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Global pandemic and mediatized politics. Argentina's presidential communication and its impact on Twitter in the first half of 2020

Pandemia global y política mediatizada.
La comunicación presidencial argentina
y sus repercusiones en Twitter en el primer
semestre 2020

ABSTRACT:

The aim of this article is to explore the Argentine president's Twitter feeds in relation to his own press conference on the Covid-19 pandemic —produced in May 2020— as well as the discourses of internet users during the conference. Those that took place after the presidential announcement of the extension of the quarantine will also be taken into account, in reaction to the Intractable programme whose themes referred to the conference. The analysis takes into account the particular historical moment of the mediatization of politics, as well as the particular moment of the mediatized pandemic in which inaccurate information, figures without sources, fake news, trolls, bots, etc. proliferate on social networks. Socio-Semiotic tools were used to carry out the comparative analysis. It was concluded that there are interface operations in the presidential social network that combine a «choral enunciation», and it was also determined that there are two political-media collectives on Twitter: one that supports the president and is constituted as «militant Internet users of the quarantine» in Argentina, and constructs «logical micro-argumentations»; and another that opposes the quarantine but does not support any political force but emerges as an opponent of the president and postulates «passionate micro-argumentations».

KEY WORDS:

Mediatización de la política; Conferencia de prensa; Twitter; Internautas; Colectivos; Presidente.

RESUMEN:

El objetivo de este artículo es indagar en las discursividades del presidente argentino en Twitter en relación con su propia conferencia de prensa por la pandemia por Covid-19 —producida en mayo de 2020—, así como en las discursividades de los internautas durante la conferencia. También se tendrán en cuenta las que se produjeron con posterioridad al anuncio presidencial de extensión de la cuarentena, en reacción con el programa Intractables cuyos temas hicieron referencia a la conferencia. Se tiene en cuenta para el análisis el momento particular histórico de la mediatización de la política, así como

el contexto de pandemia mediatizada en la cual proliferan en las redes sociales informaciones inexactas, cifras sin fuentes, noticias falsas, trolls, bots, etc. Se utilizaron herramientas de la socio-semiótica para realizar el análisis comparativo. Se concluyó en la existencia de operaciones de interfaz en la red social presidencial que conjugan una «enunciación coral», así como se determinó en la existencia de dos colectivos político-mediáticos en Twitter: uno adherente al presidente que se constituye como de «internautas militantes de la cuarentena» en la Argentina, y construye «micro-argumentaciones lógicas»; y otro opositor de la cuarentena que no se ancla a ninguna fuerza política pero emerge como opositor al presidente y postula «micro-argumentaciones pasionales».

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Mediatización de la política; Conferencia de prensa; Twitter; Internautas; Colectivos; Presidente.

1. Introduction

With the global pandemic due to Covid-19, social, political and economic practices have changed, and there has been a passage to digitalization for many of them. As confinement was installed in order to prevent the spreading of Covid-19 in different countries all over the world, discourses began to proliferate in different types of media, platforms and formats. From healthcare professionals and famous people, to unknown people, trolls, bots, all of them discussing this issue, giving their opinion about the quarantine, giving advices against the virus, and suggesting solutions or preventive measures —even some different from the ones given by competent authorities—. This way, in different parts of the planet, fake news regarding coronavirus multiplied, mixing with information provided by competent authorities.

On the other hand, the time spent in quarantine in Argentina increased the television consumption. In a context of uncertainty, where state decisions regulate social practices in a more noticeable way compared to pre-pandemic times, presidential press conferences have gained much more attention in the media scene.

The aim of this article is to analyze the impact in social networks that had a press conference held by the President of Argentina, which announced the extension of the isolation in the country. We will focus on the conference from May 8, 2020, and its impact on Twitter. The election of this topic has two reasons: on the one hand, the importance of the presidential announcement in the media ecosystem and the big impact the announcement had on Twitter. On the other hand, because analyzing the impact on Twitter is a way of understanding the contemporary mediatization of the Argentine politics within the context of the pandemic, and the political misinformation and proliferation of fake and inaccurate messages and information.

