

Prólogo de
José Luis Orihuela

**Albertina Navas
Carlos Sabino
César Ricaurte
Israel Márquez**

SOCIAL MEDIA, CITIZENSHIP AND POLITICS

**[Keys to the new
public sphere]**



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Foreword: Hyper-connected citizens

José Luis Orihuela

Center for Internet Studies and Digital Life, University of Navarra (Spain)

The Internet's infrastructure, social media and mobile devices make up the technological tripod upon which the new information ecosystem of hyperconnectivity is supported. Hyperconnected citizens on their part have developed new ways to interact with information, media and power, establishing themselves as social actors in processes that, up until today, have been under the control of institutional mediators.

Every great innovation in information technologies, has had an impact on the relations between the power and citizens, redefining the scope of the public sphere.

Until the advent of the Internet, each "new technology" (press, radio, television, satellite and cable) had only reinforced the power of those with access to costly, scarce and regulated technological infrastructures of communication.

The media operated under the paradigm of distribution (one-to-many), using centralized pre-filtering systems (the editors), managed their relationship with power in democracies as a control mechanism (fourth Estate) and their relationship with the public in terms of representativeness (implicit delegation). Although the media was supposed to represent the voice of the people, the mechanisms made available for the audience to provide feedback were rather scarce. The old communication model was notoriously asymmetrical, had a marked tendency to massiveness and was consequently, unidirectional.

With the Internet, the access paradigm (many to one and many to many) replaced the distribution paradigm, previous filtering mechanisms disappeared (since content was generated by users on self-managed platforms), control over power got dispersed (people's media) and the mass' media ceased to be the exclusive intermediary between citizens and power (disintermediation).

Social media and mobile devices enhance Internet connectivity, providing its users with unprecedented autonomy, allowing them to not only control power in a distributed way, but also exert control over the media and coordinate with other users, both inside and outside the Web.

Everyday, hyperconnected citizens discover and create new participation and control channels, taking online activism to the street and then amplifying it from the street back to social media.

This is how hyperconnectivity has permanently changed the public communication stage and is also changing markets, education, politics and government, outpacing by far these institution's ability adapt and react.

Media, enterprises, universities, political parties and public administration are faced with their greatest historical challenge: reinventing themselves in order to survive in a world that has changed and keeps on changing. A world in which technology, for once, has empowered people.

The debate surrounding the cultural and political impact of social-centric technologies has been opened and has many fronts. The "digital transformation", the great mantra of our time, can not be seriously undertaken without a relation of rapprochement between what is gained and what it loses in a hyperconnected world.

- How much disintermediation, transparency, distributed control and permanent consultation can a democratic system tolerate before becoming something else entirely?
- How do we prevent the communication of either public administration, political activity and current affairs analysis from

becoming a simple exchange of tweets and memes in pursuit of the next trending topic?

- What's the privacy, security and vulnerability toll our ever-connected lifestyle it's taking on us?
- How do we protect the virtualized institutions (the media, the parliament, the square, the market, the classroom) from their enemies?

Now that we know that technology has switched the relations between citizens and power, it's time to ask ourselves if the world we are building is freer, more democratic and safer than the world we left behind.

Introduction

"If it's not on television, it doesn't exist." This quote made famous by the American politician and environmentalist Al Gore seems to take on new proportions considering today's media being so open and social and the extent of its reach. Nowadays, the premise should be updated to: "If it's not on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, it doesn't exist." This applies to all aspects of life, including politics.

The transition from the offline to the online world is more than a mere change of platform, it is a true metamorphosis. Politicians are taken from a privileged position of unilateral and unquestionable speech, that feels almost like a pulpit, to become just another actor in the social process of content creation in which, they also happen to share credits with the citizens. It's an age where political protagonism gets diluted while collective intelligence grows; less data and more stories; fewer individuals and more community; less linearity and more hypertextuality; Less unidirectionality and more networks.

In this rising stage, influenced by digital technologies, internet social media emerges as key tools of communication between politicians, authorities, civil servants and citizens. Politicians, parties and governments can use social media to reshape their channels of citizen participation to unprecedented levels. Meanwhile, citizens establish themselves as civic leaders who are turning these digital platforms into public spaces where they can promote a constructive, informed and decisive dialogue on public issues relevant to their community.

Political communication aims to the seek of mediation when disagreements show up in society, and tries to bring about changes in those fields where citi-

zens are dissatisfied or improvements are needed in order to achieve the common welfare. Social media networks and the development of communication tools enable government representatives to have a direct line to learn about their constituents requests , gain access to information on who their audience is and, based on it, elaborate their proposals, tailored to meet the deficiencies perceived by their constituents and better oriented to achieve mediation.

Thus arises Politics 2.0, cyberpolitics or technopolitics, comprised as the use of multimedia tools to expand the ability of political actors to approach and understand the public they pretend to represent. Without a doubt this action, which primary purpose is service, is not deprived of particular interests that, making use of technology, also seek to attract more adherents to their respective parties and political movements, in order to consolidate its members loyalty and, with it, to lean voters their way.

From the citizen's point of view, the use of digital tools opens up a new possibility of social organization to climb the steps of the proverbial ladder of citizen participation: information, consultation and debate. Social media networks are, therefore the space where needs and proposals are exchanged, a place of expression and discussion, with the essential characteristic of not being bound to intermediaries, contents go straight from the political representative to the citizen and vice versa in a horizontal, free from hierarchy structures.

This phenomenon, known as cyberactivism, by definition the citizen's ability to promote and fight for a cause, focused on defined objectives, regardless of the party or representative who listens. The fight for said causes it's carried out and amplified through the formation of digital communities composed of members who identify themselves as spokespersons for the same project, despite not knowing each other. For organizational purposes, therefore, their location and schedules are not as fundamental as their ability to stay contact and the common ground that is established through their social media interactions and the specific actions that can be taken building upon that.

Horizontality, is therefore, the feature at the core of this new civic and political digital communication. From a political activity standpoint , it means that

hierarchies no longer exist - that - or at least, such is the aspiration - nor intermediaries between citizens and political representatives. It also means that the proximity established by the candidate opens the possibility to attract potential new voters or sympathizers. This presents a great opportunity to better understand the profile of your voters, as well as their needs and non-conformities, which should then influence the development of a greater sense of responsibility and commitment towards them; as well as the impossibility of turning a deaf ear to their demands since these get exposed on a daily basis through the different spaces social media facilitates.

Moreover, candidates or potential candidates have greater and more attractive resources to reach out to the common citizen, making a rigorous selection on the information to be delivered and which debates they engage on. This is mainly because the public is no longer a passive listener, it also analyzes, investigates, stays informed, expresses its opinion, debates, interacts with other citizens exposing their needs and demands in every level, the political sphere included.

The user's vision itself, empowers citizens, to stop being passive observers of the events that unfold in their environment. Nowadays, citizens are actively involved, enabled and count with organizational tools that help them overcome traditional time and space restrictions, thanks to readily available choices. They get involved in politics from their home, workplace or campus, expecting direct and accurate responses from political actors.

This is precisely why the research project "Social media, citizenship and politics, Keys to the new public sphere" emerged with the objective of increasing the visibility of this phenomenon on social media and its links to Latin American politics. The phenomenon is approached from three directions: firstly, the politician-to-citizen communication (the cases of Venezuela and Ecuador); secondly, citizen activism leading to concrete changes in the political world (Guatemalan case); and third critical approach, which seeks to put the parties, policy, citizens and technology, in the position corresponding to each one of them without simplistic exaggerations or apocalyptic visions.

This project, aimed at a broader readers base, has linked researchers from educational institutions and strategic partners from several countries in the region. The book starts with a Dr. José Luis Orihuela (New Media prologue, professor of New Media at the University of Navarra (Spain), who is considered one of the great names in research and teaching social media in Latin America. It is then divided into four chapters that expose general concepts and deepen in their respective case study.

Thus, Chapter I, entitled "Cyberpolitics, from rallies to social media. Case study "@NicolasMaduro: Analysing tweets from the most shared president of the region", authored by Albertina Navas, Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business (Trinidad and Tobago) and doctoral student at the University of Navarra (Spain). Focuses on Twitter as the stage for the legitimation of democracy today. This is so because, through this social media network, the ordinary citizen has the opportunity to be in direct contact with its political leaders and establish relations with other citizens without 3rd parties intervention or formalisms. Based on the analysis of activity, popularity, influence, conversation and content indicator this article portraits the social media interacción of President Nicolas Maduro (Venezuela) building upon analysis of activity indicators, popularity, influence, conversation and content.

On Chapter II, César Ricaurte, executive director of the Andean Foundation for the Observation and Study of Media, Fundamedios (Ecuador), presents the article "Tweet-O-Meter, battle in 140 characters. Monitoring speech against the press from officials accounts and Ecuadorian State Institutions". In it, Mr. Ricaurte addresses the use of Twitter in Ecuador, analyzing the number of tweets posted by officials against the press, political opponents and civil society, throughout the 2012 - 2015 period of time. He measures the amount of negative content, and presents a list of who are its authors, shedding light on who the two most prolific culprits of discrediting media and opponents are, characters who were officials on Rafael Correa's administration.

He presents a list of who the authors of these negative contents are and the volume of attacks, shedding light on who are the two major offenders, discrediting media and opponents, characters who were officials of the government of Rafael Correa. Furthermore, he unfolds the discursive strategies applied by these actors in their tweets against journalists and media.

In Chapter III, "Cyberactivism, citizenship in the streets and in social media. Case #RenunciaYA: How the Guatemalan people forged the resignation of the sitting president and vice president", co-authored by Albertina Navas and Dr. Carlos Sabino, professor of the Francisco Marroquín University (Guatemala), presents digital activism. The article explains cyber-activism as a set of techniques and technologies, anchored on the Internet, social media and mobile telecommunications, used by citizen movements to better spread local information to a large audience and expose the causes and stages of the gestation process.

The theory on this process is applied to the study of the protests unleashed between April and September 2015 in Guatemala, now known as Renuncia Ya. These found its origin in the cases of corruption of the political class and resulted on the resignation and incarceration of the president Otto Pérez Molina and his vice president, Roxana Baldetti.

Finally, in Chapter IV, Israel Márquez, a postdoctoral researcher at the Open University of Catalonia (Spain), in his article presents us with the question: "Is there a digital public sphere? A critical reflection." The author reveals the debate about the public space while its very foundations challenged by the expansion of the Internet and the emergence of the so-called Web 2.0 or social Web. He argues whether this has in fact led to the possibility of more openness from politicians and a more dynamic and direct exchange of information, involving greater citizen participation in democratic life.

In summary, the present work exhaustively addresses, through historical documentation, case studies and theories, the link between social media, politics and citizenship, while opening the debate on questions logically derived from this discussion. Political actors, whether public officials or candidates,

are challenged with making the best use of the opportunities made available to them by social media, which holds them accountable of implementing clear and transparent actions for citizens, who have more options than ever before to monitor and discuss the work of their representatives, enabling them to adhere or discredit to its causes, in a sphere of an ever developing global expression.

This also confronts professionals of communication and branches related to new technologies with the challenge of rethinking their knowledge to respond in a satisfactory way to the new world stage for Broadcasting Corporations as well as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs); in order to assimilate these new dynamics that far exceed the mere transmission of messages, since those who were formerly receivers are now also interactive transmitters of the circulating information.

All this is happening in a quick, simple and direct way, becoming an opportunity to express their demands and needs at every level, including their discontent or preferences in the political sphere, in order to influence politicians and public institutions decision-taking processes. The politics plus the use of social media create a symbiosis, a fusion in which these two elements complement each other.

Chapter I: Cyberpolitics, from rallies to social media.

Case @NicolasMaduro: Analysis of the most shared president's tweets in the region

Albertina Navas

International Centre for Social Media Studies by Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business (Trinidad and Tobago) and University of Navarra (Spain)

"Distance-shrinking communications and the co-presence feeling enabled by new technologies turns time-space constraints into one single dimension; the present."

Mancera and Pano, 2013

Background Information

Greece is known worldwide as the cradle of Western civilization. Democracy is one of its fundamental legacies, as a political system that proposes the sovereignty of the people and their right to choose and control their rulers. In this context, the Ágora became the axis of political activity, being the space where citizens had direct access to their leaders and where they generated reciprocal connections with their peers.

Centuries later, digital social media seem to replicate those emblematic characteristics and, for many, turning into channels that allow citizens, civil leaders and government officials to gather in public spaces where they can engage in a constructive and informed dialogue on topics of common interest.

The theory stipulates that politics should focus its activity on human co-existence, seeking to mediate among disagreements and respond to citizen's

demands in order to achieve the welfare of all. While its remaining essence is the service to the community, its forms of exercise has changed substantially . The streets, squares and convention centers were the natural scenarios of the political exercise, however these have increasingly being combined with technology platforms with free access and intuitive use, that facilitates a more active back and forth participation.

Thus, Cyberpolitics, technopolitics or politics 2.0 emerges, understood as the use of multimedia tools that expands the politician's ability to approach, address, understand and interact with the social group he represents or intends to represent. Undoubtedly no activity is naive, so the ulterior objective; besides the service, is to recruit sympathizers to their political stream, who could become voters.

This scenario is favored by the exponential growth of connectivity points, which have shaped a new political scenario in which the use of digital tools allows permanent contact with the community, systematic information update and the issuance of timely responses to citizens . However, these advantages must find a counterpart of a greater commitment of the political leader to his potential voters. Because of that scholars of this phenomenon, such as Professor José Luis Orihuela (University of Navarra), see social media as laboratories of innovation in political communication and effective allies of transparency.

Certain investigative currents claim that apparently we are experiencing a "Greek Agora effect", in which citizens have become active actors in political processes, in a context of horizontality that defines the communication model. However, the mere fact of including technology into the political exercise is not a guarantee of it. Clearness in the message, strategic vision and knowledge of the audiences remain critical success factors . Therefore, it is worth remembering some key examples.

Cyberpolitics and its Milestones

The first documented case on the use of digital platforms for a political campaign was deployed by Labor Party representative Kevin Rudd in the 2007 Australian federal elections. The candidate biggest challenge was to defeat his contender, John Howard of the Liberal Party who had been Prime Minister for 11 years.

The campaign's main objective was to build a direct dialogue with the nation, generating a route towards the youth, approaching especially those who would vote for the first or second time, through highly efficient marketing in terms of reach and frequency with an adequate Geographic segmentation.

To do so, the following digital products were designed: a web page (kevin07.com.au), a mobile site (kevin07.mobi), MySpace and Facebook profiles , a YouTube channel and massive emails. The strategy was to reach 1.2 million people at a fraction of the cost of traditional media advertising. The communication style pursued customization and humanization, by means of hand camera format videos to thank for the donations received. In addition, the message focused on establishing a difference between the past from the future, with a display of explicit openness such as a non-censorship policy applied to all digital channels and to all the received comments no matter their point of view. Hence some of the biggest challenges were: managing resources to provide quick and timely responses, at a 24/7 pace, and triggering damage control plans in case of misinformation or slander.

The results exceeded expectations from every angle of analysis, and even though today they might sound small, back then they broke all established records. The main website registered 2 million page views, 400,000 unique visitors and users filled more than 32,000 forms and online requests, while the mobile site received 34,000 visitors. The campaign "Use your shirt" became viral and managed to sell 40,000 T-shirts with the "Kevin07" motto.

The YouTube channel registered more 1.8 million views, while MySpace reached 24,000 friends and Facebook 20,000. In financial terms, this campaign

raised five times the funds of the previous ones of the same party and, most importantly, that Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister in those that later would be remembered as the first digital elections in Australia.

Figure 1: Kevin Rudd's Social Media Profiles during 2007 campaign



Insert Kevin Rudd's campaign images

Source: Social media and Internet archives

About a year later, the presidential elections in the United States became the great milestone of politics 2.0. Barack Obama's campaign was consistent and well planned, it relied on a series of digital platforms, with unprecedented results. In this resource gear, three communicative axes were chosen: Hope, Change we can believe in, the "Yes we can" motto. These messages, endowed with a great positive emotive load, summed up the change and the hope that Obama represented, whose figure was meant to symbolize that transformation.

Figure 2: 2008 Barack Obama's campaign propaganda



Source: my.barackobama.com

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were the main channels of the campaign, and they were called The Big Three. On these platforms candidate's work plan and his scheduled activities were shared, and also were used as a fund raise tool; in all cases the main driving force was focused on : connection and closeness with potential young voters. At the end of the electoral process, Facebook reached 15,000 fans, Twitter 150,000 followers and YouTube registered 50 million views. Nowadays, these numbers seem narrow, but back then they exceeded by far the ones achieved by American digital politics.

The general approach of the digital strategy was to understand the behavior of the new user — young and hyperconnected —, its needs and desires, how and where it consumes information, without losing sight that the main purpose of all action was to raise funds to finance the Campaign and win the election.

In that context, the web page my.barackobama.com was created with updated information of the campaign. Simultaneously, the network of volunteers was key to create the database of candidate sympathizers , who joined

the Yes We Can donation campaign. Those databases were the raw material for personalized email campaigns and the alerts via text messages to mobile phones (SMS) with information from the electoral program and reminders of the voting date, election poll results, Campaign appointments, among others. Over 70% of the campaign was funded by voluntary donations, each under \$50. A total of \$ 618 million was raised, more than double of what his closest competitor raised, but the main success indicator was that Barack Obama became the new president of the United States.

The success of this campaign has been object to multiple analysis and all coincide in the following:

1. **Involvement:** Positioning the idea of "the change You want" which was not limited to the traditional unilateral political vision that focuses on "the change I propose."
2. **Integration:** Digital channels were not an aggregate to the strategy, but the core of it. Therefore they received adequate priority, vision and proper approach.
3. **Personalization:** Every audience had content developed specially for them. Even though the strongest focus was on youth, adult voters were not neglected and appropriate messages for those profiles were developed.
4. **Tone:** Communication was close, positive and humane. They wanted people to feel that they were whispering to their ear.
5. **Accuracy :** All messages contained a strong call to action that shifted attention to intention: "If you like me, then support me."

While all digital initiatives were combined with traditional offline actions such as door-to-door visits and phone calls, these were called The Social Media Elections. It was the first political campaign in which the use of social media was essential to get support, spread the message, participate with au-

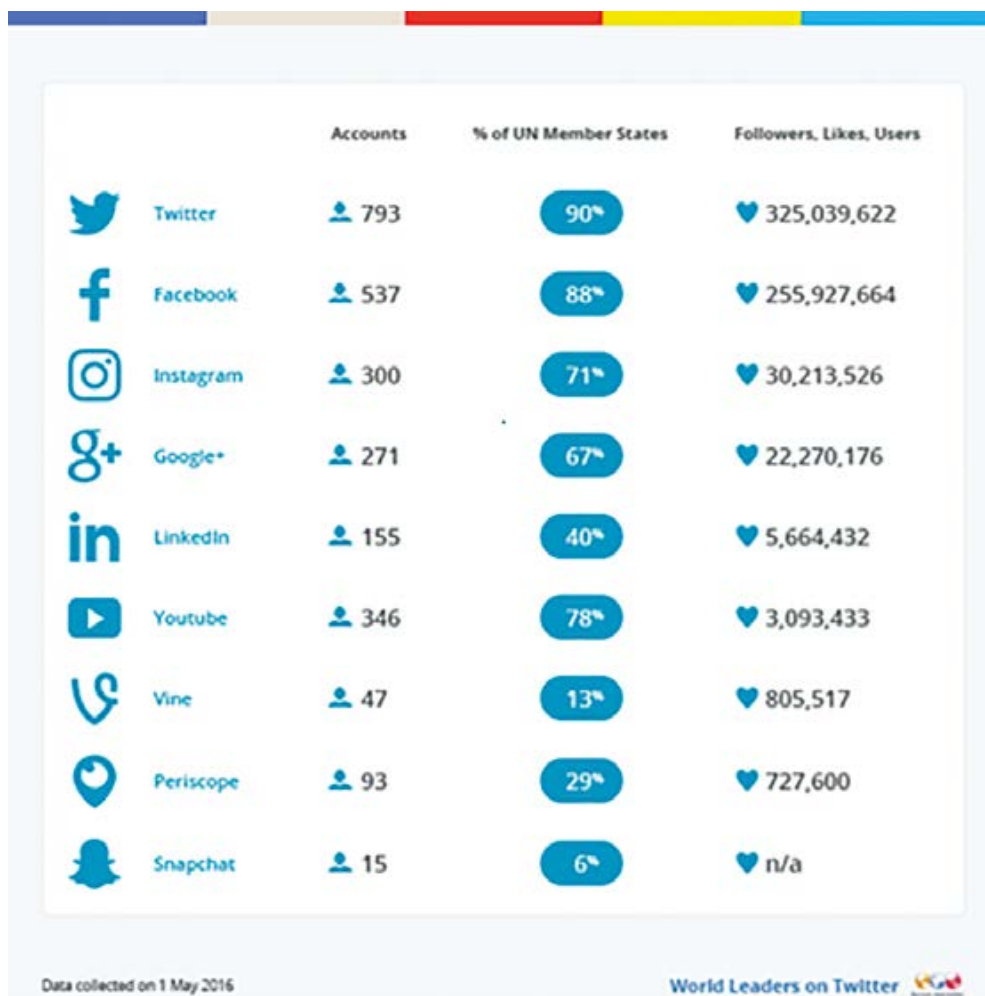
diences and raise funds; combining platforms in a comprehensive way and on large scale.

