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R Juste de Ancos, L Soler, M Ortí Mata (2014): “Media, actors of references and power in Paraguay”. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 69, pp. 229 to 247.

http://www.revistalatinacs.org/069/paper/1010_Quito/13jen.html

DOI: [10.4185/RLCS-2014-1010en](https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2014-1010en)

Media, actors of references and power in Paraguay

Rubén Juste de Ancos [CV] [ORCID] [Globe] Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar / Simón Bolívar Andean University, Quito, Ecuador / ruben.justedeancos@uasb.edu.ec

Lorena Soler [CV] [ORCID] [Globe] Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA) / University of Buenos Aires and Conicet / lsoler@sociales.uba.ar

Mario Ortí Mata [ORCID] [Globe] Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM) / Complutense University of Madrid / mortimat@cps.ucm.es

Abstract

[EN] Introduction. This research study aims to empirically address the political dynamics reflected on Paraguay’s print press during the 2013 elections campaign. **Method.** This empirical study is based on the social network analysis of the name references included in a sample of news articles. **Results.** The results of the study include several graphical representations of the coverage of political actors during the 2013 elections campaign, which was strongly conditioned by the previous impeachment and removal of former President Fernando Lugo. **Conclusions.** This study of name references confirms the continuity of the traditional parties in Paraguay as institutions with political and media power, and the secondary and peripheral role of the actors that emerged in the political landscape when Fernando Lugo won the presidency of Paraguay.

Keywords: Elections; Paraguay; Social Network Analysis, news media.

Contents: 1. Introduction. 1.1. General hypothesis: the personalisation of political communication in the press. 1.2. Specific research hypotheses. 2. Method. 2.1. Population and sample. 2.2. Procedure. 3. Results. 3.1. Structure of references networks. 4. Discussion and conclusions. 5. Notes. 6. List of references.

Translation by CA Martínez Arcos, Ph.D. (Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas)

1. Introduction

This article aims to empirically address the process of political communication and strategies produced in the Paraguayan news media during the presidential and legislative elections of April 2013, which followed the impeachment and removal of the then President of Paraguay Fernando Lugo (in June 2012) [1]. This empirical study is based on the social network analysis (SNA) of a wide sample of news articles published in the Paraguayan press from January to April 2013.

From a theoretical and methodological point of view, the objectives of this research study cover different dimensions of mass media studies. The first dimension is the privileged role that the mass media play, in contemporary societies, in the selection and framing of the news (Fowler, 1991; Hall, 1979); especially in the case of informative news stories.

The agenda setting power of the media, which determines the degree of coverage given to actors and events, has made the media fundamental agents in the regulation of the political economy of the sign. Specifically, within the field of political and electoral communication, where the media simultaneously function as an arena of political struggle for political actors, in their attempt to control and guide the contents that are published (McCombs, 2006; Ripollés, 2009).

This ability to act as a space where the actors of reference are created is greater in scenarios going through deep social and political changes and in societies located in a more peripheral geopolitical position, like the Paraguayan society. Throughout the organic crisis experienced by these peripheries, the tendency towards the more or less messianic over-personalisation of the political leadership has been reinforced by the media's tendency towards the construction of charismatic personalities, which is also present in Central American countries. To some extent, this also applies to the political history of Fernando Lugo, a former Bishop from one of the poorest areas of Paraguay and an emerging figure in the political sphere who reached the Presidency of Paraguay in 2012, gaining 40.8% of the vote representing the Patriotic Alliance for Change (*Alianza Patriótica para el Cambio*, aka APC), which united several parties. [2]

The arrival of Lugo to the presidency involved the possibility of reopening a process of progressive social reform (in line with the reforms recently undertaken by several Latin American countries) as well as the defeat of the dominant position of the National Republican Association–Colorado Party (*Asociación Nacional Republicana-Partido Colorado*), hence ANR-PC (due to its initials in Spanish), which ruled Paraguay for most of the 20th century. However, the development of some events showed the inability of the new presidency to end a period marked not only by the hegemony of the ANR-PC but also by the division of the political spectrum into the ANR-PC and the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (*Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico*), hence PLRA (due to its initials in Spanish). Still, Lugo's victory resulted in a transformation of the Paraguayan political system as it introduced the figure of the outsider candidates as important agents of change. [3]