2. State of the Art

2.1. MEDIATIZATION OF POLITICS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The interest in the analysis and construction of the subject matter is related to the mediatization of the pandemic since the press conference and its impact on Twitter. In this sense, it is important to consider some factors regarding two aspects: the historical process of the mediatization of politics, and the press conference as an event organized under political and media logic.



The mediatization —according to Veronian theory, as well as the one coming from Nordic countries— is conceptualized as a process that has several stages, with a leap and acceleration during the last quarter of the 20th century (Coudry, 2014; Hjarvard, 2008; 2014; Mazzoleni y Schulz, 1999; Strömbäck, 2008; Verón, 1986; 1987a; 1987b; 1998[1995]; 2001 [1984]; 2013). This transformation also causes changes regarding political logics and media logics¹.

From Verón's perspective (2001 [1984]), the era of mass media can be divided into two moments. First, when traditional media appeared, their function was to «influence» political practices. In effect, in this society, which he calls «media society», the television, the printed press, the films, the radio, create a representation strategy. However, as of the 80s, there is a change in the process of mediatization of politics and a new type of society emerges, which Verón calls «mediatized society». Here, the media «constructs the reality». Political logics are organized according to the logics of traditional media. The politics no longer uses the media to be represented before the citizens (it is not about linking the two worlds); but it thinks itself as of the logics of mass media. This way, in an advanced audiovisual democracy

(...) an election campaign is not a process external to the media (it is a part of the political field), which the media would only reflect, reproduce, better or worse: an election campaign is every day more oriented, organized, regulated, according to the television (Verón, 2001 [1984]: 15).

One of the aspects that involves the mediatization of politics is the management of the political collectives (Verón, 1987b), which have contact with political leaders and as well as journalists. That is to say, both of them manage the collectives, and therefore, the media discourse and the political discourse are mediators of the collective. In effect, Verón states that political and media collectives mix in a mediatized society.

At the time being, we follow Carlón (2015), who thinks we are living in a «hyper mediatized society», pierced by relations between the system of mass media —in crisis— and the social networks. From his point of view, collectives emerge from social networks, which then ascend to mass media and can occupy public space, such as the Internet-users on Twitter attached to a hashtag.

Approaching to the mediatization of politics, a historical process of imbrication of the political field in the mass media (Verón, 1984), is essential to understand the current moment, in which the political discourses are also in social networks. Current democracies are characterized by installing new ways of political discourse and expansion processes of politicians, among which we can find different kinds of Internet-users, who distinguish each other depending on the relation they have with the social network and the political field, as well as those who explicitly aim at manipulating the political conversation, such as trolls and bots.

As regards the press conferences, it is worth mentioning that since the establishment of the quarantine in the country —from March 19 until June, President Alberto Fernández

1/ The historical process of the mediatization of politics, and the specific issue of the relation between political and media, in the veronian theory and the conceptualizations from Nordic countries, surpass the objective of this article. An approximation, among others, can be found in «la mediatización de lo político» [the mediatization of politics] (Slimovich, 2016). It was also specified the relation between political and media logics, in the case of the Argentinian political party Cambiemos, in «El camino de Cambiemos en las redes sociales: entre las lógicas políticas y las mediáticas» [The path of Cambiemos in social networks: between political and media logics] (Slimovich, 2020).



held several press conferences, nationwide TV broadcast or announcements. We consider presidential press conferences as «political-media events» (Slimovich, 2011; 2016), quoting Dayan and Katz (1992), who consider «media event» as a television genre which attracts massive audiences, in real time (live and outside the studio). In another paper (Slimovich, 2016), we have combined the category of the authors: «media event» with the television broadcasting of political events, a presidential press conference, opening and closing of the political campaign (which are later reproduced by news programs, political opinion programs and entertainment shows), and we have called it «political-media event»:

It is a type of television broadcast, which has political logics (...) there are also other logics that come from the informative discourse in television, such as the type of shot, the fragment of the candidate's speech that replicates on stage, how it is summarized off-stage, how it is related and argued by the political specialist, how it is broadcasted, through which device, etc. (Slimovich, 2016: 90).