After this experience, political communication, from the point of view of those in power, the sitting authorities and the public servants, started to have a growing interest on the digital world. This is evidenced by the study Twiplomacy done by Burson-Marsteller (a Global Public Relations and Communications Firm) published since 2013. That first report shows that three quarters of the 193 member countries of the United Nations had official accounts of Twitter. These included the 45 European governments and all the countries of South America, with the exception of Suriname; While in North America, Asia and Africa an average of 75% of governments were using this platform on regular basis.

In its July 2013 release, Twiplomacy analyzed the accounts of 505 Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and their institutions and published a ranking of the 50 most followed Twitter accounts of political leaders and public institutions around the globe. On the top of that list, presented in order were: Barack Obama (@BarackObama), Pope Francis (@Pontifex) and the White House (@WhiteHouse). This ranking had eight Latin American presidents in the top 30. In alphabetical order by country: Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina (@CFKArgentina), Dilma Rousseff of Brazil (@dilmabr), Sebastián Piñera of Chile (@SebastianPinera), Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia (@JuanManSantos), Rafael Correa of Ecuador (@MashiRafael), Enrique Peña Nieto from Mexico (@EPN), Ollanta Humala from Peru (@Ollanta_HumalaT) and Nicolás Maduro from Venezuela (@NicolasMaduro).

Of the 153 official accounts of Heads of State, Embassies and Government Houses registered on Twitter in 2013, the number increased to 172 in 2015; and to 793 in 2016. This represents a fivefold leap over a span of three years. Only a few African countries are not in this site; even China, where access to most social networks is banned, is using the account (@Chinacio) although not verified it includes the president Xi Jinping's entire official agenda and the biography leads to the official website of the Chinese Government (www.scio.gov.cn).

Figure 3: Twiplomacy Study, 2016



Source: Burson-Marsteller

In 2016, the study accounted 3.9 million tweets, adding the annual activity of the 793 studied accounts, revealing a daily average of five tweets per account. The most active accounts in Latin America are those of the Presidency of Mexico (@PresidenciaMX) and the governments of the Dominican Republic (@PresidenciaRD) and Venezuela (@PresidenciaVen) with averages close to 80,000 tweets per year.

The study keeps adding new indicators and more social network sites as study subjects on a yearly basis. It started exclusively with Twitter and since 2016 the study includes data from other social network sites. Among other conclusions, it has been observed that the main political use of Facebook is to build-up and strengthen of traditional communities based on the conversa-

tion. In contrast, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Periscope and Vine have become emerging social media sites to enthrall young audiences with audiovisual content. A recurrent success formula has been the combination of information and entertainment. This was proven by Barack Obama's video Dancing on The Ellen Show. This kind of material, loaded with humor, is the one that tends to become more viral and to generate connecting links with the local and international citizenship.

Although the spectrum of social media sites has expanded, Twitter does not lose its position as the primary site used for political communication, not only because of the audience's breadth, but for being the main channel where events of great importance were announced. For instance the talks between Iran and the G6 in Lausanne, Switzerland, on Tehran's nuclear energy program. All negotiation parties preferred Twitter to update the media and general public about the status of the negotiations. Twitter was crucial to spread the historic handshake between Barack Obama and the Cuban P. Likewise, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton chose Twitter and YouTube to announce her 2016 presidential candidacy. It can also be mentioned that most of the time the accounts of the National Leaders have greater audiences than their Government Houses; and their number of followers has even become a source of national pride.

Twiplomacy 2016 showed that Barack Obama (@barackobama) stood firm as the world's most followed political leader since 2013, reaching nearly 140 million users between Facebook and Twitter. Next in the ranking was Pope Francis (@Pontifex) with 28 million users and accounts in nine languages. The podium was completed with Narendra Modi (@NarendraModi), Prime Minister of India. Among the Latin American characters, Enrique Peña Nieto (@EPN), president of Mexico, was ranked as the most popular politician with 5.2 million followers. At some distance, were Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos (@JuanManSantos) and Argentinian President Mauricio Macri (@MauricioMacri) with about 3 million followers each.

When Twiplomacy published its the latest report , in 2016, Donald Trump had not yet taken the Oath as the President of the United States and within a few months of his administration in January 2017, he became a phenomenon of social media networks. Recalling Franklin D. Roosevelt as the first radio president; John F. Kennedy as the president of television and Barack Obama as the president of the Internet, analysts are wondering already if Donald Trump will become the president of social networks and reality TV.

The argument goes through the logic that social media was fundamental during his campaign to the White House. Trump had profiles on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and even his own mobile application. All of those eased his access to a wide audience of potential voters, but Twitter was the most strategic. From there Trump (@RealDonaldTrump) built his political image, called for support, generated headlines for the traditional press and attacked his opponents.

With 11 million followers on Twitter during the campaign, his message grew exponentially thanks to the 3.5 million retweets of his followers. In addition, he was very active posting an average of 11 tweets per day , which allowed him to dominate the political conversation in that social network site. Using the hashtags #DonaldTrump and # USElections2016 , only between January and July of 2016, 130 million mentions were generated ; almost four times more than his competitor's Hillary Clinton (@HillaryClinton).

We are still to see what's to happen with Trump; in meantime, let's turn our eyes to Latin America. Another president who has kept a strong presence in social media sites is Nicolás Maduro (Venezuela).He took over as President in April 2013 ; a month later he launched his Twitter account @NicolasMaduro , which grew rapidly during its first weeks of existence recording the highest levels of amplification (retweets per tweet) in the region. Below is a detailed analysis of the use of this account.

Analysis of the tweets of the account @NicolasMaduro

This study began with a purpose, which extends to the cases of other Heads of State and Former Heads of State in Latin America, to verify whether the use of Twitter is or not limited to the pursuit of political positioning and to cut off communication mediators, and if it aims to take advantage of the social media sites as an exercise of citizen participation.

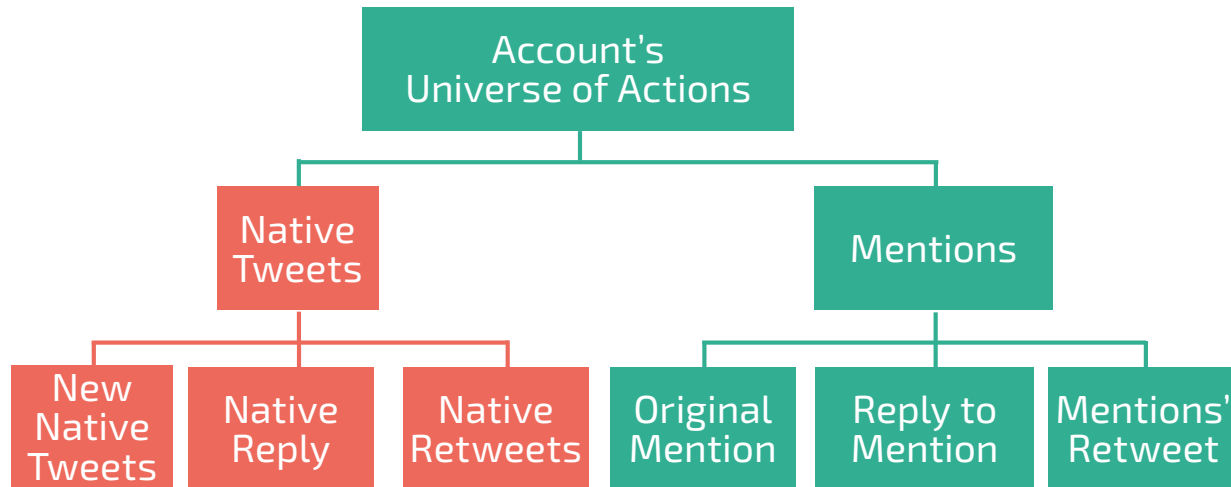
It should be noted that the investigation began in 2013, when Twiplomacy's ranking included eight Latin American presidents among the most popular in the region. Nicolás Maduro was chosen out of the eight mentioned, because it generated the highest percentage of retweets (77%). This means that almost 8 out of 10 tweets posted on @NicolasMaduro account receives at least one retweet. Therefore, it is considered the most shared account among those of its peers in Latin America.

It was decided that the body of research would be the Venezuelan President official account and 2013 would be the base year, as it was that year when Nicolás Maduro assumed the executive role in his country and opened his Twitter account, and no significant changes were identified in the trends of use of the account in later years.

It is imperative to point out that each Twitter account generates a universe of actions consisting of the direct publications of the studied account, through new tweets, answers and retweets.

These will be called native tweets. The universe of actions is completed with those initiated by third parties (original mention, replies to mentions and retweets to mentions), which simply refer to the studied account, but do not necessarily generate any action on their part. These will be referred to as mentions.

The present study will focus exclusively on the analysis of native tweets, since the mentions generated during the base year exceeded 11 million tweets, which extended and increased the cost of the research substantially.

Figure 4: Universe of actions regarding an account

Source: The Author.

It is key to consider that any study of a profile on social media should cover three basic aspects : The way it speaks (what it publishes), the way it responds (the interaction) and the way it shares (how it amplifies third party information) . For the analysis, whose results are presented below, a mixed approach was used, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques, in order to obtain data in five categories:

- A. Activity
- B. Popularity.
- C. Influence
- D. Conversation
- E. Content

A. Activity: an account that publishes and shares, but responds little

The first category, Activity describes the account morphology and how it is used. It focuses on the type of publications, their frequency and intensity.

The @NicolasMaduro account was created on March 8th 2013, and from that date to December 31th, 2013; it published 2,854 tweets, distributed as follows: 51% of new native tweets, 7% of responses and 42% of retweets . The account tendency is to, almost in equal parts, publish native information and share third party information. But its response rates are very low, so the conversation tendency is very small.

Table 1: *Native tweets, Nicolás Maduro (@NicolasMaduro) account*

Indicator	Sub Indicators	Nominal Data	Porcentaje
Native tweets	New Native	1,449	51%
	Native Reply	194	7%
	Native	1211	42%
	Total native tweets	2.854	100%

Source: Twitonomy and the Author.

The Tweets per day indicator is a measure of Intensity, as it shows the volume of native tweets in relation to a reference element in this case a calendar year. during which the account recorded an average of 10 tweets per day. This number shows that the account is a high activity one , as the suggested SocialBakers standard is five tweets per day. However, it is necessary to calibrate the data, as this indicator presumes that the account will show activity 100% of the days of the considered period of time, and this is not the most usual case.

Table 2: *Intensity, Nicolás Maduro (@NicolasMaduro) account.*

Indicator	Sub indicators		Nominal Data	Percentage
Intensity	Tweets per day			8
	Tweets by Day of the week	Monday	386	14%
		Tuesday	385	13%
		Wednesday	503	18%
		Thursday	328	11%
		Friday	371	13%
		Saturday	378	13%
		Sunday	503	18%
		Total	2.854	100%
	Tweets by Time range	From 12:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.	729	26%
		Form 6:01 a.m. to 12:00 m.	306	11%
		From 12:01 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.	988	35%
		From 6:01 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.	831	29%
		Total	2.854	100%

Source : Twitonomy and the Author

In order to achieve that calibration , it is necessary to include a Frequency indicator, which describes the number of occurrences in a period. The first is to define the number of days that the account actually posted at least one tweet. The result was 234 days and, in relation to this number, the frequency is 12 tweets per day. When all the necessary considerations were done, it is verified without any doubt that this is a very active account.

Table 3: *Frequency, Nicolás Maduro (@NicolasMaduro) account.*

Indicator	Sub indicador	Data Nominal	Percentage
	Days the account was active (at least 1 tweet posted)	234	64%

Frequency	Tweets per active day	12	
	Range of tweets per day	2	
	Peak dates	22/09/13	
		24/04/13	
		26/03/13	
	Number of tweets on the Peak dates	38	1%
		36	1%
		34	1%

Source: Twitonomy and the Author.

Sunday is the day of the week that consistently registered more activity and the time frame of publication is from 12:00 m. Until 6:00 pm This fact could be related to the broadcast of the TV program "Sundays with Maduro" which is on the Venezuelan Television Network , from 12:00 m, and seeks to be a space for accountability of the week activities . The program generates trend topics in digital platforms and traces part of the Media agenda.

During the period of study, activity peaks were registered on September 22th (38 tweets), April 24th (36 tweets) and March 26th (34 tweets). The activity level is proportional to the need of reporting an important geopolitical conjuncture, communicate the start of national scope Projects, or electoral propaganda.

Figure 5: *Tweets and Retweets Nicolás Maduro (@NicolasMaduro) account*



@NicolasMaduro: RT @jaarreaza: The powerful alliance Venezuela-China is strengthened with the visit of the Pdte @NicolasMaduro: Energy, Housing, Technology, Agriculture ([original tweet](#)).



@NicolasMaduro: Tomorrow we will tell you the entire plan. I call on the whole country to build a new stable and secure electrical system. I have faith that we will achieve it ([original tweet](#)).



@NicolasMaduro: RT @OlaBolivariana: @NicolasMaduro: I come asking for support for the 14A to the people of the Tuy Valleys, #MirandaConMaduro ([original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

In every case, the account shares third party publications, as long as the post is focused as a positive outcome of their administration.

B. Popularity: The account almost tripled the amount of followers in 10 months

Next category, Popularity is defined as the amount of people interested in a brand or a particular profile or social media site; in other words, it is the size of the audience.

Table 4: *Followers of Nicolás Maduro (@NicolasMaduro) account*

Indicator	Sub indicator	Nominal Data	Variation
Followers	Followers at the beginning of the Study	556.905*	n/a
	Followers at the end of the Study	1'575.772	183%
	January 1st, 2013	No aplica	0%
	February 1st, 2013	No aplica	0%
	March 1st, 2013	No aplica	0%
	April 1st, 2013	556.905	0%
	May 1st, 2013	984.360	77%
	June 1st, 2013	1'145.280	16%
	July 1st, 2013	1'208.286	6%
	August 1st, 2013	1'258.096	4%
	September 1st, 2013	1'320.237	5%
	October 1st, 2013	1'377.036	4%
	November 1st, 2013	1'418.975	3%
	December 1st, 2013	1'513.848	7%
	January 1st, 2014	1'575.772	4%
Followed		48	
Ratio of followers to followed		32.828	

Note: Maduro created the account in March 2013.

Source: Twitonomy and the Author.

The @NicolasMaduro account was created in preparation for the presidential elections for the period 2013-2019, to be held on April 14th of that year. This electoral process was convened during the next 30 days after the death of President Hugo Chávez. By its first month of existence, which coincided with the greatest electoral activity season, the account had more than 550,000 fo-

llowers and, a month later, when Nicolas Maduro was already the President, it reached almost a million followers (984,360), Which represented a jump of 77% over a 30 day period.

In the following months, the monthly variations were inferior , with an average of 6.42%. This is a reasonable behavior, as the accounts of famous or public people tend to grow very rapidly in the first few months of existence and then stabilize with smaller but permanent growth rates. The account finished 2013 with 1,575,772 followers, which means that its audience almost tripled during a 10 month period.

It is also important to take into consideration the number of people followed by an account, because one of social media profiles main functions of is to listen. However, the tendency is that accounts of individuals or institutions widely known, follow few accounts compared with their number of followers. At the end of the study period, @ NicolasMaduro was following 48 counts.

As a result, the ratio of followers to followed was 32.828. For the analytic tool Twitonomy , if this ratio is greater than 1, in an account that has a broad base of followers, it is assumed to be an indicator of relevance. However, if one of the purposes of Digital Political Communication is to collect information directly from citizens, it is considered that following so few accounts demonstrates a unilateral logic in communication that does not seek conversation, but the mere dissemination of information and it's personal opinion.

C. Influence: An account widely shared and valued by its followers

The Influence category is defined as the ability to get people ,who are part of a social network, to be active and involved with the spread of the message. In the case of Twitter, the level of influence is measured by the number of re-tweets and third-party favorites generated by the studied account.

Table 5: *Category Influence, Nicolás Maduro (@NicolasMaduro) account.*

Amplification	Total third party RT to the studied account	13'762.619
	Amplification Rate	4.822
Applause	Total FV to the studies account	268.543
	Applause Rate	94
Virality	Total Retweets of Native Tweets	2.854
	Virality Rate	100
Lists	Number of lists to which the Studied account belongs	9.059
	List per every 1000 followers	6

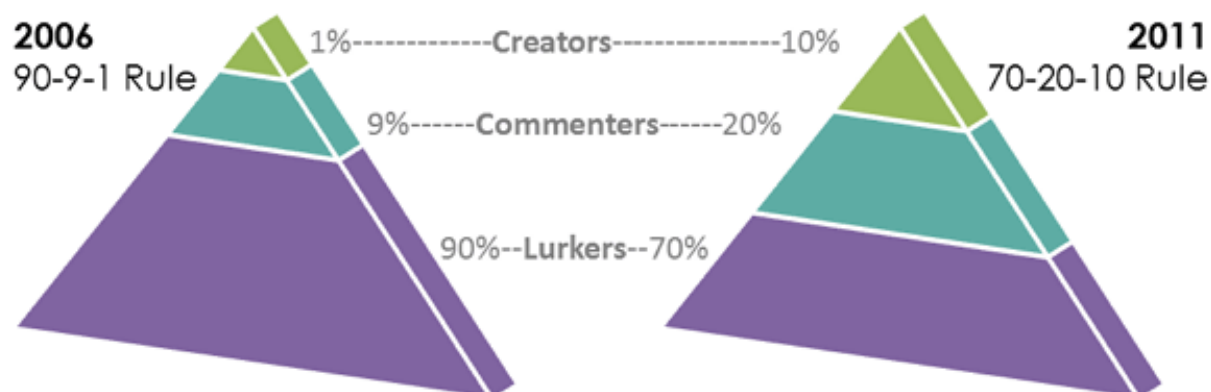
Note: RT means retweets; FV means favorites.

Source: Twitonomy and the Author.

During the base year, @NicolasMaduro account recorded 13.76 million re-tweets of third party accounts, meaning that each published tweet generates 4.822 (amplification rate) retweets on average. Also, the account generated 268,543 favorites, which gives an average of 94 favorites per tweet (applause rate). These two indicators show how shared and valued an account is. Now, to know if these numbers are acceptable or not, it is necessary to compare them with the standard proposed by the theories of participation in virtual communities.

The notion of virtual community varies substantially according to the discipline that addresses it. Thus, for sociologists it is a network to build social relations; for ethnographers are the spaces where individuals weave roles and for technologists is the underlying software infrastructure that supports the community. In our case, it will be assumed that a virtual community is a group of people who come together to fulfill an online purpose and who are governed by rules and policies. Simple observation shows that members of a community do not have similar levels of participation. There are those who consume information, but do not perform any action, there are also those who eventually take action, and the fewer are those permanently committed to the content that circulates in the community .

Figure 6: Participation Theories, comparative figure.



Source: Jakob Nielsen y Paúl Schneider

Both the scientific community and professionals focused on improving usability¹ and user experience² have studied the phenomenon of participatory inequality.

One of the most representative was Jakob Nielsen, known as the "Father of Usability", who formulated the theory 90-9-1, which states that 90% of members of a virtual community are just voyeurs (read and observe, But do not contribute), 9% contributes eventually and only 1% actively participates and contributes most of the content.

Years later, this theory was criticized on the grounds that it assumes that 100% of the community members do something. However, there are many inactive profiles and in many cases, not all members of a community have access to the same content development functionalities. So, to correct this distortion, the researcher Paul Schneider applied the model eliminating the inactive accounts of the studied universe. The result was the theory of 70-20-10, which states that only 70% of community members observe without

¹ Usability is a quality attribute of websites that refers to how easy they are to use. It is based on five components: 1. Learnability. 2. Efficiency. 3. Memorability, 4. Errors and 5. Satisfaction. More information on usability at <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-101-introduction-to-usability/>

² User experience is another quality attribute of websites that refers to how much a page satisfies the needs of the client without causing annoyance or frustration. More information on user experience at <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/definition-user-experience/>

interacting, 20% creates content, with a low and unidentified periodicity and only 10% is highly active and committed with the community.