This reification of the actors of reference was repeated after the impeachment of Fernando Lugo in June 2012. This event produced an essential opening of the polarising debate and the possibility of a new reification of the figure of the political leader, which became a distinctive feature of the 2013 elections. The impeachment also opened a debate marked by uncertainty about the actors who could become the protagonists of the polarised debate: the traditional parties (ANR-PC vs PLRA) or the actors affected by the impeachment (UNACE, PLRA, ANR-PC vs. Avanza País and Frente Guasú).

In this sense this research study has tried to show the capacity of the media to transform, under certain circumstances, the ideological instability that existed in the revaluation of a signifier in decay (the traditional parties, ANR-PC and PLRA, based on their candidates) and, ultimately, of their symbolic internal relations. In this sense, the interaction between the development of the 2013 elections campaign and its coverage by the Paraguayan press surely represents a paradigmatic

example of positional dispute between political options that seeks, at all costs, to achieve a media/signifier revaluation of the actors/candidates; since the central or peripheral position of a political actor (candidate or party) in the news media can largely condition the electoral results (Farnsworth, 2005).

As second theoretical and methodological objective, the characterisation of the media's construction of referential centrality and, accordingly, of the symbolic evaluation of actors, compels us to briefly reformulate the debate around the independence of the media; especially from the (other) powers capable of conditioning and acting on the referential construction of the socio-political reality. The current trend in this and other fields is to give greater autonomy to the social and political spheres from the economic sphere, which causes the theoretical and empirical distancing of these two areas in studies that examine their operation (Curran, 2002).

In the specific field of media studies, the assumption of the lack of interrelation between the socio-political and economic spheres has contributed to the polarisation of the theoretical and methodological orientations (Curran, 2002) into pluralistic and Marxist tendencies (Curran, 2002; Couldry and Curran, 2003).

For the pluralistic tendency, of hegemonic character, the media is more autonomous in the configuration of the message and their (administrative, editorial and journalistic autonomy) institutional organisation in relation to owners and advertisers (capital). This theoretical position also postulates the existence of a relation of competition -not always asymmetric- between the audience and the media. On the other hand, the Marxist, or dependentist, position tries to address in theoretical and empirical terms the existence of interactions between messages, institutions and audiences and, at the same time, postulates that they are determined by the current economic situation and ideological hegemony.

In this case we have tried to adopt the position of a certain specific constructivism; that is, we assume the existence of an ideological dependence in the news-making process, but also the existence of an active and to some extent conscious orientation of news that aims to support certain alliances of interests, often subject to a process of more or less permanent reconfiguration.

In any case, the objective is to locate this view of power, over and within the media, in its historical construction process. In the case of Paraguay, historically, the nature of the power linked to the Paraguayan media rests on two strongly oligarchic-patrimonialist elements: ownership concentration and links with traditional actors.

The media is owned by five business family groups: Zuccolillo, Vierci, Domínguez Dibb, Wasmosy, Chena, Ángel González, and Rubín (Segovia, 2010). This concentration is especially manifest in the print press, since Paraguay has the lowest rate of newspapers per capita in all of South America (Segovia, 2010): only six different newspapers for a population of 6,996,000 people (i.e., more than one million people per each print newspaper).

In addition, another element must be added to the oligopolistic configuration of the structure of the Paraguayan media: a contradictory ambivalent position towards the historical process of modernisation/democratisation of the country. We refer, firstly, to the business groups whose leaders have played a key role in the process of conservative modernisation (1954-1989) closely linked to the State (Ramón Fogel, 2005), and have become strongly linked to the dominant political actors during this process (ANR-PC and, to a lesser extent, PLRA).