In this case, they are «political-media events» that generate loads of information and repercussion, on social media, traditional media, and expectation from the citizens. In every one of these announcements, the authorities informed the new measures and the evolution of the quarantine, differentiating the particular situations in the provinces.

It is worth mentioning that live broadcasts were a highly used genre by former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. She used nationwide TV broadcasts —with multiple associated mediatized representatives (Fernández and Cingolani, 2019)— while she deployed in social networks a «private ethos» (Gindin, 2019). On the contrary, former President Mauricio Macri hardly used this type of broadcast, and he concentrated the spreading of his political communication on social media, like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Slimovich, 2017; 2019; Annunziata, Ariza y March, 2018). As regards Fernández's conferences, it is not about the amount of live television broadcasts the president uses to talk about the pandemic, but mostly how he attracts massive audience —adapting the subjects and media agenda, according to that specific political-media event— thanks to the system itself, as well as the live transmission on social networks; where the television, with its implication and unpredictability, (Carlón 2004) gains relevance as a device.

Finally, it should be pointed out some aspects related to the mediatization of the pandemic. The process of confinement have caused many changes in social practices. Here, a double movement emerged. On the one hand, a passage from face to face encounters (classes or meetings with friends), to mediatized exchanges (Fernández, 1994). On the other hand, an emphasis of the mediatization (Verón, 2013), since some exchanges that happened face to face, but later had some mediatization process (such as Sessions of Congress), started to take place entirely in digital platforms (video calls through Zoom, WhatsApp, Jitsy, Skype, among others). At news programs, outside-broadcast crew and chroniclers were, in many cases, replaced by journalists and guests who participate through video conference. This framework of mediatized pandemic, which implies —as we stated before— a digitalization of political practices, as well as a change in those that were already mediatized before the pandemic, could be conceptualized as a transformation within the historical process of political mediatization, since relations between Internet users and networks changed —as it did among peers—, as well as the type of consumption of traditional media.



2.2 MEDIA CONSUMPTION DURING THE MEDIATIZED PANDEMIC

An important fact is that during these months of mandatory confinement in Argentina, media consumption has changed. In «Entre recomendaciones y rutinas: Jóvenes #en casa durante la cuarentena» [Between recommendations and routine: Young People #at home during the quarantine] —a survey of people from 14 to 21 years old, living in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires, Argentina, taken between April and May of 2020— it was shown that, among the activities young people spend most of their time during social distancing, «the use of social networks» was on the first place (Tapia, 2020).

According to the survey «Tecnología, noticias y entretenimiento en tiempos de aislamiento por el Covid-19» [Technology, news and entertainment during confinement due to Covid-19], in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and Greater Buenos Aires, the main information media is Twitter (32%); however, for the population over 45 years old, «television news» is very important (26%), and WhatsApp among citizens is mainly used to send memes and jokes (46,4%). This information partly shows the process of post broadcasting (Fernández, 2018), in which «the broadcasting is not leaving (...) and platforms are not able or cannot occupy that construction space of global village, not even at a country level» (p. 26).

In this sense, Contursi and Tufro (2019) point out the interactions between the TV show *Intratables* —which airs in a weekly television prime time slot— and Twitter, concluding that the social network appears in four ways: the hashtag, Twitter screenshots as a form of archive, the set design similar to Twitter's interface, and the use of the social network as a way of giving «voice» to the viewers.



3. Methodology

This article has two objectives. On the one hand, we first understood that the press conference, as a political-media event, creates expectation; and on the other hand, we analyzed the impact that had the press conference in common Internet users and in the presidential social networks. Thus, we aim at reconstructing the production of sense of the discursive framework, which has the political-media event and the messages on social networks related to the press conference, in the context of the pandemic due to Covid-19.

As regards the impact on Twitter, we looked into two specific moments: on the one hand, the tweets during the presidential press conference that refer to this event, the ones the president himself made on his Twitter account, as well as those from Internet users. On the other hand, we will focus on analyzing the moment after the conference, specially the tweets made while the TV show *Intratables* was on air, which had a reference —a hashtag or text— to the show or to some of its guests. The election of following the trail of the repercussions that had the press conference, mentioning the TV show that has a panel discussion (Heram, 2018; Fernández 2020), enable to capture the interactions that occurred on Twitter, regarding a TV show that dedicates part of its schedule to discuss about the pandemic, and which aired live right after Alberto Fernández's conference.