On this basis, acceptable levels of audience interaction, in terms of retweets and favorites, should be around 10% and 20% of total community members. If we assume that the audience of @NicolasMaduro was in 1.5 million followers in the base year, then an acceptable response level should be between 157,000 and 315,000 interactions. The amplification rate is 43 times higher than this figure, which allows to conclude that the account is highly shared. The applause rate, although it is lower, is within the range, which allows to affirm that the account is also valued.

It should be noted that in the case of Twitter, a response rate can not be automatically calculated, as this platform does not distinguish between mentions and responses, so the count of responses (publications using the Twitter reply or response button or their applications) should be done manually, an issue that is not feasible for these high traffic accounts.

The virality rate indicates the proportion of native tweets from the account that were retweeted. In @ NicolasMaduro the case , 100% of their tweets received at least one retweet. Meaning that all the publications in the account are shared by its followers. Another validation as a highly shared account.

Finally, Twitonomy suggests taking into account the number of lists to which the account belongs as a measure of influence, as this is an action that third parties do voluntarily, without the participation of the studied account. In this case, @ NicolasMaduro has been adhered to 9,059 lists, giving an average of six lists per 1,000 followers. The larger this number is, combined with a large number of followers; makes an account to be considered as Influential, which does apply in this case.

D. Conversation: An account that interacts only with those who adhere to its position

The Conversation category refers to the building of a net with identifiable users, when people respond to one another using the answer button, or when they mention each other in their tweets using the @account form.

Table 6: *Most mentioned accounts by @NicolasMaduro's account*

Indicator	Account	Account Type	Interactions
Most mentioned accounts	@NicolasMaduro	13. Himself	59
	@tmaniglia	4. Media account / journalist	24
	@s	1. General Citizen	23
	@genesis_aldanar	2. Activists / Groups	15
	@OlaBoliviana	3. Politician / Political party or movement	13
	@JauaMiranda	8. Lower range authorities (majors, ministers, etc)	12
	@VillegasPoljakE	4. Media / journalist	10
	@teleSURtv	4. Media / journalist	9
	@BlogdeMaduro	13. Himself	9
	@DrodriguezMinci	3. Politician / Political party or movement	8

Source: Twitonomy and the Author.

This section will study , the most mentioned accounts, those to which the studied account has referred with the syntax @name; The most answered accounts, those to which the studied account has been directed using the native Twitter response button or its applications; And the most retweeted accounts, those to which the studied account has been referred through the RT (retweet) Twitter button and its applications.

Table 7: *Most replied accounts by @NicolasMaduro's account*

Indicator	Account	Account type	Interactions
Most Retweeted	@tmaniglia	4. Media account / journalist	184
	@Drodriguez-Minci	3. Politician / Political party or movement	67
	@teleSURtv	4. Media account/ journalist	60
	@maduro_en	13. Himself	57
	@OlaBolivariana	6. Government House	51
	@ActualidadRT	4. Media account / journalist	43
	@VillegasPoljakE	4. Media account / journalist	43
	@maduro_fr	13. Himself	42
	@ForoCandanga	4. Media account / journalist	37
	@jaarreaza	3. Politician / Political party or movement	37

Source: Twitonomy and the Author.

The first interesting fact that pops up is that the most mentioned account by @NicolasMaduro is himself with 59 interactions. This is because the Venezuelan president has some accounts in other languages. This is the case of @maduro_ar in Arabic, @maduro_pt in Portuguese, @maduro_fr in French and @maduro_en in English, the launch of two more accounts in Chinese and Russian it's been announced. All of these accounts include in the biography the exact translation of : "President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Son of Chávez. Building the Homeland with revolutionary efficiency. Translation of @NicolasMaduro."

Figure 7: Mentions of the Nicolás Maduro account (@NicolasMaduro)



Source: Twitter

Another interesting fact is that several media accounts, journalists and politicians or parties are repeated in all three lists. On the most mentioned accounts, the most answered and most retweeted. This is the case of @teleSURtv (TeleSur broadcasting), @tmaniglia (Teresa Maniglia), @PartidoPSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) and @jaareaza (Jorge Arreaza). All those accounts belong to people or institutions sympathetic to Nicolás Maduro's ideology. This shows limited openness to the variety of voices, confining social conversation to the validation of their own political and ideological positions. This can be harmful to the exercise of democracy as postulated by the book "Politics and the Twitter revolution", how tweets influence the relationship between political leaders and the public: "The findings indicate that the political use of Twitter among Ideologically strong followers contributes to increased political polarization and potentially damages the ability of these followers to understand opposing voices."

Table 8: Most Retweeted accounts, Nicolás Maduro (@NicolasMaduro) account

Indicator	Account	Account Type	Interactions
	@tmaniglia	4. Media account / journalist	23
	@genesis_aldanar	2. Activists / Groups	15

Most Replied Accounts	@OlaBolivariana	3. Politician / Political party or movement	12
	@JauaMiranda	8. Lower range authorities (majors, ministers, etc)	11
	@DrodriguezMinci	3. Politician / Political party or movement	8
	@VillegasPoljakE	4. Media account / journalist	7
	@TeleSURtv	4. Media account / journalist	7
	@LaHojillaenTV	4. Media account / journalist	4
	@PartidoPSUV	3. Politician / Political party or movement	3
	@JuventudPSUV	3. Politician / Political party or movement	3

Source: Twitonomy and the Author.

The Conversation category also analyzes sociability traits, understood as the treatment and relationship with third-party accounts. In this part comes the use of mentions, links and labels. According to Twitonomy's recommendation, an account that uses many mentions has a tendency to interaction, since the mention can be understood as an invitation to reply. If an account shares many links, it is considered that it seeks to become a source of information and, if it uses a high number of hashtags, also tends to the conversation because the goal of a hashtag is to facilitate the localization of a public conversation in digital platforms.

During the time of the study, @NicolasMaduro account used 405 mentions, 364 links and 266 hashtags. As said before although mentions register a high number, always refer to their politically linked followers. Most of the shared links lead to journalistic notes of news-media close to or related to the Regime, and to publications on the official channels of the Venezuelan Govern-

ment. The hashtags have political and militant loaded language , plus trying to validate Maduro as the legitimate successor of the Chávez's policies . Among the most well-known hashtags used during the studied year are: #jurocon-Maduro (#WithMaduroIsware), #DerrotandoalFascismo (#DefeatingFascism), #ConlazurdadeChavezyelespiritodeBolivar (#WithChavez'sLefthandAndBolívar'sSpirit) y #Gobiernodecallecaminodechavez (#People'sGovernmentChavez'sRoad). It reaffirms the notion that, although the account shows openness to the conversation, it limits this possibility to people, movements and institutions related to its political and ideological position.

Table 9: *Sociability, Nicolás Maduro (@NicolasMaduro) account*

Indicador	Cuenta	Interacciones
Sociability	Mentions made by the studied account	405
	Links uses by the studied account	364
	Hashtags used by studied account	266

Source: Twitonomy and the Author.

E. Content: Dominant Theme, Politics

The Content category refers to the topic that the tweet addresses in a preponderant way. So it only allows 1 classification according to the main theme in 50% or more of the extension of the tweet.

The first four categories were analyzed based on quantitative techniques, however, for the category Content a qualitative methodology was preferred. As this case is part of a larger investigation, it was not feasible to tabulate tweet by tweet, since the universe exceeds several thousand publications. In this context, it was decided to make a simple random sampling with 95% confidence and $\pm 5\%$ margin error. Given that the universe of study in the @NicolasMaduro account was 2,854 tweets, the sample resulted from 339 native tweets distributed as follows: 162 new, 30 responses and 147 retweets.

It was necessary to apply three pilot tests to define the topics to be tabulated and that these were 100% exclusive. From these first experiences we had to emphasize the need for the coder to be very close to the Venezuelan reality, since in many cases the themes of the tweets had high local conjuncture burden combined with a high degree of irony, which made them indecipherable for the Research assistants from other latitudes. Finally, two Venezuelan coders did the work and obtained the following data, based on the following definition of variables:

- **Autobiographical:** Activities carried out in the past or plans of future actions in the personal sphere, not as a public official. Comments, opinions and statements on personal level .
- **Communication and press:** Information, opinion or any kind of comment regarding the media sector, its journalistic products or its actors (journalists, owners or administrators). Includes propaganda, campaigns and communication strategies.
- **Economy and business:** That which is the object or subject of a lucrative occupation or interest. It includes strategic sectors, oil, telecommunications, tourism and entrepreneurship.
- **Politics:** Said of a person or group that intervenes in the matters of Government and businesses of the State. Art, doctrine or opinion concerning the government of each state. Activity of those who govern or aspire to govern public affairs. Citizen's action when intervenes in public affairs with his opinion, with his vote or in any other way.
- **International Relations:** Interests of some nations with others and posture in the face of foreign conflicts. It includes human rights and human mobility (economic and forced migration).
- **Security:** Military, police and border issues. It includes accidents and natural phenomena like tsunamis, floods, earthquakes, fires, hurricanes, etc.

- **Society:** Mutual cooperation for all or some of the life's goals. It involves gender issues, minorities, childhood and adolescence, peoples and nationalities, creeds, ways of life and customs, knowledge and artistic or scientific and technological development, popular and urban culture, entertainment, education, environment and health.

Table 10: *Themes of New Native tweets, Nicolás Maduro (@NicolasMaduro) account*

Indicator	Sub indicators	Percentage
Themes of New Native Tweets	Autobiographical	0%
	Communications and press	22%
	Aconomy and business	4%
	Politics	42%
	International Relations	12%
	Security	5%
	Society	15%
	TOTAL	100%

Source: Twitonomy and the Author.

Clearly, politics is the dominant theme (more than 30%) it applies to what the account speaks (native tweets), what the account responds (native responses) and shares (native retweets). The usual tone is militant with permanent references to former President Chávez as an endorsement of the current *regime*:

Figure 8: Retweet of Nicolás Maduro's account (@NicolasMaduro)



"@NicolasMaduro: RT @RodriguezT_MIJP: The Government of our President @ NicolasMaduro, is faithful to CDR Chávez's legacy and defends our People of speculation" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

The socialist political concept, initiated by Chávez, of the Bolivarian Homeland is permanently positioned:

Figure 9: Tweets of Nicolás Maduro's account (@NicolasMaduro)



@NicolasMaduro: On the poverty eradication World Day , Bolivarian Venezuela is moving towards the Socialist future with Chavez's Missions([Original tweet](#)).



@NicolásMaduro: #WithChaves'sLefthandAndBolivar'sSpirit we are defeating evil and saboteurs, opening the Way of Christian Socialism. ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

Communication and the press are the following subjects, where a pattern is observed: The account addresses in positive terms only to the journalists and media of its own ideological line and refers in a critical and negative tone to those who pronounce contrary to their position:

Figure 10: Tweets of Nicolás Maduro's account (@NicolásMaduro)



@NicolasMaduro: I invite everyone to see Min. Rodríguez Torres in Telesur 8:30 pm, where he will make important revelations of the Right-wing's macabre plans ([Original tweet](#))



@NicolasMaduro: Let's continue giving ethics lessons, the bourgeois press that distills hatred full of bad intentions. May the Motherland shine with its Truth !! ([Original tweet](#))

Source: *Twitter*

The third topic covered, in order of repetition, is Society that is approached from the perspective of accountability and as the main focus of his Government:

Figure 11: Tweets of Nicolás Maduro's account (@NicolasMaduro)



"@NicolasMaduro: Only the Socialist Revolution guarantees to the youth their future of Education, dignity and happiness. @tmaniglia" ([Original tweet](#))

Source: Twitter

The account also shows its international connections with political leaders related to its movement:

Figure 12: Tweets of Nicolás Maduro's account (@NicolasMaduro)



@NicolasMaduro: A day like today in 2005, Chávez, Kirchner and Lula in Mar del Plata defeated the colonial project of the FTAA Long live the Great and Free Motherland !!! ([Original tweet](#)).



@NicolasMaduro: Excellent working day with President Correa, we will consolidate our economic, energy and social cooperation ([Original tweet](#))

Source: Twitter

Economy, business and security, although they are strategic topics of high interest to the Venezuelan people, are scarcely approached by @ NicolasMaduro and when he speaks about it, he does so from a perspective of political militancy rather than the fact itself. It is also curious that he is the only president of the region that does not publish on personal issues unlike his related

political colleagues like Rafael Correa (@MashiRafael) and Cristina Fernandez (@CFKArgentina).

Conclusions

Politicians see the use of social media networks as strategic channels in their communication because they have free access, allow social interaction, reach large audiences and are easy to use from mobile devices. President Maduro has this idea very clear, that's why he has made Twitter one of his main channels of communication and contact with his target audience.

Although social media networks ease access and consolidate relations with citizens, every politician must be aware that social media sites are only part of the world, not the entire world; so what happens in them cannot necessarily be extrapolated to other dimensions of life, so what happens there must be assumed as a thermometer, but not as a reflection of offline reality.

In order for the use of social networks in politics to become a democratic exercise, it must open itself to a debate of ideas in which different positions about a subject can be confronted on equal terms and in the framework of mutual respect. This is the democratic exercise of which @NicolasMaduro account lacks, as it limits its interaction to people and institutions of the same political line and it does not open to a debate with a multiplicity of voices.

It is important to understand that the use of social media networks for political communication will be successful as long as it is done in a non-hierarchical and multi-point model complemented by offline world initiatives. It aims to articulate a network of connections that could not be obtained otherwise, in addition to having the ability to view the connections of third parties.

Finally, the use of social media networks in politics generates a disintermediation perception, because the citizen feels like he is addressing directly to his authorities and his peers, without intermediaries. This is achieved thanks to the quick response and the human tone of the publications. This aspect is adequately addressed by the studied account, since all its publications have a human tone, a simple and colloquial language that achieves the effect of making citizens feel that the President speaks directly to them.

However, in most cases as in Nicolás Maduro's, politicians' social profiles are not managed by themselves, or at least not always; so it is done by their communication team . That is why in the practice, the "Greek Agora effect" is a perception rather than a reality and even though the communication of certain traditional actors, such as the media, is being disintermediated; in the practice new filters are created, which are the Social media managers and Communication Advisers.

Author's Biography

Albertina Navas. Candidate for Doctorate in Communication by the University of Navarra, MBA, Master in Digital Journalism and Journalist. Consultant and lecturer in social networking strategy with more than 15 years of experience. She has taught at the university and executive training in public and private institutions in six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Is ranked among the most influential Ecuadorians on the Internet and represented the academy in the discussions of the Ecuadorian Electronic Government Plan. She was elected a member of the global Google program for women leaders in technology, Guatemala chapter, and a member of the International Chamber of Entrepreneurs. She is currently the Director of the International Centre for Social Media Studies at Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business and an associate consultant at ASREDES.

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Chapter II: Tweet-O-Meter, battle in 140 characters.

Monitoring official speech against the press by Civil Servant's accounts and Ecuadorian State Institutions".

Director: César Ricaurte

Andean Foundation for the Observation and Study of Media, Fundamedios (Ecuador)

Researchers: Daniela Arias, Media Observatory of Ecuador (OME) coordinator by Fundamedios and rika Guerrero, assistant of the OME.

Pointing out the use of Rafael Correa's administration of social media networks, especially Twitter, in his crusade against the press it's not big news. Since public officials and governmental institutions took twitter by storm, especially after the police uprising of September 30th 2010, hostility against the press and the the digital realm became their new battlefield.

The day the police rebelled, the media was forced to join their broadcast to Ecuadorian Government TV channel. In addition, the main networks websites were over flooded and their ability to service their users was intermittent. Social networks, especially Twitter, were the only channels readily available for citizens to obtain information from non-official sources. That day alone, the number of registered twitter accounts in Ecuador went from 22,000 (previously existing) to 44,000 accounts. After these events, both public entities and officials opened their accounts.

In addition, the most recent episode was starred by Rafael Correa himself, when he called his followers to “fight back in social media platforms” in four occasions on 2015 when addressing the listeners of his weekly broadcast “Enlace Ciudadano³” (National Broadcast: Presidential Address Connecting with Citizens), in response to the satirical page Crudo Ecuador (Raw Ecuador). On Saturday, January 24th 2015, during his 408 broadcast, president Correa discredited and threatened to reveal the identity and expose a portrait of [Crudo Ecuador](#) Facebook page administrator. He accused him of organizing a smearing campaign “stigmatizing systematically using satire and irony” and “lying and libel” against him in order to tarnish his image. These statements resulted in Gabriel González (the page administrator) being harassed and threatened with pictures of his family. González then announced his retirement considering “the pressure and harassment from the Government”.

It is worth noting that this was the first time there was available data to outline this kind of strategy. The study of the Fundamedios’ “Ecuadorian Media Observatory” (OME), the first of its kind in Ecuador and the second in the region after Venezuela, reveals that between June 2012 and November 2015 there were 1,384 tweets and retweets aimed against the press and 3,108 Tweets of this kind against opposition politicians and against civil society. These messages originated on 27 accounts, comprising the sample of this study and were distributed as follows: 13 civil servants, 7 National Assembly members of the official party, 1 high official political leader⁴ and 6 public institutions. 3,200 tweets were monitored, these accounts were selected based on the number of tweets and followers.

Fundamedios received inspiration for this study, from a previous one made by Ipys Venezuela, and aimed to contribute to the analysis of the official discourse maintained during Rafael Correa’s administration against the media.

³ Enlace Ciudadano, National Broadcast led by Rafael Correa: Presidential Address Connecting with Citizens Was broadcasted on Radio and Tv (54 tv stations) from January 20th, 2007 to May 20th, 2017 every Saturday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm (local time)

⁴ Please note that some of these Public servants either left or changed Office during the 2017 electoral process or when the new president Lenin Moreno took Office.

Social media platforms, Twitter in this instance, is just one of the many gears that forms governmental machinery to exert pressure against the free press being the Organic Law of Communication, State controlled joint broadcasts or the abuse of right rectification and replica.

In the case of Twitter was clear that during Rafael Correa's administration 4 discourse lines were managed:

1. The official truth, the absolute truth.
2. Double standards.
3. Pure and hard Insults and grievances.
4. Taunting and Challenging

By repeatedly and systematically resorting to these tools, through the propagandistic apparatus - social media platforms included - they tried to stigmatize and disqualify the press.

Under this consideration, who are the ruling politicians who led the Ecuador Tweet-O-Meter?

Speech 2.0 against Ecuadorian Press

"The corrupt press and opposition are capable of presenting Victor Jara⁵ as an executioner and Pinochet⁶ as a humanist philanthropist." "As they usually do, they go on lying and for a change they spread lies, those so-called journalists." These messages are but a sample of the treatment imparted by Rafael Correa to either national and international news outlets, by the use of social media site Twitter.

Since the very beginning of his administration, Correa was notable for attacking the press and opposition in discussion panels, press conferences and

⁵ Victor Jara was a member of the Communist party in Chile who was murdered

⁶ Augusto Pinochet was a Dictator in Chile from 1973 to 1990

his weekly addresses to the citizens. However from 2010 onward, this communication strategy gained strength when been channeled through social media networks (Twitter and Facebook). This maneuver was partially focused on discrediting and disqualifying the work of the media, which the then president referred to as "one of his greatest enemies".

While talking about the press Rafael Correa said: "The press is our main adversary, to them we are but an annoyance because in the past they used to dictate conditions over the presidents, they were the guests of honor in Carondelet, and had the front row in presidential inaugurations but I had never in my life invited them to anything; that's why "

This tactic was backed by the official communication apparatus and its guidelines were accepted by ministers, national assembly members, public institutions and other supporters of the Correa Regime. But it was not until January 24th, 2015 when the then head of state officially declared "the battle for dignity and truth in social media networks" against the press and opposition during his weekly broadcast No. 408. During which the website www.somosmas.ec was inaugurated.