Based on their dominant position and historical links, the media groups have ended up working as “promoters of the interests of the economic elites that own them, to the point of becoming pressure groups on the political power” (Morínigo, 2004). Therefore, the media act in collusion or opposition with certain dominant groups depending on the circumstances. This reveals the dual and contradictory role of the media: they are narrators of the everyday social and political life

(ideological level of articulation with their audience/demands), which almost inevitably involves moments of tension as they are also institutions with interests linked to allied, constituted and constituent powers (political level or of production of cross-sector alliances).

Thus, the staging of the impeachment of Fernando Lugo revealed this contradiction, in which the dominant political interests clashed with the public opinion. In this case, the contradiction occurred due to the duplication of interests and actions, as “amplifiers” of the public opinion (ideological level), faithfully broadcasting both the impeachment and the major subsequent demonstrations in favour of the deposed President, and as institutions linked to the traditional sectors (political level), having to maintain a closer position with the groups that promoted them.

This ambivalent position was reproduced during the elections campaign of the following year, configuring and positioning in media terms the two great actors that fought during and after the impeachment: Fernando Lugo, the Guasú Front and Avanza País, as the group that supported the continuity of Fernando Lugo; vs the ANR-PC and the PLRA, which supported the impeachment of the President.

In short, our research aimed to explore the media connections and implications involved in the impeachment, and to show their possible consequences at the political and social levels. The analysis of a large body of newspaper articles carried out for this study has allowed us to determine the extent to what the positioning and demarcation of the different political actors in the press has represented and contributed to the restitution of the bipolar order of the traditional political system. In other words, the analysis has allowed us to establish how the media have managed to assign a secondary role to the political polarisation that resulted from the removal of the highest government authority, and restored the confrontation -largely significant- of the two big political actors of Paraguay’s recent history: the ANR-PC and the PLRA.

1.1. General hypothesis: the personalisation of political communication in the press

The existence of a form of systematic mediation in the production of news, which can be considered as ideological and discursive bias, has been widely exposed by Fowler (1991) and Stuart Hall (1979). For both authors, the media can influence the news in two ways that reflect the determinations of their construction: their selection and transformation (Fowler, 1991: 12).

In our case, the analysis of the biased configuration of news focuses on the strong trend towards the “personalisation” of news during political and electoral processes, i.e. on the progressive introduction in a fundamentally-open elections campaign (since the beginning) of the implicit hierarchy of certain political actors of reference that will become the protagonists of the hegemonic political-ideological battle.

To understand how and why this process of personalisation occurs and its connection with the restoration of a hegemonic political-ideological order we need to accept the existence of different instances in the configuration of news. First of all, that the journalistic work is the result, simultaneously symbolic and material, of the superimposition of different actors (journalists, directors, owners and characters involved in the news stories) and interests (ideological, political and economic). Similarly, we cannot assume “objectivity” in the treatment of the news events given that there are multiple ways of approaching them as a result of this multiplicity of actors and interests.

These two instances of the ideological mediation/diversion that takes place in the construction of journalistic communication reveal the existence of a principle of structural determination, which starts with the selection of actors and events that make up the news. This process conditions the configuration of a certain “value-subject”, which is based on the traditional “objective” and manifest need to mention subjects/actors in any text, particularly, within the political scene. Based on this

principle, “the activity of language needs the stability of these fixing points of the subject; if this stability is missing, there is an attack against the very structure of the subject and the language activity” (Pêcheux, 1970: 246).

This journalistic value-subject equivalence, which is presented as necessary, thus entails a constitutive illusion of the subject, in which the media reproduce on a practical level “this illusion of the subject,” through the perception of the subject as speaker and carrier of elections, intentions, decisions, etc. (Pêcheux, 1970: 249).

On the contrary, this study examines how the tendency towards personalisation in the news-making process in the print press (traditionally justified by the linguistic pertinence of the value-subject association) is explained by the existence of three different levels of action of the mass media: the distributive, reproductive and productive levels of action.

First, the value-subjects are put in circulation, or 'distributed', by the media as products of a specific ideological context. In the case of Paraguay, this tendency also coincides with a progressive distancing from the traditional political institutions, whose reputation is declining in comparison to the emerging value of the (supposedly) non-affiliated individual. In this and other cases it also coincides with a widespread trend towards the individualisation/personalisation of the explanation of almost any socio-political process.