Taking into account that the objective is framed by mass media, platforms and social media, we developed an analysis that specifically consider this media framework. We used

tools from social semiotics, and the conceptualizations about social networks (Carlón, 2004; 2015; Fernández, 1994; 2018, 2020; Verón, 1987a; 2001 [1984]; 2013; Steimberg, 1993).

As regards Twitter, we aim at capturing the variations and invariants of the repercussions of the live transmission of the presidential press conference on social networks, and the later live transmission on *Intratables*. This way, we will be able to reconstruct the sense production process of the discursive framework press conference, *Intratables* and the impact on Twitter. For the analysis of the discourses emerging on social networks, we take into account the classification of Internet users according to the purpose of the political discourse (Verón, 1987b), the type of argumentation, and the type of Internet user (Slimovich, 2012; 2016).

We resume the idea of «citizen Internet user», referring to those who post about the issue on social networks, but do not express any virtual preference (Slimovich, 2012: 152). We will also mention «Follower Internet users» (p. 149) of a politician or political party, in relation to the veronian figure of pro-recipient. They appear in many ways, and one of them is «argumentative logic Internet user» or «passionate followers» (p. 149). There are also «fanatical members» (p. 152), and on the contrary, there are supporters that may be called «relaxed members» (p.145), as some of the ways the political orientation is shown in social networks. On the other hand, we will mention «opponent Internet users» (p. 152), in relation to the veronian figure contra-recipient, with the different manifestations according to the political-relation, and whether they argue from a logical or passionate point of view (Barthes, 1985).

Therefore, this study considers the imbrication of different genres, devices, Internet users, platforms and media. On the one hand, the study of a political-media event —the presidential press conference—, broadcasted live on television. As opposed to what could imply the study of this object of study in a mediatized society, as we stated before, analyzing the repercussion of the press conference in the current society implies an evaluation of mass logics and social network logics, as well as their mixture. Hence, the discourses of Internet users during the live broadcast of the press conference come into play, as well as the subsequent broadcasting of *Intratables*. These discourses suppose and repeat political-informative interphases (Verón, 2001 [1984]; Slimovich, 2016).

The corpus of the analysis is composed of, on one hand, the tweets made from the president's account during the conference, and the ones made after, which were related to the conference he had given. On the other hand, we will also analyze the messages that appeared on Twitter, which referred to the press conference during the time it lasted, and the «trending topics» used at that time. Finally, we will take into account the messages on Twitter after the conference, during the hour *Intratables* discussed the subject, which were related to the show: its topics or interviewees.

We will also talk about the difference between Segre's «thematic motive» and «subject» (1985), taking into account that motives are minimum units of sense, encapsulations that go through different texts, which appear in most of the subjects and build the theme of a subject when used.

4. Alberto Fernández's political communication

The first quarter of his administration —from December 2019 to February 2020— the presidential Twitter account shown «political-media events», such as the meeting between Alberto Fernández with Pope Francis, the meeting with Emmanuel Macron, among others. In



March, with the establishment of the preventive and mandatory isolation in Argentina due to Covid-19 pandemic, it is shown a continuation of the dissemination of political-media events in his Twitter, but during the second quarter of 2020, he tweets messages referring to his own television press conferences, where the main subject is the pandemic.

Another feature that is worth mentioning about Alberto Fernández's political communication during the pandemic is the appearance under different genres, types of broadcast and media groups. Fernández (2020) mentions the existence of a «post broadcasting president»:

in general, the presidential transmedia narrative is simple, and it seems to gain acceptance. However, in every appearance, even acknowledged by his followers, mistakes are written down and commented in every exchange system (Fernández, 2020: 16).