During the January 24th, 2015 "Enlace Ciudadano" (National Broadcast: Presidential Address Connecting with Citizens) the former president declared:

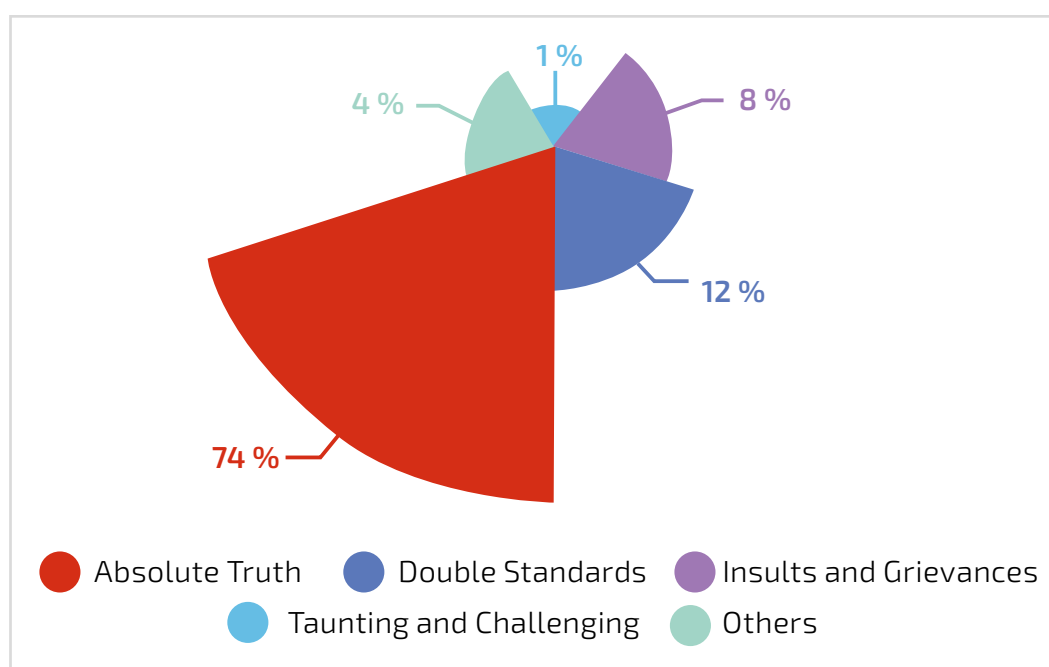
You can sign up in the www.somosmas.ec ("We are more") website and find relevant information of this kind, and every time one of these defamation campaigns take place we will send them the real information to this account so that they receive 10 thousand tweets, telling the truth. We are more and we are not going to allow a small group of liars and dishonest people to control us. Everyone go sign up! Here you will also learn who these haters are and will receive other kind of material. Through this website we will get organized to refute this class of shameless slanderers".

This "battle" was not without a strategy. The observation of 27 governmental accounts recorded 1,384 tweets and retweets discrediting and dis-

qualifying the press. When analyzing the discursive lines (characterized by a number of phrases used to establish a point of view) that the authorities handled, four were identified (Figure 1):

1. Absolute truth.
2. Double standards.
3. Insults and grievances.
4. Taunting and Challenging

Figure 1: *Discursive lines used by the authorities.*



Source: Fundamedios.

1. The official truth, the absolute truth.

The resource "the official truth, absolute truth" was identified in 1,022 tweets and retweets representing 74% of the sample. This is because the officials, who were connected to Correa's administration, focused on permanently denying press releases. According to them, "distorted" news and certain "recurrent complaint" of the media. Part of their campaign consisted on positioning their version on issues regarding conjuncture, national and in-

ternational politics. Some examples are Vinicio Alvarado (@vinizeta) former minister coordinator of Productivity and former Secretary of Public Administration; Ricardo Patiño (@RicardoPatinoEc) former minister of Defense and former chancellor; former Rafael Correa (@MashiRafael) and Fernando Alvarado (@FAlvarado) former minister of Tourism and former press secretary.

Figure 2: *Absolute Truth tweets*



@vinizeta: "My clarification in front of the evil DISTORTION of my words in interview on communication as public service <https://t.co/9hgSqOE1> " ([Original Tweet](#)).



@RicardoPatinoEc: "@The Economist Enough with the lying about #Ecuador! Come to this country, verify the reality before publishing falsehoods. A bit of decency" ([Original Tweet](#)).



@MashiRafael: "The press' and opposition's new favorite complaint: they say we are against family businesses. Who could be against small business?" ([Original Tweet](#)).

Source: *Twitter*

Another strategy, included in this category is the rejection to some news, the imposed requests of right of reply, forcing rectifications or making the media apologize after the dissemination of information, evidenced from the accounts of the Ministry of Communication (@ComunicacionEc), Fernando Alvarado (@FAlvaradoE) and Guillaume Long (@GuillaumeLong), former chancellor and former minister of Culture and Human Talent:

Figure 3: *Absolute Truth tweets*



@ComunicacionEc: "(OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION) SECOM rejects inaccuracies of agency @ AFP - <http://t.co/DPvDcHvBjx>" ([original tweet](#)).



@GuillaumeLong: "My response and rectification request to @Expresoec by its shameful headline of #30S "We will Expropriate freedom" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

Qualifying journalists' and media's work and indicating how they should perform their job was a fundamental part of Rafael Correa's attack speech, reflected in accounts belonging to Roberto Wohlgemuth (@Mashiroberto), former member of the Council for the Regulation and Development of Information and Communication (Cordicom) and former National Intergovernmental Secretary; José Serrano (@ppsesa), former minister of the Interior and former minister in charge of Justice; And Maria Fernanda Espinoza (@mfespinosaEC), former ambassador in Geneva and former minister of Defense:

Figure 4: *Absolute Truth tweets*



@Mashiroberto: "Hey @democraciaec has a unique aim to invite bitter people. And how he portrays them! Like they were the last coke in the desert!" ([Original tweet](#)).



@ppsosa: @televistazotv @ecuavisa, this note, again, neglects a core theme: it was a public transportation bus driver" ([Original tweet](#)).



@mfespinosaEC: @ecuavisa @MashiRafael @DefensaEC "We only wish the media would perform a weekly balance of communication "errors" and apologize" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

They didn't forget using phrases about freedom of speech while discrediting the journalistic work, the Office of Communication's account being one of such sources (@ComunicacionEc):

Figure 5: *Absolute Truth tweets*



@ComunicacionEc: "Newspapers are just crows that jump over the dead #JuanMontalvo #LibertadDePrensa <http://t.co/Vx1ZCPLf>" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

In addition, José Serrano (@ ppsesa) and Viviana Bonilla (@viviana_bonilla) former Secretary of Politics Administration, used their account to challenge newspaper's headlines:

Figure 6: *Absolute Truth tweets*

@ppsesa: «1/2 Diario La Hora, eager to alarm Quito and its inhabitants, on saturday, presented the grand headline, that 1000 police officers are leaving Quito» ([Original tweet](#)).



@viviana_bonilla: "My total support goes to the residents of Muisne and their fair complaint against media outlet using a sensationalist front-page headline" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

Officials in Correa's administration, also negatively emphasized the power of the media in relevant historical events, former president Rafael Correa (@MashiRafael) taking the lead:

Figure 7: *Absolute Truth tweets*

@MashiRafael: "Ecuadorians still expect an apology, albeit after a century, of the corrupt press that called up "satrap" to Alfaro" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

2. Double Standards

This category, comprising 166 tweets (12%), in which the press is accused of having a double standard when reporting facts that officials considered important to their cause.

In journalistic research - contrasting sources, Doris Soliz (@dorissoliz), then Executive Secretary of the Governmental movement, Alianza País and former Minister of the Secretary of Economic and Social Inclusion, stated:

Figure 8: *Double Standards tweets.*

@dorissoliz: "@EcuavisaInforma impressive! Your newsreel covers ONLY violent people's . Not authority's nor citizen's. Is that "reporting" ???" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

They stressed the lack of coverage of Rafael Correa (@MashiRafael) and Patricio Barriga (@PPancia) former Secretary of Communications of the Cordicom:

Figure 9: *Double Standards tweets.*



@MashiRafael: "Has anyone read or seen the mercantilist media's incredible attempt to involve the President with narcotraffic" ([Original tweet](#)).



@PPancia: "The affirmative actions taken by the Government are not news in certain media. Are only issues proposed by the opposition of public relevance?" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

3. Insults and Grievances

Insults and affronts were also an outstanding facet of former government administration's rhetoric against the private media. 117 tweets making use of this resource were counted, representing 8% of the sample. Here, Robert Wohlgenuth's tweet as an example (@Mashiroberto):

Figure 10: *Insults and Grievances tweets*



@Mashiroberto: "This man is a servile soldier of great corporations, Chevron and their media. Enemy of Ecuador!" <https://t.co/DEiNdR7X11> ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

The tweet refers to journalist Emilio Palacio, who in another tweet said: "According to Bloomberg, The Chinese and the Spanish freeze oil drilling in Ecuador. Another setback for Correa."

Ricardo Patiño (@RicardoPatinoEc) and Vinicio Alvarado (@vinizeta) commented in his favor:

Figure 11: *Insults and Grievances tweets*



@RicardoPatiñoEc: "@carlosfabbian Always have to clarify to those trash-can sediments. Don't let them lie with impunity." ([Original tweet](#)).



(insert image)

@vinizeta: "Liars, coarse, unwitted and lazy! They're bad, even at making things up!" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

Making reference to the rectification made by cartoonist Xavier Bonilla 'Bonil', at the request of the Communication Oversight Office (Supercom), on the raid at the ecuadorian journalist Fernando Villavicencio's residence.

Inappropriate conversations with and about journalists and caricaturists were made by Roberto Wohlgemuth (@Mashiroberto)

Figure 12: *Insults and Grievances tweets*



@Mashiroberto: "A nof, but here @bonilcaricatura says we want censorship ... Such double standards #JeSuisBonilEtHipocrite" ([Original tweet](#)).
Source: Twitter

The tweet refers to the implementation of a news agency by journalist Juan Carlos Calderón and Martha Roldós, which received funding from the U.S. based NGO NED. The project was discredited by the official media. Vinicio Alvarado (@vinizeta) stated:

Figure 13: *Insults and Grievances tweets*

"@vinizeta: @Martinminguchi What would I have to defend myself from, Can you tell @MashiRafael ? Or are you just vulgar and unethically fabricating intrigues? ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

4. Taunting and Challenging

Although not as widely used as the other 3 categories (comprising 15 tweets, or 1.08% of the sample) it is worth mentioning. The use of this resort was characterized by challenging certain civil organizations and private entities in order to incite a reaction to specific events. Rafael Correa (@MashiRafael) and Roberto Wohlgemuth (@Mashiroberto) expressed themselves as follows:

Figure 14: *Taunting and challenging tweets*

@MashiRafael: "Do you get what's happening? What will the free and independent press say? What will traditional politicians say? Tax Evasion never again!" ([Original tweet](#)).



@MashiRafael: ... "If someone gets arrested for insulting the President it's an "attack on freedom of speech" What will Fundamedios say? Porsiaca Nebot" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

Not only the press was aimed in this category, the same kind of challenge was directed at the opposition. Examples are shown in the tweets made by Rafael Correa (@MashiRafael)

Figure 15: *Taunting and challenging tweets*



@MashiRafael: Double standards displayed by the opposition and the press: if Nebot imprisons three citizens for offending traffic agents, it is "respect for authority" ([Original tweet](#)).



@MashiRafael: "So, Mery Zamora is a poor "victim" of "political persecution". There is no doubt: The corrupt press and opposition are capable of presenting Victor Jara as an executioner and Pinochet as a humanist philanthropist." ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: *Twitter*

The figures 2.0 of the anti-press strategy. Tweet-O-Meter of government accounts.

The 27 Twitter-account ranking reveals that those belonging to officials or former officials of important governmental entities managing communication policies such as the Secretary of Communication (Secom), The Council or Regulation and the Secretary for Development of Information and Communication (Cordicom) occupy the top 10, along with the Communication Oversight Office (Supercom). Among the top places the former president Rafael Correa is also notorious, next to three of his closest ministers: Guillaume Long, Vinicio Alvarado, Jose Serrano; Two former assembly members: María Alejandra Vicuña and Rosana Alvarado; And the former executive secretary of Country Alliance, Doris Soliz.

Table 1: Ranking of Most Actively Discrediting Officials ⁷

Posición	Cuenta	Actor	Cargo	# Tuits de descrédito	%	Alertas
1	@FAlvaradoE.	Fernando Alvarado	Former Secretary of Tourism and former Secretary of Communication	449	32,44	81
2	@Mashiroberto	Roberto Wohlgemuth	Former member of the Council for the Regulation and Development of Information and Communication (Cordicom) and former sub Secretary of National Intergovernmental Secretary	166	11,99	4
3	@MashiRafael	Rafael Correa	Former President of the Republic	119	8,60	225
4	@alvaradorosana	Rosana Alvarado	Former first Vice-President of the National Assembly	77	5,56	19
5	@ppsesa	José Serrano	Former head of Ministry of Interior and former head Ministry of Justice	72	5,20	3

⁷ Some of the officials in this list, during the presidential elections of 2017 were maintained or changed of function representatives like: Jorge Glas, confirmed in office as Vice president of the Republic; Rosana Alvarado, current Minister of Justice; María Alejandra Vicuña, designated Minister of Housing; Carlos Ochoa who remains as Head of Information and Communication; Virgilio Hernandez, who is now presidential advisor; Maria Fernanda Espinoza, appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs (Chancellor); Ledy Zúñiga, current representative of the Technical Secretariat for Drugs; Mauro Andino appointed Director of the National Customs Service. In addition to the elected assembly members: José Serrano (president of the Assembly), María José Carrón, Viviana Bonilla, Gabriela Rivadeneria, Marcela Aguiñaga, Doris Soliz.

6	@dorissoliz	Doris Soliz	Former Secretary of Country Alliance and Ex-MIES	54	3,90	9
7	@marialevicuna	María Alejandra Vicuña	Former National Assembly member	43	3,11	5
8	@vinizeta	Vinicio Alvarado	Former head of Production Ministry and former Secretary of Public Administration	42	3,03	1
9	@GuillaumeLong	Guillaume Long	Former Chancellor and former head of Ministry of Culture and Human Talent	38	2,75	0
10	@CarlosOchoaEc	Carlos Ochoa	Head of Information and Communication	37	2,67	128
11	@RicardoPatinoEc	Ricardo Patiño	Former Head of Ministry of Defense and former Chancellor	33	2,38	16
12	@Ppancia	Patricio Barriga	Former Secretary of Communication and former President of Cordicom	31	2,24	9
13	@ComunicacionEc	Secretaría de Comunicación	N/A	31	2,24	50
14	@AdmPublicaEc	Secretaría de la Administración Pública	N/A	28	2,02	3
15	@marcelaguinaga	Marcela Aguiñaga	Former vice President of National Assembly and former head of Ministry of Environmental affairs	24	1,73	1
16	@PoliticaEc	Secretaría de Gestión de la Política	N/A	20	1,45	0

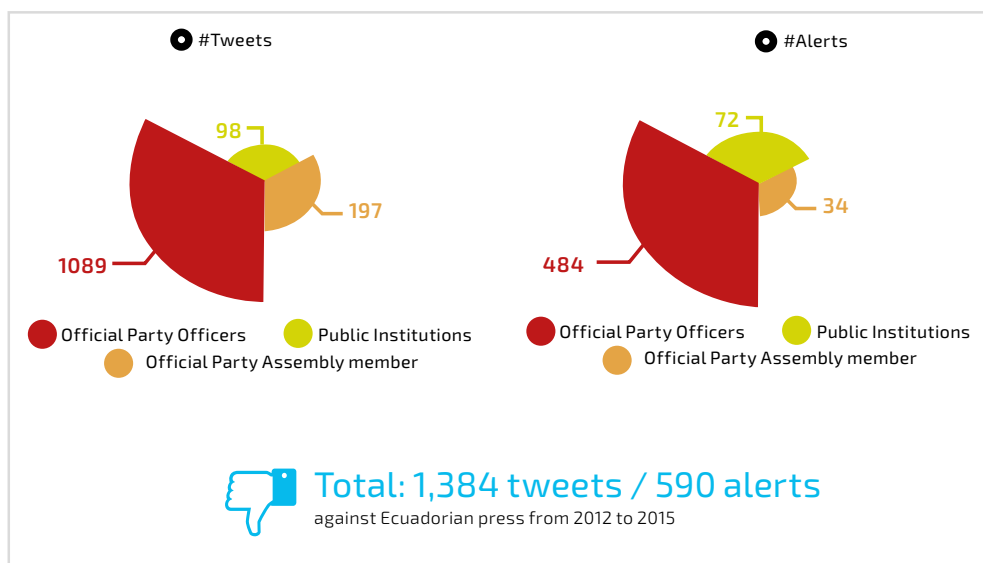
17	@virgiliohernand	Virgilio Hernández	Former National Assembly member	19	1,37	2
18	@mfespinosaEc	María Fernanda Espinosa	Ex-Ambassador at Geneva and former head of Ministry of Defense	16	1,16	1
19	@ledyzuniga	Ledy Zúñiga	Former Minister of Justice and former member of the National Council for Social Rehabilitation	15	1,08	0
20	@majo_carrion	María José Carrión	Former National Assembly member	15	1,08	2
21	@GabrielaEsPais	Gabriela Rivadeneira	Former President of the National Assembly	15	1,08	4
22	@viviana_bonilla	Viviana Bonilla	Former head at Ministry of Policy Administration and candidate to Guayaquil Mayor	12	0,87	0
23	@Presidencia_Ec	Presidencia de la República	N/A	12	0,87	3
24	@Jorge Glas	Jorge Glas	Former Vice President of the Republic and former Coordinator of Strategic Sectors	5	0,36	7
25	@Justicia_Ec	Ministerio de Justicia	N/A	5	0,36	3
26	@mauroandino	Mauro Andino	Former National Assembly member	4	0,29	1
27	@MininteriorEc	Ministerio del Interior	N/A	2	0,14	13
	TOTALES:			1.384	100	

Source: Fundamedios (2016). Note: These were the positions at the close of this edition.

Number of tweets by Power

Of these 27 accounts, 14 belonged to people who were civil servants during Correa's administration, and among them 1,089 tweets and retweets were recorded against the press. Even disqualifying messages were found from accounts of public institutions: 98. A total of 1,384 tweets of this kind generated 590 alerts against freedom of speech (Figure No. 2).

Figure 16: *Number of tweets by Political Power*

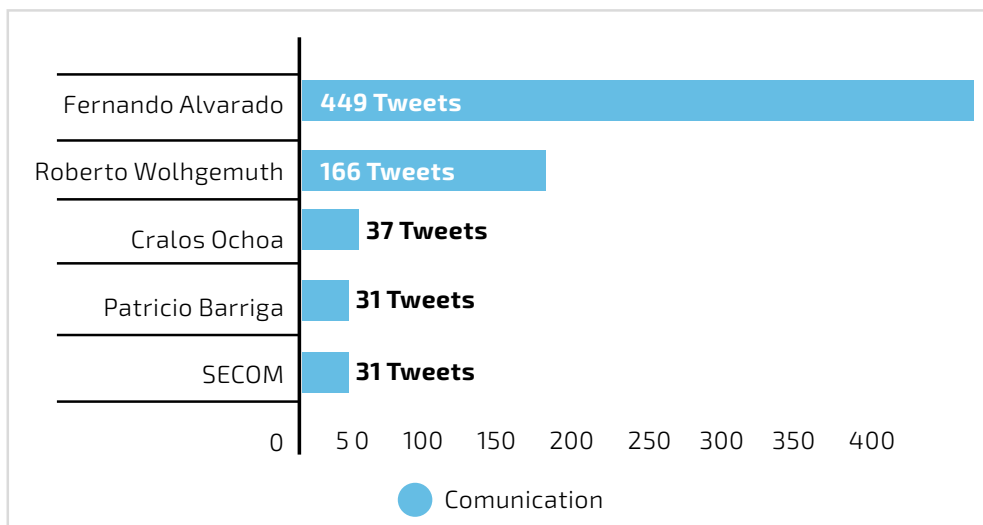


Source: Fundamedios.

Number of tweets per group

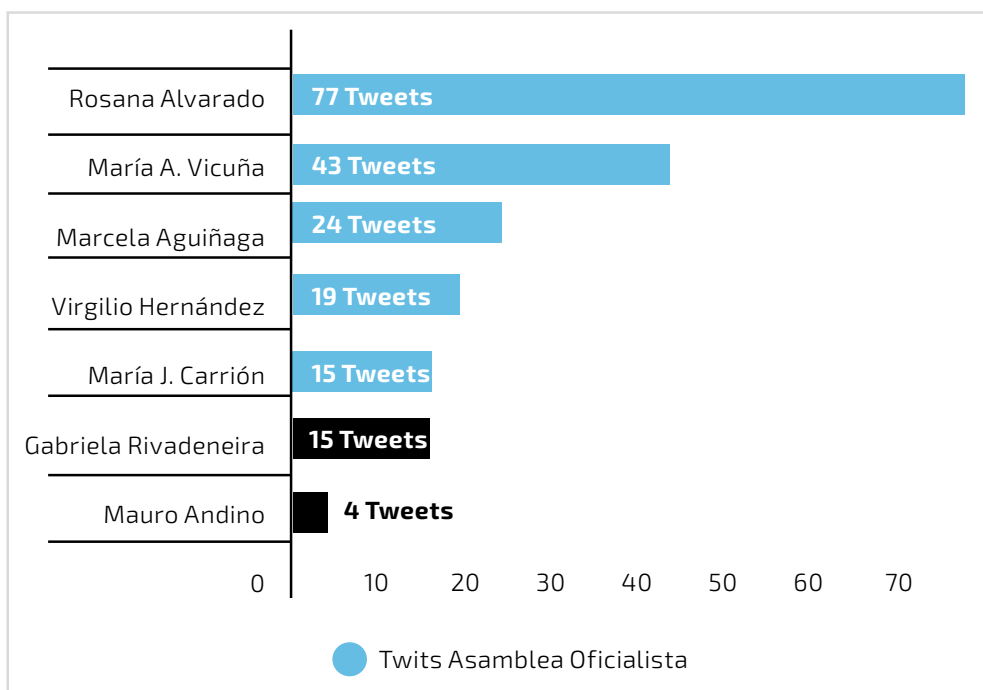
The group with the highest number of affronts or disqualifications against the press on Twitter was the Communication one. Among these, the list is led by the former head Office of Communication, Fernando Alvarado; who at the end of Rafael Correa's Administration closed his Twitter account which prevented us from using his tweets in this study. The second group corresponds to those who were officialist and former members of the National Assembly and the third one to the then President Fernando Correa (Figures from the 3 to the 8).