On the second level, the “reproductive” level, the reification of the role of subjects involves a form of continuity to the news, which generates a communicative product that is identified with certain proper nouns that are relatively easy to remember. This is clearly the case of the consecutive news about political figures, which are generally followed by feature news reports about them. This would be related to the necessary definition of and a committed to a “particular product” (value-subject) with the intention of expanding the market share.

The third level, the “productive” one, refers the media’s strategic, and therefore relatively conscious, mythification/reification of specific subjects, beyond the possible rationality associated with the audience’s “high demand” for these subjects. This trend coincides with the need of the economic capital to expand itself beyond its institutional boundaries, in a process of spatialisation (Curran, 2002).

Table 1. Dimensions in the news: actors, interest levels, and action levels.

Actors and interest levels	Cognitive-ideological level (Distribution level)	Economic level (Reproduction level)	Political level (Production level)
Journalist	Ideological	Increase of audience share	Power relations and equilibriums
Director	framework		
Owner(s)	Fragmented Property		Ownership monopoly
Action levels in the news	Interpretation scheme (psychosocial) How it is said Ideology	Selection scheme (institutional) TRANSITIVITY	Confrontation scheme (inter-institutional) What is said Discourse
	Demand context		Supply context
Causes for the reification of subjects	Socio-historical context. Example: the recent importance individuals give to institutions (political crisis). Individualisation process	Suitability for demand (audience) Complementarity with advertisers	Inter-institutional alliances Concentration processes

Source: Authors’ own creation. Notes: The grey tones show the degree of relation between different interest levels and the actors.

These dimensions of the journalistic reification of the subject are therefore closely related to the different operational levels of the media. The definition of names, their selection and location in the news context, is preceded by a filter of interest levels.

In many cases, due to the intense dynamics of work, the ideological level is the one that ends up defining the shape and orientation of the news content. However, insofar as the multiplication of information produces a stronger “selection” effect, we would be moving towards deeper production and reproduction trends of the institution: the search for contents and forms that may result in an increase of the audience and the propensity towards the direct confrontation with other groups and powers (the mythification/demythification of certain actors, institutions and events) in the battle for the expansion of ownership equity.

1.2. Specific research hypotheses

In addition to the general hypotheses described in the previous sections, this research study is guided by the following hypotheses:

H1. The historical centrality of the traditional political actors in the social spheres of Paraguay still shows relevant elements of subsistence. Although their social legitimacy and value has been gradually falling, these actors remain to be important centres of political, social and economic power. Their centrality in the media coverage reflects their condition as actors with social, political and economic value.

H2. At the same time, there is a gradual abandonment of the partisan identity which particularly affects the country’s traditional parties. [4] These parties are now forced to search for alternative forms of legitimacy such as the figure of the (apparently) outsider candidate (the case of Horacio Cartes for the ANR-PC and, at the time, Fernando Lugo for the PLRA [5]). The media’s discourse and their emphasis on the “modern” centrality of public opinion had contributed to the loss of legitimacy of the traditional parties and to the emergence of outsider candidates as ascending values.

H3. The emergence of third political forces has not become consolidated, and there is a rotation in the composition and direction of this third space, insofar as its members currently promote a non-ideological “anti-system” discourse, and there is a reception of non-affiliated voters [6]. The crystallisation in this third force of a specific identity capable of ideologically challenging the traditional forces seems difficult at the moment; and this prevents the press from focusing on any of the individual members of this new space.

H4. The media exhibits a relative autonomy from the actual activity of the political subjects involved in the news and the macro-social context. This is influenced by the ideological, political and economic location of the media. Therefore, the possibility of getting a prominent coverage in the press is conditioned by the degree of adequacy of the strategy of the political actors and by the media’s historical preferential referencing of certain actors.

H5. The personalisation process in the Paraguayan electoral process and the specific location of names in the news item will be conditioned by the needs and interests of certain political, economic and media actors, due to the restoration of the traditional order in force, with the consequent enhancement of the value of its main actors.