As regards his Twitter account, we notice the existence of different types of political/journalistic interphases (Verón, 2001 [1984]; Slimovich, 2016) in the moment before the pandemic, which continued during the pandemic. We refer to operations where he replicates contents shown in journalistic media —whether they are opposing or allies— as well as the «imitation of their logics and genres» (Slimovich, 2016).

Thus, during the presidential press conferences broadcasted since March, with the establishment of the preventive and mandatory isolation in Argentina, the presidential Twitter account shows political-journalistic interphases, which replicate media and journalistic content related to the conference. In a case we analyze in this work, we can see that in the discourses broadcasted during the presidential press conference on May 8 and the days before, there are some retweets of the *TV Pública*, which are included to the president's political enunciation. They are tweets from the state television, which quoted the president's words, informing that the isolation would continue for 15 days, and that schools and shows involving large group of people would remain closed (Fig. 1).

There are also presidential messages that retweet public figures, physicians, economists and even the opposition, as it is the case of the retweet to the Chief of Government of the City of Buenos Aires, with whom he shared the press conference, along with Axel Kicillof, Governor of the province of Buenos Aires and other prestigious physicians.

On the other hand, during the press conference, the president referred to those in the opposition that were against the establishment of the isolation in Argentina, and he stated, «There are people from the opposition that govern and they do it with responsibility (...) and there are others that do not govern and just recklessly call for people carelessness in Twitter». These controversial moments in his discourse appear in his Twitter account, but emerge thanks to the retweets. In other words, they are retweets the president makes of the account of another politician of the same political party, who quoted or paraphrased his words. This way, the confrontation seems mitigated. This is the case of the retweet to the account of Wado de Pedro (Fig. 2).

To summarize, during the pandemic, the presidential Twitter account is made up of different voices from leaders, public servants, politicians, journalists, public figures, and therefore it creates a *choral political-media enunciation*².

2/ As regards enunciation, we follow Steimberg's point of view (1993), who postulates it is an «effect of meaning of the processes of semiotization, thanks to which a communication situation is created in a text, through mechanisms that may or may not be of linguistic character» (p. 44)





Figure 1. Source: Alberto Fernández's Twitter account: @alferdez. Alberto Fernández retweeted: Televisión Pública @TVpublica. «We are not seeing schools opening any time soon», answers @alferdez. President of the Nation confirms that the closing of schools, the cancellation of shows involving large group of people and the special isolation of senior citizens continue without changes. Quarantine Phase 4. The quarantine will be extended until May 24. Alberto Fernández's press conference.



Figure 2. Source: Alberto Fernández's Twitter account: @alferdez. Alberto Fernández retweeted: Wado de Pedro @wadodecorrido: With precise information, @alferdez dismantled the lies and the attempts to confuse and divide the society. Together, Argentinian men and women continue with the same commitment of protecting everyone's health and life in this pandemic.

In the next section, we will explain in detail how the discourses of the Internet users are, during the press conference, as well as during the broadcasting of *Intratables*. Moreover, we will look into the conformation of those political-media collectives in social networks.

5. Impact on Twitter

As regards the impact of Internet users on Twitter, we analyzed two specific moments: on the one hand, the publications during the press conference, which mentioned the political-media event; and on the other hand, the tweets while *Intratables* was on air, having a hashtag, or referring to the show or some of its guests or interviewees. In general, we can confirm that the repercussions on social networks show theme heterogeneity, and different types of political correlation with the interviewees and the president.

Regarding the moment of the conference, Twitter trends show the conformation of two collectives related to different hashtags. On the one hand, those who support the president gather under the hashtag #Alberto, #Alberta y #Albertotecuida [Alberto looks after you]. This collective of internet users that support the president replicate «logic micro-arguments» (Slimovich, 2012: 152) that justify the confinement in different places of the country, and since they support the president and create political discourses in favor of the quarantine, they are considered «internet users supporters of the quarantine» (Figs. 3 and 4).

On the other hand, the other collective stands as «quarantine opponent», and group under the hashtag #ConmiLibertadNo [Not with my freedom]. At this point, we can see that the pandemic and the confinement established by the National Government, generate grouping and discursive confrontations in social networks, which do not correspond to classic political recipients: followers, opponents and indecisive regarding a party or leader (Verón, 1987b), nor to supportive collectives, but are related to the quarantine and the mandatory isolation it implies.