Figure 17: Number of tweets per group - Communication

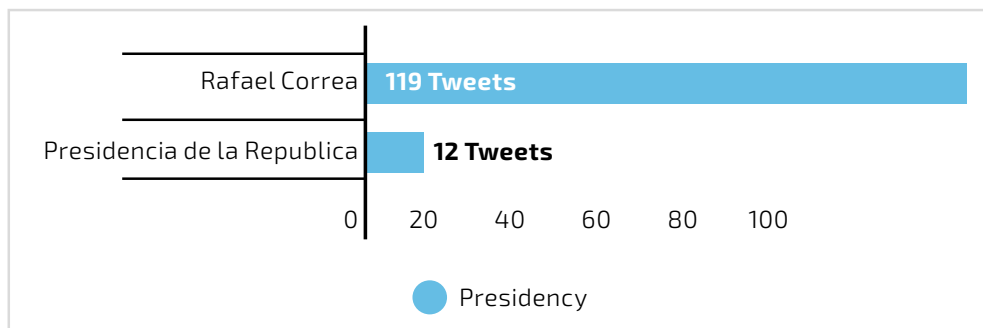


Source: Fundamedios.

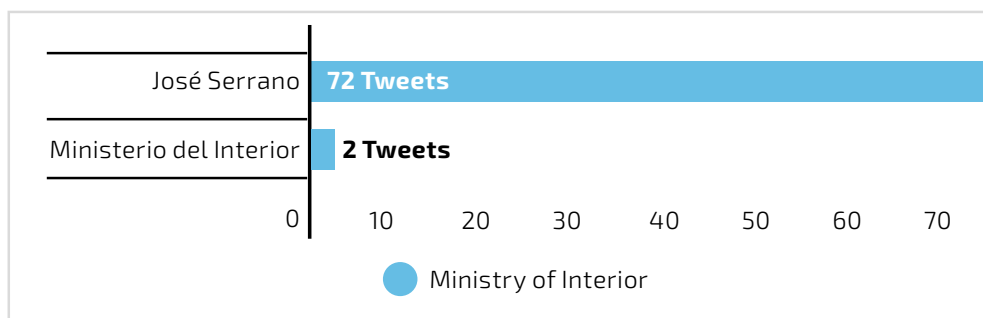
Figure 18: Number of tweets by groups - Official Assembly members



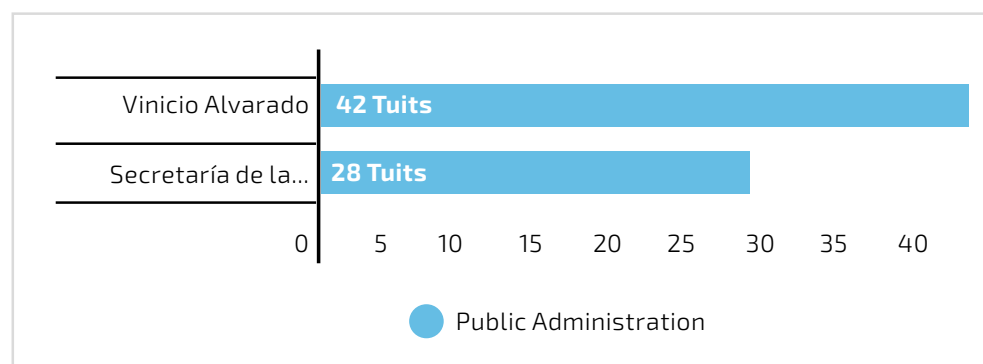
Source: Fundamedios.

Figure 19: Number of tweets per group - Presidency

Source: Fundamedios.

Figure 20: Number of tweets per group - Ministry of Interior

Source: Fundamedios.

Figure 21: Number of tweets per group - Public Administration

Source: Fundamedios.

Thermometer of official speech. Analyzing the tweets of the top three offenders.

Correa's government's tweet-o-meter against the press is headed precisely by officials who held high positions in the administration of public communication policies. They are: Fernando Alvarado, former head Office of Communication and former head of Ministry of Tourism; And Roberto Wohlgemuth, former representative of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments of and of the Council for Regulation of Communication (Cordicom) and former National Intergovernmental sub Secretary.

But Ecuador is not the only case. [The tweet-o-meter performed by Ipys Venezuela](#), who studied the messages of characters of his government between 2013 and 2015, revealed that in that country the ranking is led by William Castillo, general director of the National Telecommunications Commission (Conatel); And Delcy Rodriguez, former Minister of Communication and Information.

However, this is not the only coincidence. Politicians in these two countries occupy the first places. In the case of Ecuador, Rafael Correa ranked third with 119 tweets against the press. Meanwhile, Nicolás Maduro, with 23 messages, ranked fourth in Venezuela. Thus, the Ecuadorian former president surpassed his Venezuelan counterpart five times in the number of offenses against media and journalists in a similar period of time.

But how did they perform on Twitter and what is the opinion of Fernando Alvarado, Roberto Wohlgemuth and Rafael Correa about the press?

1. Fernando Alvarado- @FAlvaradoE

Fernando Alvarado, the first on the ranking, published 449 tweets discrediting the press between mid-2012 and 2015, however at the end of Rafael Correa's Administration this account was closed and his tweets were not available to be retrieved as images to be used in this study. Alvarado is responsible for changing the concept of national joint broadcast and turning it into regular spaces of mandatory transmission with the objective of disqualifying journalists, opponents and any citizen who expressed himself against the Go-

vernment. He became an expert in imposing content through right of reply requests and rectifications, received by the media with notes entitled, designed and ready for publication.

The strategy against the media was described in an article written by journalist Boris Muñoz, in the article "Ecuador went to war" published by Gatopardo magazine July-August edition, 2016 (Mexico):

The former secretary uses this metaphor to explain his strategy:

"Private media were like "a weed that had to be cleaned." I told the president that the weeds were always there, and always would be, and that therefore I only had two choices: to give them space and negotiate with them, which meant letting the weed grow free, pruning it from time to time [...] or getting them completely off the field."

Alvarado, according to this text, recalls telling the President:

"But in order to do that, one must cut the weeds and prune it every day because it just won't die. Then you have to plant flowers and fruits, which means strengthening the regional media to nurture pluralism. If you don't, the weed will come back and cover you."

During his term in the National Office of Communications from 2012 to November 19, 2015, according to the institution's website, Mr. Alvarado was responsible for "fostering the democratization of communication in the country, generating new information and dissemination spaces with attributes of quality, veracity and closeness to all citizens of Ecuador."

Among the hashtags he used to position his speech in networks excel: #ElDesmontaje (#TakeDownTheScheme), #MereceMejorComunicacion (#YouDeserveBetterInformation), #NoMasMentiras (#NoMoreLies).

2. Robert Wohlgemuth - @Mashiroberto

Figure 24: Tweets of Roberto Wohlgemuth (@Mashiroberto)



@Mashiroberto: "@ecuavisa The #Traitor channel ... they're only hurting the people. Show some decency <http://t.co/i7FjX23lwy>" (Original tweet).



@Mashiroberto: "How much more "independent" media? In the hands of crime and this absolute #Traitor - & gt; @fevillavicencio" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: *Twitter*

This latest tweet by Roberto Wohl gemuth (@Mashiroberto) refers to a news from Ecuador Inmediato , entitled: "Fernando Villavicencio will ask the US Senate to enforce to Ecuador 'the same measures and sanctions' that Obama imposed on the government of Venezuela."

The second place in the ranking accumulated 166 disqualification tweets against the press. This position is held by Roberto Wohl gemuth, former representative of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments in the Council for the Regulation of Communication (Cordicom) and former Secretary of National Intergovernmental. These messages were published between 2012 and

2015. In this same period, he was the protagonist of four alerts of freedom of speech, according to the records of Fundamedios.

In his tweets he focuses on discrediting the journalistic work, denying and criticizing the publication of news on topics such as the police revolt of September 30, 2010, the process held by African American communities against the cartoonist Bonil, etc. He also aimed organizations such as the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which defend freedom of the press and human rights. In October 2013, in his personal blog "[Minga Comunicacional](#)", he accused certain media outlets that they might be breaking the communication law, incurring an act of prior censorship because, in his opinion, they did not cover matters of public interest.

The most important tags in his tweets were: #VendePatrias (#SoldOut-Traitors), #Caretuco (Scoundrels), #LaHoraNoEsLaSecom (LaHoursNotSecom) #LaHoraEsPasquin (PasquinsLaHora), #GolpistasFrustrados (#FrustratedPutschist).

The Council for the Regulation of Communication is the institution that regulates the conditions for the exercise of the rights and the fulfillment of the obligations established in the Law of Communication.

3. Rafael Correa- @MashiRafael

Figure 25: Tweets of Rafael Correa (@MashiRafael)



@MashiRafael: "How difficult to do the right thing about the truth destruction media and their so called analysts. See: <http://ow.ly/2btgoq>" ([Original tweet](#)).



@MashiRafael: "@VamosPatriaEc the battle is mostly mediatic. Latin America seems to have the most mediocre and unethical press. We'll keep on beating them" ([Original tweet](#)).



@MashiRafael: "@geothephoenix87 It might be the last option, but we cannot allow the right-wing to return in 2017 with its corrupted banks and media" ([Original tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

Rafael Correa, former president of Ecuador, holds the third place of the Tweet-O-Meter, Publishing 119 tweets against journalists and media, between 2012 and 2015. He is responsible for 225 freedom of speech alerts, according to Fundamedios data. This figure, makes it the character in the list with more cases attributed in this field.

He is the ex-official with the most insults and discrediting comments issued against the press, the opposition and regular citizens, especially during his "Enlace Ciudadano" mandatory broadcasts he ran every Saturday. Up until the writing the present article, 472 saturday broadcasts had been aired. By the use of these, the epithets he used when speaking about the media became well known : "corrupt press", "hypocrites", "cavemen", "cowards", "liars", "political intriguers disguised as journalists", "swines" "cynics", "manipulators", "mediocre bunch", "ink hijackers and putschist". He also publicly tear newspapers to pieces in seven different occasions, as a way to show his rejection to what was published on them.

In June 2014 he pushed forward and approved the "Organic Law of Communications", which came to be known as the "gag law", which endorsed numerous disproportionate sanctions against the media.

In 2015 he declared war on the press and his opponents through social media sites. Rafael Correa instructed his supporters to chase and expose the until then anonymous profiles of managers of Facebook pages like Crudo Ecuador.

Behavioral profile of the politician 2.0. The thin line between personal affairs and public office.

Is it possible for a public official tweet on his personal account without his charge getting in the way? Can personal and Twitter official accounts coexist and at the same time be seen as unrelated?

The analysis of a total of 81,261 tweets, belonging to 27 official accounts (13 civil servants, 7 National Assembly members, one high-ranking official political leader and 6 public institutions) determined that the most recurring themes among the sample accounts (most of which belonged to government officials) to be the following: 44% Publicize their administration; 22% Political discourse; 12% Proselytism; 4% Discrediting opposition; 3% Discrediting the press; While tweets on advertising campaigns get 5% compared to personal tweets that represent 10%.

These results show that ex-public officials, despite tweeting through personal accounts, used said to publicize their office related work, spread their political points of view on different matters spread their proselytizing speech.

In fact, experts in communication, social media sites and digital journalism have pointed out that there is no separation of private accounts from institutional accounts in social networks, because there is a single identity, therefore by employing a personal account, the public servant status is remains the same while using a personal account. When someone performs the public function or represents an institution he does so during the entire period of his mandate. Therefore, when expressing point of view through Twitter, for

example, that being a public space, one cannot have the impression that he does so under the same rules than any other individual; Also, both public and private officials must assume full responsibility of the comments they make through social media sites, since they do so as representatives of the institutions they work for.

Regardless of the channel used to transmit contents, individuals must be aware of the media power they possess and the resolutions they express, since during the time they are officials their duty is with whole citizenship and not just the supporters of their political party. It is worrisome to observe how often officials use of social networks sites displays biases, disregarding the fact that their duty is with the entirety of the electorate and they are therefore obligated to be exemplary on the matter of respect to minorities, democracy, and become the benchmark of openness to a wider democratic debate.

This is how of the 27 accounts analyzed only 1 is promoted as a personal profile: that of former Secretary of Communication and former Minister of Tourism, Fernando Alvarado. The rest of the officials presented themselves with the position they held at that time.

However, the main concern among the experts is the way speech was managed against the press in social media sites by governmental authorities and Officialist Assembly members, who held such positions during the development of the present investigation.

There is a wealth of information available on the internet, credibility not being as widely spread, is a quality that has to be sought after. This is why media continues to play such an essential role, as people tend to give greater credibility and importance to local and global media.

In this sense, brand name, the label of truthfulness, remains important, provided that it is respected, with which the credibility of a medium becomes its only way of survival in a world of interaction and generalized information.

This credibility and truthfulness of the media is precisely what the Correa administration aimed to destroy, by discrediting and disqualifying the infor-

mation they presented, in order to incite the citizen to wonder whether or not the information presented by the media is an absolute truth, in light of the fact that before Correa's government, the media constituted the undisputed source of information.

Once the data presented by the press gets trivialized, Twitter becomes the platform through which citizens feel they can be heard without intermediaries. Understanding this premise, the former president, established himself as a source of direct information, using Twitter as his channel of communication. However, with the generalization of the use of Twitter, now, by the use of this very same channel, citizenship calls for accountability, something that displeases Correa.

This is why, experts also agree on the need of public officials and authorities to adhere to a code of conduct on social networks. In fact, at the end of the investigation of the Tweet-O-Meter in Venezuela, a Handbook 2.0 was proposed for officials with 12 recommendations, which, rather than being a code of ethics, is an invitation for public servants to review the standards of freedom of speech and to comply with the national and international principles that must be followed specifically by those who administer the people's assets.

In short, more than a specific regulation, a clear code of ethics is necessary, since public officials when assuming a temporary charge, also take on an important responsibility and commitment before the citizens of transparency, participation, inclusion and a series of principles, digital media being only one more way of communication and contact with their people, whom they serve and to with whom their duty lies, but such principles cannot be disregarded at any time and under no circumstances.

Handbook 2.0 for public officials of Ipys Venezuela:

1. Public officials should be guarantors of human rights and must not promote impunity.
2. Must be at the service the citizens and not of partisan interests.

3. Must value journalistic work, must not criminalize it.
4. Be guarantors of access to public information.
5. Must avoid violent messages.
6. Must not threat and or exert pressure against journalists and/or citizens.
7. Display tolerance towards criticism and respect dissents.
8. Be open to public scrutiny and being questioned.
9. Provide timely response to citizen's demands.
10. Encourage coexistence. Must not spread fear.
11. Must be respectful towards opinions that challenge the current administration interests.
12. Be inclusive and respect the minorities.

Source: Adapted from Ipys' Manual 2.0 for public officials. Venezuela, 2015

The ethical code proposed in the cited Handbook should be seen as a recommendation, rather than an imposition, but should be linked to the functions of public servants in a protocol.

The Rapporteurship for freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in its 2015 Annual Report on freedom of speech, within the chapter dedicated to Ecuador, condemned the stigmatizing discourse spread by former President Rafael Correa from his 'Enlace Ciudadano', (in which he berated the work done by communicators), and stressed the importance of creating a climate of respect and tolerance, in the various channels of communication including social networks sites, towards all ideas and opinions, making the unobstructed dissemination of these fundamental in any Democratic society.

Presently, public officials in Ecuador do not adhere to a code of conduct or ethics specific to the use of social media sites, as is the case in countries like the United Kingdom, Spain, Brazil and Mexico. Ecuadorian officials however, are provided with two codes, one entitled "Good Living of the Executive Function" and the Code of Ethics of Country Alliance, norms and values that — according to this study — it's far from applied on social media sites. A summary of the main principles it's offered.

Code for Good Living

This Code is based on article 83 of the Ecuadorian Constitution, in its numbers 8, 11, 12 and 17, respectively, establishes as duties and responsibilities of all Ecuadorians.

"To administer public patrimony with honesty and adhere unrestrictedly to the law, and to denounce and combat acts of corruption. (...) Assuming public functions as a service to the community and perform accountability reports to both society and the authorities, as requested by law. " (...) To exercise its office or profession according to the rule of ethics. (...) Participate in the political, civic and community life of the country in an honest and transparent manner."

The following are some of the ethical principles and values promoted by Correa's regime:

- **Integrity:** Proceeding and acting with consistency between what is believed, felt, said and done, cultivating honesty and respect for truth.
- **Transparency:** Which allows people and organizations to behave in a clear, precise and truthful manner, in order to allow citizens exercise their rights and obligations, especially the social accounting and auditing.

- **Amiability:** To express and behave with kindness, cordiality, solidarity and courtesy when attending and serving others, respecting their differences and accepting their diversity.
- **Respect:** Recognition and consideration of each person as unique being, with its own needs and interests.
- **Loyalty:** Trusting and defending the values, principles and objectives of the entity, guaranteeing both individual and collective rights.

Alianza País' Code of Ethics

As with the previously summarized code, the Alianza País Code of Ethics was established by the pro-government Alianza País party. This code is built among others, upon the art 83 of the Ecuadorian Constitution, which establishes as duties and responsibilities of Ecuadorians to : not be idler, not to lie, not to steal; respect human rights and fight to enforce them; promote the common good and place the common interest above the private interest, according to good living, honesty and the fight against corruption, with transparency, and to practice justice and solidarity.

The following are some of the principles and ethical duties contained in this Code:

- Express one's ideas, concepts, and criteria as they are, without affecting the dignity of others or opposing the mandates of the Movement.
- Permanently account for their political responsibilities, both to the Movement and to citizens.
- Be exemplary regarding matters of ethical behavior, as part of the new form of citizen coexistence that We are building.
- To denounce any improper behavior of the militants, regarding the provisions contained in the Constitution, Organic Electoral Law or the present Code.

Conclusions

The evidence shows that in Rafael Correa regime (public officials, officialism assembly members, a high-ranking official political leaders and public institutions) social media sites "specifically Twitter" were used to amplify their discourse of disqualification and discredit of the media, but not as a democratic space.

A clear example, 74% of registered tweets and retweets aimed to deny news reports, attack and/or criticize the contents of media outlets; 12% tried to assert the use of a double standard in the press narrative when reporting and broadcasting information; 8% use harsh language or plain insults against private media; 1.08% mocks the reactions of organisms and social-oriented organizations about the work done by press; And the remaining 4% refers to issues that don't fall into the above categories.

The two Ecuadorian ex-officials that more often discredited the local and international press by the means of social media sites from 2012 through 2015, both occupied positions related to public policies of communication during Correa's Regime. These are Fernando Alvarado, former head of the National Secretariat of Communication and Tourism (449 tweets); And Roberto Wohlgenuth, former representative of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments of the Council for the Regulation and Development of Information and Communication (Cordicom) and former National Intergovernmental sub Secretary (166 tweets).

Similar results were obtained by the study performed by Ipys Venezuela, which presented a ranking led by William Castillo, General Director of the National Telecommunications Commission (Conatel); And Delcy Rodriguez, former Minister of Communication and Information.

It was found that 21 out of 27 accounts of public former officials, former assembly members, and one high-ranking official and political leader of Correa's administration made use of both their personal and institutional twitter accounts indistinctly. These accounts were used to to promote their office administration (44%), amplify their political discourse (22%), reinforce the

official party political discourse (12%), spread discrediting remarks against both the press and opposition (7%),) post personal tweets (10%). These percentages clearly demonstrate the way these Twitter accounts were used as a tool to make the government activities stand out and to express their political stance and/or criticism on diverse issues, as well as to strengthen their proselytizing activity.

On this issue, all the experts consulted stressed that the lack of adherence to code of conduct in social media sites by public officials keeps spaces for dialogue like Twitter to be used in such a way that maximizes and guarantees freedom of speech, democracy, debate and discussion of Issues of public interest in the virtual realm.