H6. The impeachment that prematurely ended with the removal of Fernando Lugo promoted a situation that favours a non-traditional discursive polarisation, which involves traditional and emerging parties. The media context is important in strengthening or limiting this discursive possibility.

2. Method

Social network analysis is the techno-methodological basis of this research study. Journalistic information has been collected and adapted to configure different data matrices suitable for this type of analysis. The extracted database integrates different fields (news content, names, comments of the journalist, significant events, etc.). although some of them were not completely used in this work and, therefore, are likely to be more widely explored in further studies.

2.1. Population and sample

The data used in this study were collected from a systematic review of the main Paraguayan newspapers (*Últimahaora*, *Abc* and *La Nación*), conducted from January to April 2013, i.e. throughout the development of Paraguay's legislative and presidential elections campaign.

From the universe of news published in the selected newspapers, we examined all of the news about politics, and gathered a large sample that should rule out a possible error of non-coverage. A total of 2,138 news items were collected, which contained 4,524 name references, corresponding to 682 differentiated political actors.

These data were collected and numerically coded to subsequently build four adjacent (one-mode) matrices which represented the referential relation between the identified actors (682 x 682) during each of the months of study (January, February, March, April). Each of the rows contained information concerning what we can call "us actors", while the columns contained information about the "them actors". [7]

The analysis, therefore, was based on matrices of actors that were interrelated through their reciprocal mentions/references, which in the evolution of the electoral campaign and its peculiar configuration led to the addition and elimination of some actors (in this case: actors that disappeared from the media scene).

2.2. Procedure

The analysis of the collected, systematised and codified data focuses on making relational and temporary comparisons, from the techno-methodological perspective of the so-called "dynamic networks" (Bender de Moll: 2006), in which certain nodes (actors) can be added or eliminated in each of the study periods.

The construction and subsequent analysis of the matrices began with the identification of what connects actors and events, i.e., the boundaries that unite or separate them (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Scott, 2000), whose non-arbitrary choice is related to the hypothesis of the study. In this case, the selection and linking of objects/actors was defined according to two basic parameters:

First, according to what we call the "first-level boundaries", i.e., those links existing between the actors that appear in the same news story and are therefore part of the same event, i.e., the event-based approach (Knoke and Yang 2008: 15-21). In this level, we can establish a division between the actors that work as the group-subject of the narrative (us) and those who are the objects of the narrative, those that are referred to (they). [8] The use of the first person in the news story identifies the first type of actors, while the reference (content/theme of the news) puts them in relation to other actors (them). Therefore, and based on the method of the network analysis, the political actors (individuals and institutions) would function as "nodes", while the messages and their references to other actors would constitute the relations that exist between these actors/nodes.

Finally, the second-level boundaries (attribute data) place actors in a set of affiliation groups (positional approach). This is formal-referential non-subjective affiliation (Wasserman and Faust, 1994), which in most cases would point to individuals' "known" membership to political parties, government institutions, trade unions, social organisations, journalist organisations or international bodies. In turn, these actors and institutions were grouped according to their position towards the impeachment of Fernando Lugo.

3. Results

The first analysis of the structure of the networks of name references shows important elements in their configuration. We will begin by comparing the various matrices (January, February, March, April).

The previous table shows the difference between the main indicators. Firstly, there is a decrease in the global level, i.e., in the average number of links existing between the different nodes. This indicates that there are fewer links between the different nodes. In January the average was 1.086 links per node; in February it fell below 1, to 0.7384; in March the average continued decreasing to 0.4566474; and in April the average decreased even more to 0.4450867. As the general elections approached, the connections between all of the actors decreased. This can be also noticed in the level of density (the relation between the links existing between the nodes, and the total number of possible links).

Table 2. General description of the matrices (January, February, March and April).