Figure 3. Source: @Cristian_2_27 Twitter account. Are you in? #AlbertoTeCuida [Alberto looks after you]. Despite the pressure of some miserable people, Alberto prioritize the health of the millions of Argentines, being an example for the world! Break the Internet! #BuenSabado [Good Saturday]



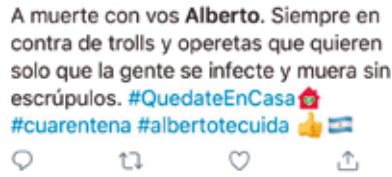


Figure 4. Source: @MuchachoCuervo Twitter account. Until death with you **Alberto**. Always against trolls and operetas* that want people to become infected and died unscrupulously. #QuedateEnCasa [Stay Home] #quarantine #albertotecuida [Alberto looks after you] (* *Translator's Note*: In Argentina, *opereta* is a pejorative term used to refer to a political operation that intends to cause harm).

The impact on Twitter at the time of the political-media event is oriented to three topics (Segre, 1985), which are taken from the president's speech transmitted through television, and then replicated in streaming in his social networks: 1) phases of the quarantine, 2) the questioning of the quarantine and 3) the comparison Sweden/Norway. Regarding the first topic, it predominates the messages in Twitter mentioning the division of the country into metropolitan area of the City of Buenos Aires and part of the Province (AMBA), and the rest of the territory of the country. There are tweets mentioning the situation at AMBA, which is the only region that remains at phase three, and do not move to phase four. This type of messages do not cause grouping of political collectives, nor group under a hashtag.

The second topic is related to the moment the president, during the conference, questioned those who criticize the confinement, generating a group that has different relations with the political recipients. This way, several publications have a political-informative interphase, since they share quotes from the conference, as well as television screenshots. The emergency mode is shown through appropriations of television content (Carlón, 2014). In effect, Internet users quote the president's phrase, where he asks the opposition «to stop lying to the people», and also the moment where he makes the difference between those who govern and those who «write on Twitter». It is worth mentioning that fragments of the press conference are replicated on the social network, where the president explicitly questions the contra-recipients (Verón, 1987b), a typical feature of the kirchnerista³ discourse since the first quarter of the XXI century, which consists of questioning a «direct contra recipient» (Montero, 2009): «a direct questioning, using second-person (sometimes using *vos* as a second-person singular pronoun), the direct contra destination causes an informal, juvenile and challenging discourse» (p. 321)⁴ (see Image 5).

3/ *Translator's Note*: *Kirchnerista*: related to former President Néstor Kirchner, and former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

4/ Multiple cases of television screenshots related to viewers' discourses are registered. As regards the messages shown on screen, which come from unknown users, while the conference is held, compare to Carlón (2012). Another case is Instagram Live, which replicates the television screen, where messages from unknown users are shown, and the person in charge of displaying may choose whether he wants to see those messages or not (Slimovich, 2018). An old example of these type of messages coming from viewers can be found on Argentinian night entertainment shows, which had «forums» at the bottom of the screen with the messages people left on the phone (Slimovich, 2007).



Figure 5. Source: @rinconet Twitter account. There are people from the opposition that do not govern and... (The phrase is not complete). The Government extends the isolation until May 24.

We believe that this type of collective is made up of «fanatical members» (Slimovich, 2012:152) a notion previously mentioned: those who replicate political content in their social networks, use political hashtags, change their profile picture to show their political ideology. In this case, we can see the existence of a «supporters» collective: while the conference is being held, this Internet users show in Twitter their support to Alberto Fernández's political space, using hashtags that are «trending topic». Besides, they send out messages during the conference that build a political opponent that has a distinctive character, since it is not necessarily someone affiliated to a different political party —although it may be the same political segment. Here, it is questioned the Internet users that are against the confinement, in order to open «the country's economy». Moreover, because they are «supporters» of the president, they are classified as «quarantine's supporters».