Author's Biography

Mr. Ricaurte has worked as a journalist and has over 20 years of experience in that field. In 2007 he was appointed Executive Director of the Andean Foundation for the Social Observation and Study of Media, Fundamedios. He has worked in the press, and both radio and TV in prominent Ecuadorian outlets. During his tenure in Ecuavisa TV Network, he founded the "Viewer advocacy" and, producer and hosted "Televidencia" which aired between 2008-2010. Among other achievements, he developed the Code of Ethics for the network. He is editor and co-author of several publications published by Fundamedios. In 2012 he was awarded the Grand Prize for freedom of speech granted by the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) and the Freedom of Expression International Prize awarded by Argentinian editorial house Perfil in recognition for his work in the defense of freedom of speech in Ecuador

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Chapter III: Cyberactivism, citizenship in the streets and in social media networks.

Case #RenunciaYA (#ResignNow): How Guatemalan people forced their President and Vice-President to step out of office.

Albertina Navas

International Centre for Social Media Studies by Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business (Trinidad and Tobago) and University of Navarra (Spain)

Carlos Sabino

Francisco Marroquín University (Guatemala)

Research collaboration: Carolina López, Francisco Marroquín University (Guatemala)

Background

The use of social sites has changed the paradigm of communications, granting the common citizen the possibility to make his voice heard, in a system used to the one way emission of content where feedback was not required. Today, citizens express themselves and experience their rights in an active way: they listen but debate also, they question and propose.

In this context cyber-activism or digital activism emerges as a new shape of citizen's exercise to attain changes in their respective societies. Such was Guatemala's case during 2015 when public pressure on the streets, with social media networks strong backing as channels of expression and convocation,

forced the resignation of Otto Pérez Molina and Roxana Baldetti, who at the time were President and Vice President.

Cyberactivism : defined as the process by which citizens, interested in get actively involved in politics, use a multitude of digital tools to build communities in order to influence the decision-making of its peers, political representatives and public institutions. The cause or interest they defend becomes the common ground among those who integrate these communities.

Communicator Manuel Castells refers to digital social media networks as spaces of autonomy, almost absolutely out of control of governments and corporations, where individuals have gathered overcoming the fears that kept them voiceless, standing against power. For the Spanish journalist Mario Tascón, cyberactivism is a new form of social activism, on which citizens use the new tools provided by the popularization of Social Media Networks to state their opinions, protest and denounce the irregularities observed on the Public and Private scale; reaching bigger audiences without intermediaries and non-limited schedule.

There are several examples of cyber-activism in the world. An emblematic example was the Arab Spring : a series of popular demonstrations, between December 2010 and February 2011, that emerged in Tunisia and gradually spread to Egypt and Libya, bringing down the governments of these countries, as well as political crises in Yemen, Bahrain and Syria.

Figure 1: Protest Banners on the streets during the Arab Spring



Source: www.Futureatlas.com

The protests began as Mohamed Bouazizi, a young Tunisian fruit seller, immolated himself in protest over the constant seizure of his products by local police officers after refusing to bribe them. His cousin recorded the events and uploaded the video to the Internet. Bouazizi's death set an example to other young people, who also tried to commit suicide trying to show discontent with the police abuses, following which they developed protests that left a balance of 147 deaths and hundreds of wounded, but also the abandonment of the power by the dictator Ben Ali.

Between January 21 and February 11, 2011, more than 500,000 people gathered in the center of Cairo (Egypt) on the so-called "Million Man March" to demand the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak, who had been in power during the past 30 years. Social media networks were the principal channels to spread the meeting call and amplify the message. Only on Twitter, more than 670,000 tweets were sent by 106,000 users. In addition, the labels #Egypt, #Jan25 and #Protest generated about 4 million mentions of users all over the world. Finally, on February 11th 2011, President Hosni Mubarak' resigned.

Figure 2: Protest at Cairo's streets (Egypt)



Source: [Rowan EL Shimi](#)

In Libya social media networks played an important role when citizens demanded better living conditions and demonstrated their anger at the enrich-

ment of their president since 1969 Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and their circle. Government supporters and the police department repelled the demonstrators creating a serious armed confrontation. At the end of August 2011 government opposition forces entered Tripoli, Libya's capital, to expel the president who was finally killed on October 20th 2011.

Similar circumstances were experienced in Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, where the population took the streets to demand respect for their rights, freedoms and better life conditions. Although there were no such strong changes, they went through moments of tension, violence and repression.

Even though realities of the Arab Spring leading countries are different, the protest were driven by the deep discontent over the rulers abuses, political corruption, continued impositions, repressive regulations, lack of freedom and serious financial crisis.

As part of these authoritarian policies, traditional media was Government-controlled; so digital platforms, including social media networks became the only channels they had to let the world know what was happening and denounce the injustice they were facing, also summoning more people to fight. In Egypt only, 90% of the information about the crisis circulated through social media networks. Facebook creator, Mark Zuckerberg, stated in public that the Arab Spring showed the essence of 2.0 revolution, and foretold that those would lead the world into a new era in which the use of social media networks would provide an unprecedented dimension to politics.

Cyber Activism had such an impact during the Arab Spring that a particular phenomenon occurred, Al Jazeera (a Qatari news broadcasting network) reposted the information that cyber activists uploaded to social media networks related to the events on the protests. This traditional Broadcasting Network became a spokesperson for the contents published on the Web even those with low definition, also broadcasted live stream on the events in Tunisia, shared newsletter, news and information took from Twitter and Facebook.

Although this is portrayed as a paradigmatic example of cyberactivism, citizens of diverse countries had long history of an active citizenship. This was the case in the Philippines when on January 20th 2001, President Joseph Estrada became the first head of state in history to lose power at the hands of an intelligent community.

Estrada was accused of corruption, and his supporters voted to exclude evidence that incriminated him, after that he was ousted thanks to the call to the streets generated through text messages via mobile phone (SMS).

The unrest in Philippine society led to a wave of seven million messages, which ended with a mass demonstration of a Million Protestants in Manila. This event is a sample of the phenomenon known as "smart mobs", which refers to the multitudes that unite around a cause, connected via digital technologies. One key feature of these protests is their short organization time as a response to the perceived urgency or crisis. This notion originally referred to social experiments and the construction of counterculture movements that claimed public spaces through the use of creative manifestations known as "flash mobs".

Another example of smart mobs occurred in Spain, after the terrorist attacks in several Madrid's train stations on March 11th 2004, in what would later be remembered as 11M. Again thousands of citizens protested against Jose Maria Aznar's administration (Popular Party), since they kept silent regarding those responsible for the attacks that left 191 people dead and 1,400 wounded. The government pointed to ETA as a suspect, without linking it to the terrorist organization Al Qaeda, which aroused the uncertainty and rage of the Spanish people.

Figure 3: Text messages sent via mobile inviting to the Madrid's protest



Source: [Foto de Josep Lluís Sellart, publicada en Diario El País de España](#)

The call began on March 13th's morning with a text message sent via mobile phone, and around noon the invitation to participate was already on Internet through the portal Nodo50, which received on that day almost six times more visits than usual. Thus, between 5,000 and 7,000 people showed up near the People's Party headquarters in Madrid and more than 9,000 people were on the outskirts of the same party headquarters in other Spanish cities on the eve of the elections. The result: the Socialist Labor Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español PSOE), People's Party opposition won the elections with 42.59%.

The Grapes Revolution, known as the Twitter Revolution, is another example of cyber-activism. It was held in April 2009, in Moldova, when the Communist Party won the elections to govern. The following days, peaceful demonstrations took place, which ended with violent actions. Society's dissatisfaction translated into protests that took the streets of Chisinau and was reflected on the Web, which once again became the main space to spread information, as it was the only way to know firsthand what was going on.

The platforms that covered the events were: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Flickr. On Twitter the hashtag #pman was a trend for several days.

What happened in Iran on June 2009, is another case study, known as the Green Revolution. On June 13th 2009, following the presidential election thousands of supporters of the candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi turned to the streets of Tehran denouncing an alleged fraud that declared Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The Public nuisance decayed into a violent repression that left a balance of dozens dead and wounded. The situation also involved government control of traditional media and even Facebook. Twitter was the main resource to report and expose violence in the Iranian capital, protesters shared photos of those killed or injured; images and videos also got viral on Flickr and YouTube.

Figure 4: Protests at the Iranian streets against the elections results.



Source: [Steve Rhodes](#)

The Red Shirts protest in Thailand (2010) was another example of popular opposition, called out by citizens by the use of digital means. Members of the National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship, led by inhabitants of poor sectors of the country's north and northeast, took the streets to call

for new elections accusing the government in functions of corruption. The call had such a magnitude on Facebook that the Thai Ministry of Information blocked the platform and another 100 websites that called to the marches accusing them of sedition.

Other key samples of flash mobs in Latin America were the Occupy Wall Street movements and "One million voices against FARC." The first protest movement was called by Adbusters collective in 2011 and other left-wing groups to protest against capitalism in general, denouncing what they saw as the abuse of large financial corporations and Wall Street tycoons. Under the slogan: We are the 99%, that refers to income inequality and wealth distribution between the wealthiest 1% and the rest of the population. On their demands they asked for the economy to serve individuals instead of great corporations and an equitable and just distribution of wealth. A protest camping was organized to take Lower Manhattan and Wall Street NY where about 20,000 people gathered, the message was sent via Facebook and particularly Twitter. In later months, protests against the economic system were replicated in 45 out of 50 country states.

The second one started when Óscar Morales Guevara from Barranquilla, under the motto "No more kidnappings, no more deaths, no more lies, no more FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)" created a virtual Community on Facebook named "A million voices against FARC" It was born as a response to Hugo Chávez's suggestion to exclude FARC from the European Union's list of terrorist organizations.

The response to Morales Guevara's call was great, resulting in the Organization of the February 4th 2008 March for Peace, with a supporting attendance of 12 million people in more than 200 cities around the globe.

The amazing 2015 in Guatemala

Sociopolitical Context

Even for those who have deep knowledge of Guatemalan affairs, 2015 was truly surprising year. During an incredibly short period time, only 6 months, the events unfolded as following: President and Vice-president were forced to step out of office, were arrested and now are facing several criminal trials. General elections were held on which the 2 candidates with more efficient and better funded party machinery , also better placed by the polls were defeated.

The ballot winner turned out to be a little known politician with little to no experience in that field, who worked as an actor /entertainment businessman; current president Jimmy Morales.

This as a result of the organization and active citizens participation reaching beyond ideologies, guatemalan citizens got together to join the protests and to take the streets demanding explanations on the corruption they were witnessing, all within the frame of a peaceful call to action. As the traditional media showed an impassive attitude, the means to achieve such massive call were social media networks, which demonstrates the communication paradigm shift that the world is experiencing today which Guatemala was not alien to.

What happened in Guatemala, the way those events unfolded, added to the sense of perplexity, has awakened hope in a country where the estimations on corruption levels are high, and where the political parties representatives have little prestige and credibility. Corruption Perceptions Index - Transparency International 2016 issue, places Guatemala in 136th place among 176 countries, going down 13 places compared to 2015 when it ranked 123th. Meanwhile at the regional level, the fourth most corrupt nation in Latin America is Guatemala.

There are many analysts and citizens who want a deep change in the Country's political system, considering that the 2015 citizen mobilization can be the turning point for fundamental transformations.

The political history of Guatemala is marked by 36 years of internal conflict, which began in 1960 when a group of soldiers tried to depose President Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes. Those who intervened in the revolt had the option of amnesty, those who rejected it formed the guerrilla group Rebel Armed Forces FAR (Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes) and kept their opposition against the Guatemalan Army until December 29th 1996, when the Agreement of Firm and Lasting Peace was signed.

The final balance of the conflict was tens of thousands of dead, missing and displaced. Violence was especially focused on western regions of the country, affecting mainly indigenous farmers.

Guatemala's democratic era began in the mid-1980s after two coup d'état; General Humberto Mejía Victores convened a Constituent Assembly, a new constitution was passed and general elections were held. Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo a Christian Democrat won the presidency, a lawyer whose incursion into politics began in his college days, and later on was a congressional deputy on several occasions.

Cerezo stepped into office in January 1986 to a five year period, with great expectations upon his administration although these vanished very soon. His government raised public spending without showing a greater benefit to the population, increased bureaucracy, did not reach peace with the Marxist guerrillas and was finally involved in various cases of corruption.

By then the political parties already had substantial changes in their very nature. Guatemalan political parties moved pretty quickly from well-organized groups with a strong ideological definition that had prevailed since 1944 to some parties that were merely electoral machineries structured around their leaders that almost without exception presented vague proposals with no ideological substance.

Cerezo's administration promoted the peace agreements signed with the guerrilla that would be the antecedents to reach the definitive agreements of peace in 1996. Cerezo was succeeded by Jorge Serrano, an engineer and politi-

cian member of the National Reconciliation Commission who negotiated peace agreements with Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca URNG (the National Revolutionary Unit of Guatemala) in 1990.

President Serrano was the first to participate in a succession of command in a peaceful and democratic manner after the approval of the constitution of 1985. Serrano ruled between 1991 and 1993, when he ended up yielding to a congress in which he was far from having a majority.

Serrano planned a coup d'etat in 1993, but the reaction of the citizenship prevented it by means of a wide political movement that covered practically the whole range of the social groups of Guatemala. Serrano marched into exile, the Constitution was reformed and a year later the Congress, that was already perceived as a focus of open corruption, was renewed. But the changes were more apparent than real: while two new parties the FRG (Republican Guatemalan Front) and PAN (Partido de Avanzada Nacional) reaped the fruits of the crisis that had occurred, the hopes of ending corruption and personalism were frustrated.

With a presidential term, now reduced to four years, the two parties mentioned alternated in power in the following periods. Álvaro Arzú (PAN) ruled from 1996 to 2000, signed peace agreements with guerrilla organizations and made some essential economic reforms. But Arzú was followed by Alfonso Portillo (FRG), whose administration had a completely different orientation that could be defined as populist. Portillo confronted guatemalan Capitalist sector, developed a rhetoric of conflict that highlighted the supposed opposition between the rich and the poor; embarked on social support programs through direct and indirect subsidies, neglecting the improvement of infrastructure.

From then on, the oscillation between more friendly governments towards private enterprise and others that were more openly inclined toward populism remained. Among the administrations that supported the private sector was Óscar Berger Perdomo (2004-2008), an entrepreneur and politician who was mayor of Guatemala City between 1991 and 1999.

While Álvaro Colom (2008 - 2012) developed a populist government. Colom's wife, Sandra Torres, undertook an extensive program of direct subsidies called "Mi familia progresa" (My family's progress), distributing food and money to the poorest sector in an attempt to reach the presidency for herself in the following elections. The background of Mrs. Torres — who was linked to kidnapping operations during the internal armed conflict — and her divorce in order to participate as a candidate, (since the wife of the president in office cannot run for elections the following immediate period), gain her strong opposition .

The judicial bodies prevented Sandra Torres from running as a candidate on that elections and the citizens preferred to vote for two candidates: Otto Pérez Molina, of the Partido Patriota PP (Patriot Party), and Manuel Baldizón of Libertad Democrática Renovada LIDER (Renewed Democratic Freedom). Otto Pérez a retired General who had had a notable participation in maintaining democracy during Serrano's coup attempt and had also intervened in the signing of the peace agreements, was portrayed as an expression of a loosely defined center-right and as a strong man capable of applying effective measures against the widespread delinquency in the country. Baldizón, on the other hand, came from Sandra Torre's party Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza UNE , and promised to continue and expand the subsidy programs that she had started. Otto Pérez Molina narrowly won the election, but Baldizón was well positioned to become president in the following period, since from 1995 onwards there had been a curious electoral phenomenon in Guatemala: The candidate who lost the presidency in the ballot or second round , won the next elections. This had happened in the cases of Portillo, Berger, Colom and Pérez Molina, which gave Baldizón high expectations and an excessive confidence in his success.

Beyond the management of the representatives who served as presidents between 1996 and 2015, which in the end was not good as the country remained plunged in poverty and social conflicts, the common characteristic was the prevalence of violence, despite being Democratic governments. At the end of Berger's administration there were more than 21,000 violent deaths. During

Álvaro Colom's four year administration there were 24,056 deaths related to violence. While in the administration of Pérez Molina, between 2012 and 2014, there were 18,021 deaths linked to violent acts.

The causes for violence to continue despite the signing of a definitive peace agreement were, among others: poverty, weakening of state institutions, impunity and clandestine arms trade. Under this contradictory circumstances guatemalans developed a sense of normality while living under violence and seeing it as an element of their daily lives.

The change starts

No significant change occurred during the first three years of Pérez Molina's administration, which began in Jan 2012. Crime rates declined somewhat, the economy continued to grow at a slow pace, but new cases of corruption emerged that revolved especially around Vice President Roxana Baldetti. She had enormous power within the government and largely controlled the Patriot Party, perhaps because of her relationship with the president, who was said to have had sentimental ties for some time. Her sometimes haughty behavior and the obvious signs of illicit enrichment were arousing a growing rejection against Baldetti.

When 2015 began, it seemed unlikely that with this performance, the Patriotic Party could repeat itself in power. It's candidate, Alejandro Sinibaldi Minister of Communications, Infrastructure and Housing, had gained some support due to the development of public works, but he had neither the charisma nor the image of honorability that could excite the electorate, so he was lagging behind a third place in the polls.

The second place was occupied by the aforementioned Sandra Torres now qualified to run for the presidency, while Manuel Baldizón seemed to be heading towards a secured victory, since the surveys gave him between 40 and 44% of the vote preferences. Everything seemed to indicate, to the dismay of many, that the pattern would repeat again and the second most voted candidate on the previous elections would win the next ones.

However, on April 16th of that year, a fact that completely altered the political landscape of the country occurred. The MP (Prosecutor's Office) and the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala ⁸CICIG publicly accused Juan Carlos Monzón of being a decisive part of an extensive system of corruption established in customs. The shocking thing is that Monzón was the private secretary of the vice-president and her confidence man. Thus, Baldetti was involved very directly in that scandal.

On that same date, the official MP and CICIG social media accounts began to be widely shared with the hashtag [#CasoLaLinea](#) (#CaseTheLine), that same day would see the birth of the [#RenunciaYa](#) movement (#ResignNow) whose genesis remains unclear as there were many outraged citizens who shaped it. However, in the digital world two publications marked one of its milestones.

Lucía Mendizábal, a 54-year-old Guatemalan businesswoman, tired of a succession of corruption allegations without major changes, published on her personal Facebook profile and on the page [Políticamente Incorrecto](#) (Politically Incorrect) a post about her indignation on the last corruption cases and made a call to her friends and acquaintances not to vote null and go out to the streets and protest.

Crisis breaks out

News about the corruption network in customs, which was given the name of La Línea (The Line), immediately woken up the interest and active participation of a citizenship very sensitive to the corruption issue.

⁸ CICIG was created on December 12th 2006, at the request of a Guatemalan chancellor and other society members, as a judicial body depending on the United Nations, that could conduct effective action against "clandestine apparatuses" entrenched in the State and overcome the pitfalls found in an unreliable Judicial Power in the fight against impunity. Otto Pérez Molina proposed ending the Commission's mandate in early 2015, raising some public support for the erratic behavior of former commissioners at the helm. However, during a visit to the country that drew a lot of attention the former Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden, opposed such decision publicly recommending the continuation of CICIG.

Figure 5: Facebook event calling to protest at the Guatemala City Central Plaza (Plaza de la Constitución)



Source: Facebook.

April 16th Facebook post by Lucía Mendizábal, gained momentum as her personal page received dozens of comments, prompting her to create the #RenunciaYa Facebook event, sharing the invitation to gather and protest on April 25th and demand Vice-president's resignation. By April 20th the Facebook event had about 40,000 confirmed participants on April 25th, about 60,000 people arrived at Plaza de la Constitución (Central Plaza). Meanwhile, Social media networks, bursted out on very critical comments against the vice president and the president, who was considered tolerant or attached to this corruption case.

"It was incredible to see how the once felt indifference changed when we began to experience the same corruption, we realized that Guatemala was ours, and as we put the authorities, we could also remove them. (...) We used to keep quiet, but now we simply express ourselves." (Testi-

mony of José Luis Ortuño, a 22 law student at the Francisco Marroquín University).

My generation witnessed the armed conflict, many parents like me lived a different time, in which we could not protest with such freedom. That is why my daughter and I decided to go out that day and express our right to peaceful assembly and demonstration, embodied in Article 33 of our Constitution. (Testimony of Elizabeth López Avila a 53 auditor of the San Carlos University of Guatemala)

That April was a prodigal in political events, before a country that suddenly woke up of its lethargy. Under the international pressure and the great support for the actions against La Línea, President Pérez Molina agreed to renew CICIG's mandate for another 2 year period. As soon as the scandal broke out, the aforementioned Sinibaldi, resigned his candidacy to run for president by the PP and disappeared from the political scene.