	January	February	March	April
Average-degree	1.0867052	0.7384393	0.4566474	0.4450867
Density	0.0015727	0.0010687	0.0006609	0.0006441
Connectivity	0.036	0.004	0.011	0.009
Nodes	244	160	127	118
Themes	751	541	316	308
Average distance	3.219	2.176	3.261	2.934

Taking into account that these are direct (bi-directional) links, and therefore that the density level tends to be lower -density was calculated from $n(n-1)$ to $n((n-1)/2)$ -, the total number of links in relation to the potential number of links (density) decreased with time, from 0.0015727 to 0.0006441 (taking into account that the maximum number of links is always 1). This indicates a concentration of the relations around a group of actors, and the disconnection of the rest. Firstly, we can see how the number of nodes (with at least one connection) decreased from 244 in January to 118 in April. The number of nodes decreased more than half, and involved a concentration around a group of actors.

We can also verify this concentration based on the average travelling distance of the different networks. In January the number of steps went from 3.2 to 2.9. In other words, the distances between actors decreased and therefore the possibility for the emergence of intermediate nodes (brokers) decreased, which reflects a scenario of political polarisation, in which the discussion centred on a group of actors and a disconnected periphery.

3.1. Structure of reference networks

This part of the analysis explores the evolution of the reference networks between actors during January, February, March, April and May. This is based on a dual analysis of the networks: those networks that explore the structure of the political actor-referencing strategies and the active practices used by parties and actors to position themselves in relation to others; and the media structure of references or the structure of media positions, which is the result of the set of references that are made by other actors and give a position of value.

This aims to compare two conflicts that arise between the main political actors. The initial conflict (central graph) derived from the active strategy of some actors against others, i.e. the actors that other actors decide to mention or not. [9] The initial hypothesis is that this orientation of the discourse is related to a macro-social conflict, in this case represented by the impeachment of Fernando Lugo, and the various positions for or against it. And, secondly, the ad hoc media conflict (left graph) derived from the reception of references by other political actors [10], which is something that the actors cannot control and inserts them into a common group of name references. [11]

As a result, we aim to determine whether the location of the different actors in the news media responds to an initial active position or an active strategy of references and positions towards the coup, or whether, on the contrary, this media location takes a different form in relation to such a strategy.

