stone unturned. Among others, he notes primaries that favor radical voices, gerrymandered electoral districts and the impact of campaign donations. One of his most intriguing policy reform suggestions is the Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV) system (where voters vote not for their first choice but instead rank order candidates based on their preference (pg. 257). While such proposals are often seen as pipe dreams Diamond notes Maine's successful adoption of an RCV, empowering independents and moderates. Such cases exemplify how reforms can be adopted under adverse circumstances with mobilization of democratic forces and how such reforms

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promise to address the polarizing and autocratizing tendencies of politics. The RCV proposal is no exception; *Ill Winds* is filled with a long list of proposals from protecting your computer (pg. 251) to how to prevent autocrats getting legitimacy by better guarding institutions like the European Council (pg. 186).

While scholarly books are rarely page-turners, *Ill Winds* might be one. It masterfully weaves personal anecdotal evidence (e.g., a lecture in Nigeria), regionally collected data, and academic theoretical debates into political and practical discussions that challenge everyone from the streets of Tahrir to the residents of Baltimore. The book affords excellent intellectual space for those who want to delve deeper into questions about democracy in the US and beyond without getting lost in a sea of pessimism or utopian escapism. Its easily accessible narrative makes *Ill Winds* a must read for those who are puzzled by the autocratic, kleptomanic tendencies marking the policies in both the US and beyond as well as for students of democracy who want to get a deeper understanding of the ever-shifting landscape of democratization. While graduate students who search for a dissertation topic might be the main beneficiaries of this book dedications in *Ill Winds* that recognize activists from all corners of the world capture Diamond's overall message to all--democracies are not institutional designs that can be taken over by autocrats but the outcome of individuals' daily democratic struggles.

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