The Patriotic Party was losing support vertiginously and nobody wanted to assume now the candidacy, before a public image of nepotism and corruption there were rumors of several Minister's resignations. Shortly after that on May 8th Roxana Baldetti stepped out of office and was immediately indicted in the case "La Línea", two weeks later the Secretary of State also resigned.

In Guatemala, as in other places around the globe, social media networks played a very significant role. CNN quoted The Influence, that registered 8,000 post related to this topic, generating 669,000 interactions, all from the week prior to the first protest to May 8th, 2015.

Figure 6: Tweets using #RenunciaYa hashtag



@magmoraga "The biggest non-party concentration in Guatemala since the signing of the Peace Agreement (1996). #RenunciaYa (taken from Skycam-guatemala FB)



Comments like this were recurrent: Willson Vásquez @willsonavc , mentioned via Twitter: "They have taken away so much that they ended up taking away the fear.#Guatemala Decide " . ("Nos han quitado tanto que terminaron quitándonos el miedo. #Guatemala Decide") [Original Tweet](#)

Source: *Twitter*

The calls to the events were done through social media networks, especially Facebook, but Twitter recorded the largest number of publications during the protests. The newspapers covered the day after the demonstrations, showing only photographs. The first publication was on April 26th 2015, in the newspaper Prensa Libre. Little by little the local press was giving more priority to the citizen protests. The analytics tool Twitonomy captured that the number of Twitter users on May 8th, publishing on the subject, were 1,377 and was increasing until reaching 1,705, on May 16th.

Pérez Molina's government collapsed under the simultaneous pressure of the open trials - supported by the US embassy - and a mobilized adverse public opinion concentrated in #RenunciaYa (#ResignNow), whose success was logical if one considers that in Central America are more than 18 million active users⁹ of social media networks. Guatemala is the country with the highest penetration of Facebook in the region and, in 2015, it added 4.2 million active users of that social network, whose predominant age range was between 21 and 30 years.

Not only did Facebook play an important role in the call for protests. The platform Whatsapp also contributed, because it is in the top of the preferences of the users of the region along with YouTube.

“Not your turn”

While the protests at the Central Plaza in front of the emblematic guatemalan National Palace continued periodically, every two Saturdays, the general elections campaign started formally on September 6th. But the panorama had already changed: with Sinibaldi out of the race, Baldizón started a huge advertising campaign with the motto “Le Toca” (“His Turn”), referring to the aforementioned repeated phenomenon: the second place of the 2011 elections would win the next ones, such sequence would take him now to the presidency.

But social media reacted strongly against the candidate's pride ¹⁰and arrogance, and his practice of openly buying votes, virtual pages were created and countless messages were posted stating the

⁹ Active user means that you have access to the platform at least once per month.

¹⁰ María Olga Paíz, in her article titled “Ego en apuros” (“Ego in Trouble”), published in the Contrapoder magazine, describes the candidate's displays of pride: “He didn't shy out from presenting himself at long forgotten villages, showing off his current lifestyle under the standards of a consumer's society: he arrived in five helicopters, surrounded by his detail and a self sufficient attitude of one who has already secured the presidential chair”.

opposite of the candidate's motto: "No Te Toca" (It is not your Turn). The intention to vote for Baldizón began, little by little, to decline.

A decisive week

By July It was evident, that the president was also related to "La Línea" corruption scandal and probably also to other similar cases. Despite this, not everyone believed that the solution was his resignation or an immediate request for the removal of his Presidential immunity by the Justice Department, those been two major requests extracted from the citizen protests. Although Dr. Alejandro Maldonado Aguirre, a man of honest career, had assumed the vice presidency, many thought - including the representatives of the United States - that his departure from office could lead to a power vacuum and that the situation would become unmanageable.

In the meantime, investigations continued. On July 9th the General Secretary of the Presidency was indicted and captured, and on August 21th the decisive phase of this process began: Roxana Baldetti was arrested and the Public Prosecutor's Office requested a preliminary hearing for Pérez Molina a mandatory step to remove the immunity he enjoyed.

Since the elections were very close, the candidates were actively pursuing their campaigns, the logistics to carrying them out went on smoothly and the pressures against those campaigns had been diluted in the absence of real citizen support.

On August 25th the Supreme Court of Justice approved the request for a preliminary hearing against the President and requested Congress to proceed. The situation in Parliament was confusing: While the official party PP and LIDER ,who supported them, had a large majority the weakness of the ruling party that was already in disarray and the growing popular pressure made the chamber vote result unpredictable .

Such news made a huge impact. Citizens were very apprehensive and distrustful about the vote in Congress, so they got into action in various ways.

August 27th was without any doubt one of the most important for this whole process: For that day a national strike was called, in which the wide support from all social stratum throughout the city was impressive. Even the Coordinating Committee for Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations (CACIF) — Guatemala's main business organization — joined the strike.

On that occasion, about 100,000 people gathered at Plaza de la Constitución (Central Plaza) , in front of the National Palace, demanding the President's resignation . This march was replicated in other cities of Guatemala and abroad. Then began to circulate the label #RenunciaYAFase2 (#ResignNow-Fase2), which was seen by about six million Twitter users inside and outside of Guatemala. Among them, Guatemalans from several cities and residents of other latitudes joined the virtual protest:

The Knowing Guatemala group @KnowingGuatemala posted on May 16th, 2015: "From Paris, France ... supporting #ResignNow #FromOverseasSupportingResignNow) fb.me/1YGPZK4tq" ([Original Status](#)). Telediario Guatemala @TelediarioGT tweeted the photo of a Guatemalan who from another Central American country supported the President's resignation: "From Costa Rica,- this Guatemalan joins a movement against corruption. #ResignNow" ([Original Tweet](#)) .

Figure 7: Tweets of Guatemalan citizens using the hashtag #RenunciaYA.



@andread_gtv: "Around the globe foreigners and guatemalans are joining the #RenunciaYa (#ResignNow) movement"

Source: Twitter

According to Lucía Mendizábal, if social media networks wouldn't exist the movement would not have surpassed 20 people and highlights that the key tools in this popular expression were Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp.

On the national strike day, we wrote history as a country, no military or insurgents were needed to defeat a president. (...) It was both the popular outcry and the love for

the country that peacefully and legally achieved the mission. Today, 'Renuncia Ya' has closed a cycle, but I am sure that we will reconvene, (...) we all have the purpose of seeing a different Guatemala and to make it real that we are indeed the Country of Eternal Spring. (Testimony of Iván Cobos Arango, 24 years old, student of Law University Rafael Landívar).

The following day Congress began the process of removing President Otto Pérez Molina immunity. After a favorable opinion of the committee responsible for examining the matter, it was decided that the decisive vote would be held on September 1st. The result, as we said, was still uncertain; many feared that the PP and LIDER deputies would vote against and Otto Pérez could then remain in office until the end of the electoral process, to hand the presidency in January 2016, but citizen pressure was too intense.

On that day, the Congress dawned blocked by demonstrators who tried to prevent the arrival of the congressman to the precinct, thus preventing the vote and the removal of the President's immunity.

Social media networks were active as never before: On learning of the fact, some people succeeded in influencing the demonstrators to stop the blocking - it was clear that they were brought by different organizations that supported the president, they were hired to be there, the payment would be either money or gifts. Other showed on the site and offered white roses to the demonstrators as a sign of peace, meanwhile Congressmen were receiving tons of calls urging them to assume a brave attitude by attending to the Congress and vote against the President.

A human chain protected the Representatives who showed up at Congress even under the rain. The result was remarkable: Under intense public pressure, a huge majority of Representatives withdrew the privilege of immunity to the President, who could then be tried by the courts without any restriction. After initial hesitation, Otto Pérez Molina resigned a day later and surrendered

himself to Justice. He had a hearing and preventively sent to prison that same day.

This confirmed the power of organized citizens, that were able seize the advantages offered by social media networks. It is important to remember that in phase 2 of #ResignNow, in addition to the participants in the national strike, around the globe more than 5.95 million people learned about what happened in Guatemala in those days, while the country was getting ready for a better future. This is confirmed by messages and testimonies such as:

Figure 8: Tweets of Guatemalan citizens using the hashtag #RenunciaYA.



MikeCastillo@MikeCastillo_PL: En #Huehuetango se exige renuncia de Otto Pérez, Augusto González y los diputados por este distrito ([Original Tweet](#)).

(#Huehuetenango demands the resignation of Otto Pérez, Augusto González and the Congress District Representatives)



Stephanie Falla@stephaniefalla: Somos una generación que no tiene miedo de manifestar la inconformidad, indignación y trabajar por un futuro mejor. #RenunciaYaFase2. (We are a generation that is not afraid to express discontent, indignation or to work for a better future #ResignNowFase2) ([Original Tweet](#)).

Source: Twitter

With this sentiment, Hector Orellana, 19, a student of Business Administration at the Francisco Marroquín University, agreed: "Ironically, by overthrowing the Patriot Party, the movement provoked in me a feeling of patriotism that I never felt before. Since then, I have that mild mental itch that makes me want to demand justice. "

The general elections

Guatemala, moved by these unusual events, was getting ready to go to the polls. The attitudes of the electorate had varied greatly over the last few weeks, so assessments and surveys were unable to predict what would happen. On September 6th, the electorate massively participated in voting, thus turning their backs on those who had opposed the electoral process.

The abstention rate was the lowest in the entire democratic history of the country (28.72%) and the elections were held entirely in peace. The most surprising result : Manuel Baldizón paid dearly for his arrogance and demagogic attitude reaching only 19.65% of the votes. Ahead of him was Sandra Torres UNE's candidate with 19.74% and the winner was Jimmy Morales, the comedian, who took advantage of the electorate's rejection against all traditional politicians and got a 23.85% of the total . There was a clear rejection against populists, who spent enormous sums in the electoral campaign. The electorate leaned towards a change of the way things were done in politics: An air of renovation went across the country.

In October 25th this trend was confirmed, Jimmy Morales got an overwhelming result: 67.44%, very close to the highest number of support for a candidate in a second ballot. As established by the Constitution, Morales assumed the presidency on January 14th, 2016 and has a minimum of representatives in Congress, although some representatives of other parties have later joined their political aggrupation FCN-Nación o Frente de Convergencia Nacional (National Front of Convergence)

How #RenunciaYa (#ResignNow) started?

The organization #RenunciaYA (#ResignNow) is perfectly located within the parameters of the theory developed by Jennifer Aaker, known as The dragonfly Effect. This explains the four determinants to make social networks effective channels for the structuring of campaigns and generation of social changes. These components are compared to the wings of the dragonfly, the only insect able to move in any direction when it synchronizes its four wings. Each of the 'wings' of the dragonfly, or communicational project, has a specific function:

1. **Telling a story:** For an idea to connect with the community it is necessary to link it with a story, structured by a beginning, tension and final. #RenunciaYA (#ResignNow) condensed the history of the nonconformity and facts of corruption that the people of Guatemala was living

and that rejected. The point of tension was "La Línea" the dismantled corruption case .

6. **To generate empathy:** The idea to be communicated should be able to generate commitment from the audience to the brand, movement or political party. Empathy and commitment was generated by presenting on Facebook not a message but an invitation to do something urgently: "Let's see if we do something about it" was the invitation on Facebook that detonated the mobilization of all those who decidedly joined #RenunciaYA (#ResignNow).
7. **Talking with authenticity:** The formula of success to transcend social media is sustained in that, to greater authenticity and transparency, greater ease of connection with the audience Guatemalans sentiment shown on social media was authentic, it emerged from their real annoyance and indignation caused by the corruption their country was facing, it was a feeling shared and widely spread among the citizens, that message turned out to generate contagion of mind attracting more and more people with similar thoughts and sentiment.
8. **Spread the message widely:** In the management of communication 2.0, we analyze how and where the message is disseminated. As for the media used, Facebook was the first one; which in Guatemala between 2014 and 2015 showed a growth of 30% users. Following the Central American trend, the four digital platforms most used in Guatemala during 2015 in this order were: Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube and Twitter, all of them were used for the dissemination of #RenunciaYa (#ResignNow)

Roles of social media networks in the movement #RenunciaYa (#ResignNow)

The analysis of #RenunciaYa (#ResignNow) clearly identifies four roles that social media networks played in the processes developed between April and September 2015:

1. **Local call:** It is important to remember that by 2015, Guatemala had close to 4.2 million active Internet users, which allowed digital platforms to be key call channels to reach thousands of people on the streets, consistently between April and September that year.
2. **International visibility:** social networks helped to give a great visibility to the movement, to the point that international networks like BBC News (UK), Aljazeera (Qatar), CNN (United States) or El País (Spain) covered the protests and sent correspondents. Aljazeera spoke of these events as the Guatemalan Spring, in an article entitled "[People-power and the Guatemalan Spring](#)", published on September 3th, 2015; And [CNN named Lucía Mendizabal as one of the nine women who changed the course of her society](#).
3. **Security control:** The National Civil Police was in charge of safeguarding the surroundings of the Central Plaza and the Human Rights Procuratorate sent its delegates to the Plaza, in case of any violation of human rights. There were a number of allegations that cellular signal inhibitors had been placed in the vicinity. However, when someone showed a violent attitude, some people took out their cell phone and without any fear, started taking video and said: "If you alter the protest, we will upload this content to the Internet." Many participants consider that these repeated actions, in addition to other legal measures such as the petition of judicial protection and the statements made by citizens to publicly hold Pérez Molina responsible for damages caused during the protests, kept armed confrontations, arrest nor quarrel among the protesters from happening. This made it possible for whole families to come with people of all ages and social strata, children, youth, adults and the elderly.

Figure 9: Tweets using #RenunciaYa hashtag



@TelediarioGT: #RenunciaYA (#ResignNow) : entire families present today in the Peaceful March in the Plaza of the Constitution " ([Original Tweet](#)).
Source: Twitter

4. **Influencing the traditional broadcast media:** as at the beginning #RenunciaYA (#ResignNow) had no greater coverage When observing that the first day everything happened normally, some digital news channels like Soy502, covered the manifestation. The only major broadcast media that came to cover the first day was TV Azteca Guatemala, taking the applause of the Guatemalans. But, the pressure exerted from the social networks was so great that with the passing of the different protests, more were present to cover the events. According to Twitonomy's report, on May 16, the most influential users were: Tele Sur, Noti7 Guatemala, Emisoras Unidas, Telediario, Guatevisión, Publi-News Guatemala and Soy 502.

Final Reflections

Two main factors, different from each other but each of decisive importance, were combined to produce the events that changed Guatemalan political landscape during 2015. On one hand, the pressure of the United States and the strong action of the Public Prosecutor's Office and CICIG opened the door for a citizen's mobilization that, on the other hand, multiplied the effects of these initiatives by giving them content that focused on the fight against Corruption, but also against demagoguery, within the framework of current law.

The US interest to eliminate the most obvious cases of corruption, derived from its worries on drug trafficking, migration and terrorism, that led them to support CICIG and the Prosecutor's Office so that the highest government figures could face trial. However, it would not have been possible for things to go that far without the constant pressure of a citizenry that through its manifestations and the feverish activity on social media woke up from its lethargy and pressed towards firm combat against corruption and in favor of an electoral solution. This election that was threatened for several months by those who wanted radical changes that went beyond the constitution, at the end was carried out in a peaceful and effective way, achieving the defeat of those perceived as those perpetuating the complicity system that prevailed until then.

The Guatemalans democratic and legalistic spirit was expressed in a new way: Not through parties or organizations as it was in 1993 but through ceaseless activity on social media, a resolute and brave cyberactivism disrupting old patterns of violent protest, it also helped to break the silence of which Guatemalans were imprisoned by fears inherited and learned from their past, and of course also through their vote.

It can be said, however, that the deepest and most lasting changes in the political system have not yet been realized: There are spots of corruption widespread in Congress and other public entities, and the battle against it is just beginning.

Most important, however, is the change of attitude. Public opinion is more self-confident, more willing to react and fight for the transformation on the way politics are practiced in the country. What happened in Guatemala has been a positive influence to similar changes in several Latin American countries, such changes also keep encouraging Guatemalans to continue the fight against corruption and to establish more efficient and transparent governments. Lucia Mendizábal's words clearly embody the generalized sentiment: "#RenunciaYA (#ResignNow) marked a turning point in our country. Guatemala showed itself in its splendor with its dignity regained".

Authors' Biography

Albertina Navas. Candidate for Doctorate in Communication by the University of Navarra, MBA, Master in Digital Journalism and Journalist. Consultant and lecturer in social networking strategy with more than 15 years of experience. She has taught at the university and executive training in public and private institutions in six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Is ranked among of the most influential Ecuadorians on the Internet and represented the academy in the discussions of the Ecuadorian Electronic Government Plan. She was elected a member of the global Google program for women leaders in technology, Guatemala chapter, and a member of the International Chamber of Entrepreneurs. She is currently the Director of the International Center for Social Media Studies at Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business and an associate consultant at ASREDES.

Carlos Sabino. Sociologist. He lived in Chile, Venezuela and Peru before arriving to Guatemala. He is Doctor in Social Sciences, of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences; Visiting Professor at the George Mason University Center for Study of Public Choice, Virginia, USA. He is also the author of a good amount of books, articles and other works, has given classes and conferences for many universities. Member of the Mont Pèlerin Society, collaborator of the Center for Global Prosperity (also a member of its Board of Advisors). Center for the Dissemination of Economic Knowledge, Cedice (Venezuela) and the Academic Council of the International Foundation for Freedom. Correspondent of the Inter-American Economic Press Agency (AIPE) and of the Center for the Opening and Development of Latin America (Cadal). He is author of Guatemala, the silenced history . ; We are all mistaken ; The failure of interventionism ; Guatemala, two paradoxes and one unknown ; Dictionary of Economics and Finance and Building consensus for a free Venezuela , among others. He is currently a professor at the Francisco Marroquín University in Guatemala, where he is Director of the History Master's and Ph.D.

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Chapter IV: Is there a digital public sphere? A critical consideration.

Israel Márquez

Postdoctoral researcher Juan de la Cierva / Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain)

The debate on the public sphere has amassed a renewed interest due to the wide availability of the Internet and the emergence of the Social Web also known as Web 2.0. This new web, differentiated for being more interactive and democratic, has given rise to a whole collection of digital tools and platforms (blogs, wikis, social media sites, etc.) that have been interpreted as new spaces of information and communication that favor the enrichment of the political debate and provides new horizons for democratic participation. Without a doubt the very idea of ‘public sphere’ has been affected by the emergence of this type of tools and platforms, which are the distinctive trademark of the social web. We should however ask ourselves: Can we really talk about a ‘new digital public sphere’? Should that be the case, what kind of sphere is it? Who are part of it? Does this hypothetical new sphere really increase dialogue and citizen participation?

Habermas' public sphere

It was Jürgen Habermas who first introduced idea of the public sphere, which he considered to be the space where public opinion is generated. It is a domain of our social life in which private individuals meet in public to discuss

matters of common interest to the community. In this space, individuals act as a public and freely express their opinions and make them known; It is also the realm in which language, discourse, argumentation and confrontation coexist, where citizens can express their opinions, discuss those of others and refute the administration of the State. It is a public use of reason on the part of individuals interested in opening the debate and discussion about subjects and interests of a general nature.

The public sphere emerges in the specific period of bourgeois society, concurring with the development of mercantile capitalism and the ever growing availability of information brought about by the appearance of newspapers and periodicals. It was first incubated in the literary circles, shaping a literary public sphere, which slowly evolved into a political public sphere directly related affairs and topics of this kind. This new sphere of discourse was not within the State's domain, but quite the opposite, it was a space in which the State's activities could be questioned and subjected to criticism by the very citizens. It was some kind of midland, a new realm between the sphere of public authority or the State, on the one hand, and the private sphere of civil society and personal relations, on the other. Spaces such as saloons and cafeterias became regular meeting places where individuals could communicate with each other and discuss everyday issues.

Although it was ideally open to everyone, in practice it was restricted to a limited section of the population: The bourgeois readership of the eighteenth century, so only the educated elites were given access to it.

The public sphere model proposed by Habermas has been criticized in other aspects, such as marginalizing women and keeping them from taking part on it, understanding the public sphere as a mainly masculine and patriarchal space.

The public sphere was broadly understood as a domain of reason and universality in which men were the only ones capable to participate, while women, because of their supposed inclination to particularism and mannerism combined with their frivolous ways of speaking, were commonly considered

to be better fit for domestic life. Hence the masculine character of the bourgeois public sphere was not an incidental aspect: it was an essential characteristic that was comprised of a set of deeply rooted prejudices about gender differences.