In conclusion, this collective is classified as president's supporter, and they are also «contra recipient» to those against the quarantine, agreeing with the president's statement that expressed: «There are people from the opposition that govern and they do it with responsibility and there are others that do not govern and just recklessly call for people carelessness in Twitter».

On the other hand, we can see the appearance of a collective of Internet users against the quarantine, who argument in favor of «the necessity of stopping employment fall», «the necessity of consumption», among others. That is to say, messages coming from people against the quarantine, also replicate the same subjects as the president's supporters, but they are clearly in favor of prioritizing the economy. This collective tends to produce «passionate micro-arguments» (Slimovich, 2012: 152). We refer to short arguments full of meaning that create figural operations regarding the continuity of the quarantine in the country, such as hyperboles or synecdoche, in order to cause emotions on Internet users (Fig. 6).

As regards the third topic, the comparison the president makes with Norway and Sweden had many reactions on social networks. On the one hand, from an economic perspective, those who state that those societies cannot be compared to Argentina, and use hyperbolic expressions and irony, apart from unofficial figures, which does not specify the source (Figs. 7 y 8). On the other hand, those who think we can compare to those countries since Argentina is doing things right (Fig. 9). This comparison to European countries is not necessarily related





Figure 6. Source: @chauoperetak Twitter account. Did he steal? No. Did he rape? No. Did he murder a woman? No. He tried to open his shop, so that he could eat. And he was arrested. If he had stolen, raped or murdered a woman he may had gotten out. Alberto's country. 48,7k views.



Figure 7. Source: @yasiboop Twitter account. «If we open the economy, we will end like Sweden did». I hope the Universe listens to you **Alberto** #ViernesDeRiesgo [Risk Friday] #quarantine #8Mayo [May 8] #ConMiLibertadNo [Not with my Freedom].



Figure 8. Source: @ulichaparro12 Twitter account. **Alberto**, don't talk about Sweden, Norway or United States. Talk about the almost 500 thousands of SMEs that are going bankrupt, and the millions that aren't able to work for more than 40 days.

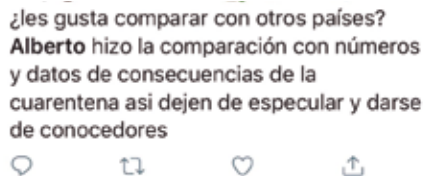


Figure 9. Source: @david_j Twitter account. Do you like comparing to other countries? **Alberto** compared figures and data regarding quarantine consequences, so stop speculating and pretending to be know-it-all.



to political recipients, as it is the case of Twitter Internet users. In other words, both supporters of the president, and those against the quarantine, tweet about the same subject.

As regards the tweets made while *Intratables* was on air, which had a hashtag or made reference to the program or some of its guests or interviewees, it is worth mentioning those Internet users that are not grouped under a hashtag, but that tweet about the program and about the speech that gave the president, the Chief of Government of the City of Buenos Aires, or the Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires. We need to point out that *Intratables* did not put a hashtag on screen, as it usually does, generating a dispersion of Internet users.

As we mentioned before, during the press conference, one of the recurring topics was the necessity of «extending» the confinement throughout Argentina. That is to say, extending the mandatory social distancing in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires (AMBA), as it was established before the president, the Chief of Government of the City of Buenos Aires and the Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires talked in the press conference. Moreover, it was announced the passage from phase 3 to phase 4 on the rest of the country. In Twitter, there are different collectives and different subjects related to the president's decision on extending the isolation.

On the one hand, there is a collective of «opponent Internet users», who are against the quarantine, and who are also «opponents» to the president. Here, we can see a line-up between the type of Internet user and the type of political recipient, which we also see during the press conference. That is to say, during the press conference and while *Intratables* was broadcasted, in Twitter there are messages referring to the necessity of ending the isolation, which are classified as Frente de Todos' opposition. Nonetheless, one of the difference between the moment of the press conference and the moment after, as regards the impact on Twitter, is that while *Intratables* was aired, the messages from the collective against the quarantine included themes relating to «opening the economy», as the Congressman Carrino stated in *Intratables* the necessity of «reducing the quarantine». In the TV show, topics relating to the opening of businesses and industries prevail. This type of arguments are the most replicated by the opposing collective.