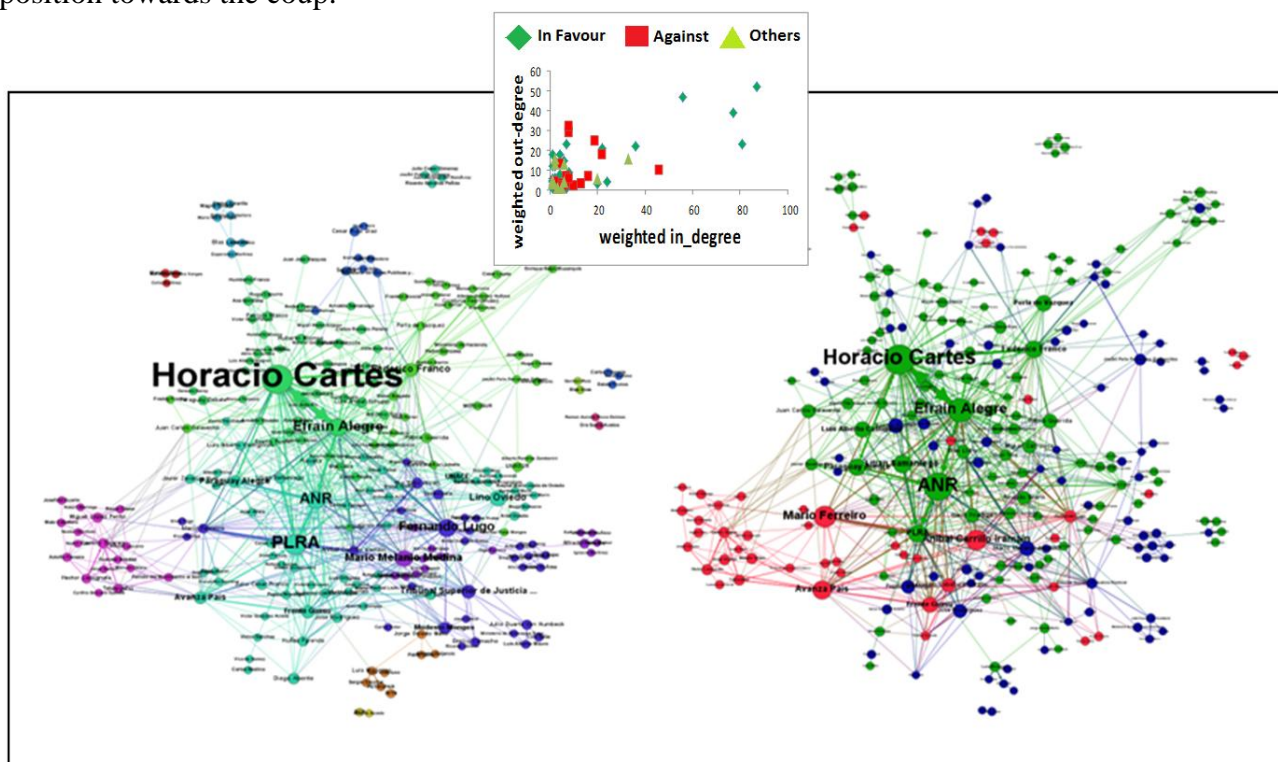
In the first month of analysis, January, we detected the concentration of the group opposing the coup (in red) around the most important actors, Avanza País and Mario Ferreiro [12], in terms of references to themselves, while another important actor like Fernando Lugo was disconnected. The first point to highlight is that this position denotes a differentiation between the two actors of importance in the electoral period (Fernando Lugo, as the deposed President, and Mario Ferreiro as the presidential candidate of an opposition block), since they did not receive references or made references to the same actors, and are therefore in different spaces. Mario Ferreiro was positioned next to Horacio Cartes, Efraín Alegre [13] (as electoral adversaries) and the PLRA, while Fernando Lugo was close to the ANR-CP and the PLRA and was far from the presidential candidates. However, the PLRA node made them belong to the same community, insofar as they belonged to the periphery of the PLRA, and were therefore subordinated to it.

However, the most important actors of reference are those linked to a favourable position towards the coup, such as Horacio Cartes (presidential candidate of the ANR-PC), the ANR-PC, the PLRA, and Efraín Alegre, both with high “out-degrees”. These actors are also positioned together, which indicates that the debate is centred on them.

Comparing this to the graph of references (on the left) we can see a different form. First, the actors opposing the impeachment received few references, and therefore had a reduced size, which indicates their marginal role in relation to the debate of others. Only Fernando Lugo and Mario Medina [14] are inserted in the set of references of other actors, and this is due to the centrality acquired in this month by the possible alliance between the PLRA and the sectors opposed to the impeachment, and Mario Medina as an intermediary actor.

This imbalance or disproportionality between the referred-to actors and the actors making references can be observed in the point graph, where the actors supporting the impeachment find a proportionality (adjusted to the straight line), while the actors opposing the impeachment occupy an imbalanced position in relation to the straight line, in which Fernando Lugo is an actor that is mentioned a lot by others, but rarely mentions other actors.

Figure 1. Graphical representation of name references made in January. Left graph: nodes sorted by communities (colour), tag size and nodes by PageRank. Central graph: nodes sorted by position to coup (green in favour, red against, and blue unknown), and tag size and nodes by weighted out-degree. Right graph: point cloud with weighted in-degree (x) and out-degree (y) according to their position towards the coup.