Although Habermas's model of public sphere has been commented, reviewed and criticized by several authors, it has the merit of showing the importance of media culture in shaping this sphere, highlighting the role of newspapers, the press, novels, pamphlets and other media formats driven by the printing revolution. However, while giving priority to media culture in the formation of the bourgeois public sphere, some authors consider that his vision of the media is rather limited, particularly in light of the negative view he has of new electronic media (mostly about radio and television), regarding these new (at the time) means of communication he said, that "today the very conversation it's mediated", in the sense that the "critical debate between citizens has been replaced by staged debate that is performed in their name". For Habermas, the kind of communication status created by radio and television, in which the reception of the mass media messages was a form of privatized appropriation, distanced itself from the dialogue that would take place between individuals who come together to discuss the most relevant topics of the day.

This ideal model of the public sphere is inspired by the press and the conversations it ensued. His take on the press of his day is heavily influenced by communication model built upon the spoken word, thus linked it to the classical Greek conception of public life, where the Ecclesia and squares were the public meeting spaces of choice.

The references made by Habermas to the Internet and its role in the contemporary public sphere are on the scarce side. In his keynote to the media researchers at the ICA conference in Dresden , 2006, he addressed the Internet only as a footnote, lamenting the fragmentation the internet produces among focused audiences 'into a huge number of isolated issue policies', but lacking the focal points that the quality press provides when addressing the same debates. Again, he considers the mediated dimension of the public sphere as a

dimension primarily composed of the press, with the defiant addition of both radio and television, and more recently by the Internet. He argues that there is a lack of face-to-face interaction and collective decision-making, as the one the print culture used to facilitate. To his eyes, the ideal, continues to be the press and the conversations that used to be articulated around it. This point of view has been criticized by many authors, who consider Habermas remains strongly anchored in a conception of the public sphere that doesn't take into account contemporary transformations, namely the impact of the Internet and digital technologies in people's life.

Jeff Jarvis, is one of these authors. He points out that Habermas disdained broadcasting media, while highlighted the absence of quality press that serves as focal point for the debate. He complained about the debates staged by the media, but then he wanted the high quality media to be the ones to broadcast the message to the public. What's even more revealing, is the way he lamented the public stop being concentrated mass and becoming a more dispersed audience focusing on "isolated issues." But, isn't this interests dispersion happening precisely because people can finally address the issues that result most appealing to them, rather than what newspaper editors, politicians or scholars believe the public should be interested in?

Jarvis, on the contrary, suggests that the advent of the Internet and new digital technologies have introduced us into the true public sphere, which he likens to a cacophony:

Welcome to the real public sphere. We are not clear or flawless, we are not majestic nor literary. We are many audiences who are now making their numerous voices be heard, many more than could be heard in the halls or through the printing press. We are in short, a cacophony. Freedom is cacophony. It is impossible to exert control over it, but that's precisely the point.

Utopias and dystopias of the digital public sphere.

The emergence of the Internet, the digital culture and, more recently, the new tools brought about by the Web 2.0 have provoked a series of decisive changes and transformations that require updating, modifying and redefining the idea of a public sphere as it was proposed by Habermas , And commented or revised by its critics and followers. It requires to see passed the conceptualizations of public sphere as a media culture and its traditional media framework (press, radio, television) to rationalize it the light of the changes the Internet and digitalization brought about.

Thus, in recent years, a variety of new voices striving to comprehend the implications of digital technology framed in public sphere's structure and manifested in new forms of political participation and activism had emerged. In general, there are two clearly-defined positions : One of those who defend and praise the opportunities offered by digital media in the construction of a new public sphere; and the other that questions and criticizes the optimism of the first group and finds several limitations in the idea of a digital public sphere. The first position it's correlated with an optimistic, almost utopian view of the Internet and new technologies, while the second sees it under a pessimistic, dystopian light.

The Utopian View

The argument in favor of the utopian point of view is the natural result the view of technology that considers technological advances as a natural catalyst of citizen participation. This based on the historical correlation between technology and democratic advancement throughout history.

The construction of canals, railways, factories, and power plants, as well as the introduction of the telegraph, telephone, motorcar, radio and television, have always been accompanied by enthusiastic proclamations about how each innovation would provide people greater access to resources, more choices when taking key decisions, and broadened opportunities for political participation.

In this day and age, this historically held belief has moved to the realm of computer systems and digital networks, where many observers have predicted that a new radical kind of democracy - decentralized, non hierarchical and characterized for people's unmediated participation - would be the natural result of the widespread use of digital electronic devices. Let's recall for a moment how during the early years of the Internet, the experts saw in the network of networks a new "electronic agora" at our fingertips, a powerful tool to revitalize democracy. Likewise, US Vice President Al Gore predicted the emergence, thanks to the Internet, of a new era of Athenian democracy, likening technological progress with increased citizen participation in public affairs.

In recent times, this belief has been extrapolated to the Web 2.0 paradigm, in which unlike Web 1.0, the webmaster is no longer the only one who can create and share content, but any user, by the use of comprehensive tools and services (blogs, wikis, social networks, etc.), can generate content and distribute it on the Internet. As a clear example of this paradigm shift, the prestigious Time magazine chose to name "You" as the "Person of the Year" , in other words, all of us who feed web 2.0 daily with our content. On the cover of the magazine, next to a blank computer with the word You, we notice the subheading emphasizing : "Yes, you. You control the Information Age. Welcome to your world. " It has been said that the Web 2.0 is an open, interactive, participative, inclusive, transparent, etc. Web, characteristics that are a good fit with the ideal model of public sphere. For that reason, with the advent of this new Web, a body of authors had emerged, who think that tools like blogs and social media sites would facilitate the articulation of new digital spaces of public deliberation creating new political, informative and communicational possibilities readily available to the entire citizenship.

As some authors have pointed out, these new digital spaces are closely related to the Habermasian idea of the 'Public Sphere', in the sense that they are 'apparently' beyond State's control, allowing individuals to exchange opinions, knowledge and critical points of view, and favor the achievement of a rational public consensus.

Thanks to the Internet and Web 2.0 the demands of social collectives, previously excluded from public debate, can be translated into discussion topics and political argumentation. In the past, direct access and immediacy provided by today's digital technologies could only be dream off, and it was only through the mass media's traditional channels that some of the issues of public interest reach the Public Sphere, this channels however subjected information to their own editorial discretion with gave them plenty of control over public opinion on the information they presented. The arrival of Web 2.0 and mobile devices pushes a deep change in this respect, due to the newly gained ability to be ever-connected and document, store and share a wide variety of events happening around us, which can quickly become subject of public interest.

It is in this sense, that Web 2.0 can be seen as a tool of citizenship empowerment, capable of increasing people's participation on public affairs, and making it possible for new voices and previously underexposed and excluded discourses to gain access public sphere. The Net opens up new avenues for expression and protest (and dissemination of those expressions and protests), transforming citizens into prosumers (producers and consumers) of information, not just passive consumers and spectators. Thus, from the society of spectacle in which citizens had very few spaces for real participation and dialogue, and therefore, to make their interests and requests visible to the public sphere, we have moved to a way more interactive, participative and open to dialogue, one that is able to provide greater visibility to the citizen's interests through the use of readily available, comprehensive digital tools that are the defining characteristic of Web 2.0.

Beyond the possibilities offered by this set of tools for better expression and communication, the most optimistic see, in them new forms of coordination and mobilization, once that are able to generating a new kind of political activism digitally moderated. Social revolts of recent years are a paradigmatic example of this. In today's world, more and more mobilizations and protests are called upon from the Internet and especially from social media websites. Social media sites make up today's set of tools of communication and coordination between people, capable of articulating new ways of synchronizing

groups of humans. Whether it is through Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, people find new ways to coordinate, cooperate and concur around a common cause. Social media sites have allowed not only greater freedom of expression but a newly achieved freedom of association between individuals and communities who are geographically separated, and who now can through the use of these networks, show their discontent and concerns and call out to gathering and manifestation in physical places.

As a result of this, recent years had seen some kind of, in the words of the philosopher Alain Badiou (2012), "Rebirth of History", linked to a wave of new social revolts and upheavals after a long period of revolutionary lethargy. Some have compared the current state of affairs with the international sociopolitical context of the 60s and 70s, characterized by the succession of major social mobilizations that left a decisive mark in world's history, from the May of '68 events in France to the American pacifist demonstrations against the Vietnam War.

2011 was a year of revolutions, uprisings and protests around the world, to the point of making the present times seen as some of the most agitated ages in history, with the resurgence of emancipatory politics throughout the world. Time magazine in 2011 named "The Protester" the person of the year, paying tribute to the 'Arab Spring' and the 'Time for Outrage!' movements that spread across Europe, the Arab nations and the United States during that year. The important role of social media sites in these upheavals and revolutions was reflected in the decision of some authors and media outlets to baptize 2011 as the year of the "Facebook Revolutions" or "Twitter revolutions", arguing that Social media sites were the ones that enabled and moved forward these protests.

In the specific case of Facebook, some examples of revolutions and mobilizations carried out through this social media site were the ones of what has come to be known as the 'Arab Spring', the Indignaos! movement in Spain (known in english speaking countries as Time for Outrage!), the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States, the Icelandic financial crisis protests, as well as the "One million voices against FARC" that started in Colombia, etc.

In all of the aforementioned cases, specific Facebook group pages were created, from which citizens were called to get organized and mobilize, from the group "We are all Khaled Said" created by the Egyptian Wael Ghonim, to the group "Real Democracy NOW" of the anti-austerity movement and their cry for a truly representative democracy in Spain, or the various Occupy Facebook groups located in different cities around the United States. People found in this social media site a new way of sharing information and coordinating themselves, sharing aspirations and strategies from the digital network to urban physical spaces, permanently occupying public places or carrying out continuous demonstrations. These new type of protests followed Internet's logic and went viral with the use of images of mobilizations carried out around the globe, to which a viral contagion among countries and cities ensued with shared hope of achieving real changes as their project.

These examples makes us think of another reason put forward by the most optimistic among the defenders of the emancipatory and democratic power of digital social networks: their ability to transcend the local sphere and ignite international repercussions in the media agendas around of the world . Digital networks allow citizens to circumvent governmental censorship and inform the international public opinion by the viral dissemination of images and ideas. In fact, traditional media outlets complement their broadcasts with material provided by common individuals, who engage in citizen journalism, which allows them to use their contents to shape the behavior of the institutionalized public sphere . The viral dissemination of videos and images by the very citizens through the Internet and resonance they have in the traditional media outlets, fed the worldwide sympathy for this type of protests and had a contagious effect in many cities around globe, with a multiplication of occupation of squares and protests in different cities (Madrid, Athens, New York, etc.) and of viral images around them.

In all these cases, the protests did not have to be convened by political leaders or traditional media. Rather, it was the result of communication, coordination and organization via Internet, which had converted into a digital pu-

blic sphere capable of promoting a democratic exchange of ideas and Opinions with repercussions on the political life of societies.

In summary, the utopian posture of the Digital Public Sphere sees in the new digital technologies and tools the ideal places for democratic revitalization, participation and political activism, thanks to it expanding the communication channels and the possibilities for both public expression and citizen coordination. In a moment of clear political disaffection and lack of confidence in the effectiveness of political parties, it doesn't come as a surprise that many authors have seen in these new technologies an element of hope, capable of promoting a direct dialogue between the people and of revitalizing democracy. This optimistic view of the new media, is however complemented by a more pessimistic one that questions the true scope of these ideas, as we are about to expose.

The Dystopian View

In contraposition to this optimistic view of the new media, we find a critical view that considers that the positive view overreaches regarding the democratic and liberating possibilities of the Internet and Web 2.0 and points out several limitations to the idea of a digital public sphere. This group authors pose a challenge to the ideals promoted by defenders of the digital public sphere; they seek to understand the public sphere from an angle that goes beyond political and cultural communication, observing and analyzing how it is also integrated into the structures of power and in political economy.

In this context, Web 2.0's social media is considered as a mere buzzword and a marketing ideology aimed at attracting users and investors to their platforms. The revolutionary role of such media in the protests of the recent years is also questioned. In an empirical study carried out among activists who were involved in the protests during the year 2011, it was found that contemporary protests are not exclusively social media rebellions, given the fact that activists are also using other means of communication such as telephones, email, and face-to-face communication. Therefore, these are rebellions

are not social media bounded, but a product of the use of multiple means both online and offline.

According to a study by Christian Fuchs, 69.5% of surveyed subjects said that the great advantage of media like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube is that activists can reach out to the working class and the grand public. However, 55.9% indicated that state and corporate surveillance of activist communication is a major disadvantage and a risk inherent to social media sites. The use of these networks by the activists embodies, according to Fuchs' conclusions, a great contradiction: It opens up new possibilities for political communication; however, this comes at the price of risking protesters online communications to be monitored, controlled and censored. Civil society finds itself at a crossroad. On the one hand, there are opportunities for communication in interconnected protests, which create public online and offline political spheres; While on the other hand there is particularist control from both the state and corporations over social media sites that limits, feudalizes, and colonizes public political spheres.

The problem of monitoring, control and surveillance practices over activists has been highlighted by another key author of the dystopian stance, the belarusian Evgeny Morozov. This author goes on to suggest that analogue activism was safer than digital, since it made the more difficult to the secret services to compile the agendas and lists of activists. social media sites make the work of collecting and circulating information about dissidents a lot easier. In Iran, for example, the government used videos of demonstrations uploaded to YouTube as a tool to identify dissidents. The government also resorted to a phenomenon as novel as crowdsourcing or mass outsourcing , opening a website on the Internet where more than a hundred photographs of protesters taken by the police were published, and it was requested from the citizens loyal to the Regime to help identify dissidents. Several people were arrested after being located by the use of this devices.

The activists themselves are increasingly weary of this new kind of surveillance and the tracking their digital fingerprints, so they have developed ingenious tactics.

For instance, in Iran, some activists met in unconventional places, such as Goodreads, a social network for book lovers. Out of fear of government vigilance, some activists took the political issues discussion to this page seeking refuge from censors. This worked until an article published by the Los Angeles Times pointed out what was happening, effectively helping the Iranian authorities to identify the dissidents. In cases like these, traditional media can serve the authorities' purposes and help track the prints left by dissidents and follow them to the unknown networking sites where they have find refuge, becoming in the process instruments of governmental control and surveillance. All of this resulting in a digital manifestation cat-and-mouse game: dissidents will try to find safe haven from the hunting authorities in the web's underground (such as a reader's website).

The experts have also pointed out the fact that new forms of digital activism are often reduced to a type of indolent, lazy activism that has little to no commitment to the real world. This kind of "activism" has come to be known as slacktivism characteristic of a digital culture, founded on the ever-growing mindset of solving everything through technology. This trend holds that problems, conflicts and complex negotiations of mankind can be solved through a technological arrangement, such as clicking on the "Like" button.

It analyzes the fact that connections made on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are agglutinated with rather weak bonds, which lack hierarchy and are unable to offer solid support to high-risk activism. For instance, Facebook groups created to support any given political causes may count followers by the thousands or even millions, but those who "like" such groups are rarely willing to sacrifice for said cause, being the ones who would ultimately do so, rather scarce. Joining this online groups, takes little economic and personal investment, but how frail the ties holding them together are becomes evident whenever the leap from the virtual context into a physical face-to-face one becomes necessary, the online link does not translate in the physical world, since not all of those who "liked" a movement are willing to fully commit.

All these arguments undermine the idea that the Internet and the new digital technologies offer revolutionary possibilities for citizen's participation and mobilization, as the previously exposed arguments offered by the most optimistic analysts could lead to conclude. There are other arguments that cast a shadow of doubt on the idea that these technologies are creating a new type of digital public sphere. One of which is the reality that only a minority of users turn to the Internet with purely political ends. Moreover, the very design of some platforms does not favor a profound political dialogue. Let's take Twitter's limitation of 140 characters as a sample. It would be hard to visualize, in such a case, that any really constructive political conversation would be developed from such a fleeting, fragmented exchange of 140 characters.

Another common criticism to the concept of a digital public sphere is the fragmentation and polarization of ideas and contents taking place on the Internet. The Internet offers the possibility to filter out the contents and interactions that we want to have access to from the ones we don't. Enabling each user to choose the contents he wants to be exposed to. However, this can lead to fragmentation and encapsulation into segmented ideological niches in which preconceived ideas are reinforced while new arguments are excluded, which has serious threat to democracy. Through these new technologies, users have the possibility to pick and choose the sources of information according to their personal tastes and interests, which differs from what used to happen with traditional media. Take the press for example where editors and writers prepared the information they had obtained thinking of a much broader and diverse audience. Nowadays, thanks to these alternatives for the user, content creators can also segment and direct their contents with a lot more precision, this logic also applies on the digital spaces. People with certain points of view get grouped in chats or blogs and by sharing their opinions reinforce the ideas that got them together in the first place.

Political communication in democracy implies that the different actors share and express their various points of view and gets nurtured from said variety while they are looking for common ground. In these spaces of the digital public sphere, however, only people who think alike and who exchange

their thoughts around the common issues get interconnected and interacting with each other, without being really open towards those who think in a different way than they do. This represents a lost opportunity for all of them to enrich the dialogue by adding precisely new angles to it.

Nowadays, we find blogs and other Web 2.0 spaces that tend to get arranged around strong ideological affinities, like a blog linking to other blogs, which are similar from an ideological standpoint, which as a result homogenizes the politically hypertextual space they occupy, much for democracy disadvantage. The results in the proliferation of endogamic digital spaces based on sectarianism, turning dialogue into a multi voiced monologue and diversity into uniformity, leading to a sectarianized public sphere.

Lastly, we must remember that the Internet is not yet accessible to anyone and everyone, and there's still a digital gap that remains a very real problem in many countries. This fact inevitably produces the exclusion of some and makes the digital public sphere an elitist space that is far from ideal. Internet access is to this day highly stratified based on age, education and income, and there's many poor households, old and young people left in a situation of permanent exclusion from this digital world. Likewise, not all the people with internet access necessarily have the technical knowledge that would enable them to navigate the web with ease, which limits their effective participation in such spaces.

Related to the above, recent studies of the Arab uprising in Tunisia and Egypt have shown that most activists were young and educated citizens familiarized in the use of new technologies, who are not representative of the entire population. In this sense, it could be considered the digital public sphere is reproducing the same limitations as the bourgeois public sphere described by Habermas, in the sense that the Arab revolts were led by an elite of young and educated activists (just as those literate elites who met in the coffee houses and salons of modern Europe to discuss matters of public interest). The digital public sphere, as the traditional public sphere, is not founded on the principle of universal access; but, like the prior, is restricted to a limited sample of the population: those who are familiar with the use of new digital

technologies and have had the educational and financial means that are a requirement to access and partake in it.

Conclusions

As we have seen throughout this paper, the perception about the digitization of the public sphere is divided into two clearly distinguishable positions. One that defends and praises the possibilities of new technologies for the construction of a new sphere and the emergence of new modes of participation and political activism, and another that questions and refutes such possibilities. Often times, the public sphere model to be defended or criticized remains the Habermas model, which is a symptom of the tremendous importance of this model in studies on the public sphere, the most recent and up to date ones included.

However, although this model remains relevant and enlightening, it results insufficient to understand its current structure and dynamics in the context of our globalized digital culture. Nowadays, we are confronted with a world that is increasingly complex, globalized and fragmented, where interwoven networks of changing nature, some with modern media structures (press, radio television, etc.) and others with digital structures (organized around new digital technologies and social media). It is rather impractical, then, to refer to a homogeneous and global public sphere (Habermas' "bourgeois public sphere"), or to speak of two competing public spheres, the modern one and the digital one. What we have, instead, is a complexity of public spheres that are articulated both online and offline, running on technology or without it, making use of both digital and non-digital media.

The present public sphere is both modern and postmodern, analogical and digital, and finds itself in constant change and metamorphosis, like so many other aspects of our daily life. It is a sphere (or spheres) in which diverse modes of expression, communication and interconnection are included, online and offline, and where a wide number of topics, styles, participants and intermediaries coexist and blend. Maybe Jarvis was right all along and this new public sphere is, after all, becoming a true cacophony.

Author's Biography

Israel Márquez. European Doctorate in Information Sciences from the Complutense University of Madrid (Extraordinary Doctorate Award Course 2012/2013) and Master's Degree in Information and Knowledge Society from the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. He has been a visiting researcher at the School of Literature, Communication and Culture of the Georgia Institute of Technology (Atlanta, USA), IT University of Copenhagen (Denmark), and the Center for Internet Studies and Digital Life Of at the University of Navarra. Having worked as a professor and researcher at the Technical University of Loja (UPTL) and at the University of the Americas (Ecuador), as well as a visiting researcher at the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development (GFDD), Santo Domingo , Dominican Republic. He has published several articles on digital culture and new media in indexed journals and collective volumes and has participated in numerous national and international congresses. He has been professor in Semiotics of Mass Communication, Analysis and Communication Research, Introduction to Communication, Information Theory, Communication Theory, Digital Journalism and Qualitative Social Research Methodologies. He is currently Postdoctoral Researcher "Juan de la Cierva" at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC).

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