On the other hand, it is replicated the subject mentioned by the host of *Intratables*, related to the necessity of the population of going back to work (Fig. 10). In the messages the collective against the quarantine posted on Twitter, we can see the repetition of content produced by media opposing to kirchnerismo and Peronism, such as *TN*.

Moreover, one of the topics mentioned in Twitter, is the fact that, in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, the Chief of Government, Horacio Rodríguez Larreta, decided to implement again, within the context of isolation, the towing of illegally parked vehicles. Here, we can see the appearance of some topics that are not directly related to the press conference (the trigger is just the existence on screen —and in the presidential press conference— of the Chief of Government), which are not mentioned in *Intratables* after the conference.

On the other hand, a moment that had a huge impact on social networks was the interview to Carlos Ruckauf on *Intratables*. It was the last interview in the show, and therefore, it was far from the conference, and also had short duration. However, it is the one that caused more messages on Twitter. The election made by the producers of the show, of the interviewee and his economic opinion, is what causes the reaction on the Internet uses, more than the opinions and the debate about the press conference. At this point, the tension between the reception grammar (Verón, 1987a) related to politics imposes upon what is happening on





Figure 10. Source: @caaaaaami Twitter account. I need to work! Argentina extends the quarantine until May 24. **AMBA** continues at phase 3. 24,1k views. @todonotici... Covid-19. Argentina extends the quarantine until May 24, AMBA...

screen, where Ruckauf focus on explaining the economic situation he had to handle on 2001, and the differences with the current moment. However, in Twitter, there is a question whether it was pertinent to interview Ruckauf, since he was invited to speak as «authorized voice», but at the time, he could not manage in an efficient way the economic, social and political crisis in the province of Buenos Aires (Fig. 11). In Twitter, it is shaped a collective of «Follower Internet users» of Frente de Todos, who appeal to «logic micro-arguments» (Slimovich, 2012: 152) against Ruckauf's appearance in the show as an «authorized voice».

6. Conclusions/Discussion

After analyzing the president's discourses on Twitter and the messages from Internet users reacting to the press conference, the first conclusion we arrive is that the tension economy/health that goes through the president's press conference —and the media agenda since the quarantine started— also appears on the repercussions the press conference has on social networks.

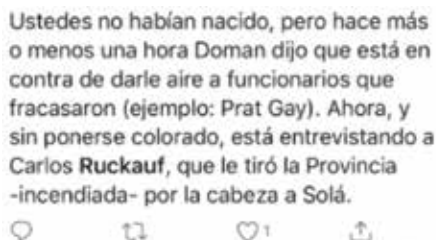


Figure 11. Source: @cagnacci_ Twitter account. You weren't born yet, but an hour ago or so, Doman said he was against showing on air public servants that were unsuccessful (for instance, Prat Gay). Now, and without any shame, he is interviewing **Carlos Ruckauf**, who left a devastated Province to Solá.

Moreover, there is an inclination to polarization of positions during the presidential press conference. On the one hand, it appears a group of Internet users in favor of the quarantine, which are also in favor of the National Government. On the other hand, there is a collective against the quarantine, who expresses their rejection regarding the extension of the isolation, and who tweets because they are concerned about the country's economy. It is not a collective that supports a force or a party, but they group because they reject the extension of the quarantine.

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that in the study of the discourses appearing on Twitter, which used some of the hashtags that were «trending topic» during the press conference, there are not «citizen Internet users», since the Internet users express their support to Frente de Todos or the president, or either their rejection. Nonetheless, there are no messages that have hashtags that can be classified as virtual indecisive.

Finally, we can see a difference regarding the type of discourse of the Internet users. President's supporters tend to build «logic micro-arguments» and interphase operations with media, as it is shown in the president's Twitter account. On the contrary, those against the quarantine tend to build «passionate micro-arguments», which aim at generating negative emotions on other Internet users, such as fear or rage, through comparisons, exaggerations and contiguity, using, in some cases, information that has no verified source.

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