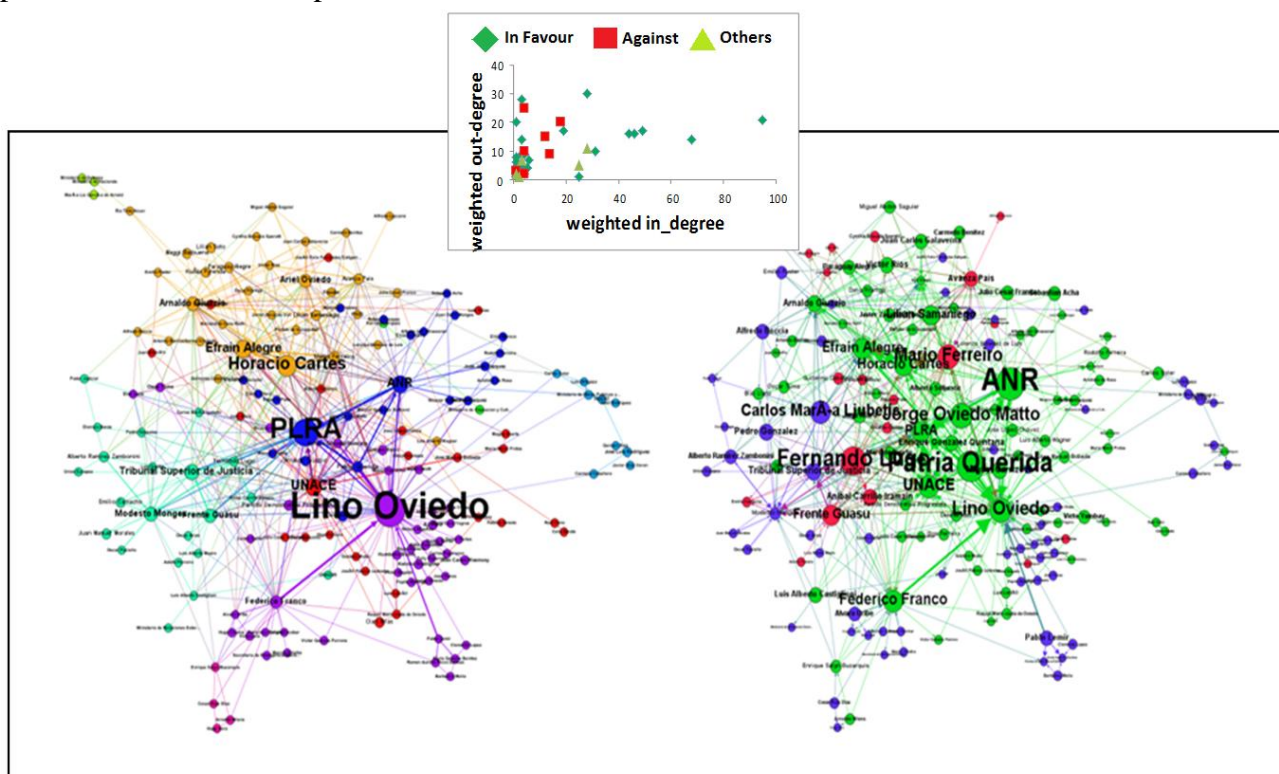
This can also be seen in the rest of the point graphs for February, March and April, where the actors opposing the impeachment (red) have a high out-degree (make references to many actors), but a low in-degree (receive few mentions from other actors). However, it was in January when a node (Fernando Lugo) reached a high in-degree (mentions) but did not reach the same values again in the other months, which reflects the progressive loss of importance in the strategy of the other actors.

In the graphical representation of the name references made during February we can see how the structure of the strategy network (centre) exhibits a substantial difference with respect to the media structure (left). As we can see in Figure 2, this is due to the centrality acquired by a node that in principle was not important in the political strategy (Lino Oviedo) but whose death in a car accident provoked the restructuration of the media perspective of actors such as Horacio Cartes and Lino Oviedo. As we can see in the cloud of points for February, this event caused, the disappearance of

nodes opposing the coup as referred-to actors, and their decreased importance in the media structure. From this month onwards, this situation was maintained.

In February the nodes opposed to the impeachment distanced themselves even more and became fewer, as a consequence of the different strategies of confrontation (the nodes that they refer to and the nodes that mention them). This can be noticed (in the central graph) with the nodes with the greater out-degree, Mario Ferreiro and Fernando Lugo, who are located in different communities: Mario Ferreiro is linked to the presidential candidates (orange) and Fernando Lugo is located in the community of international actors and government actors (community in blue).

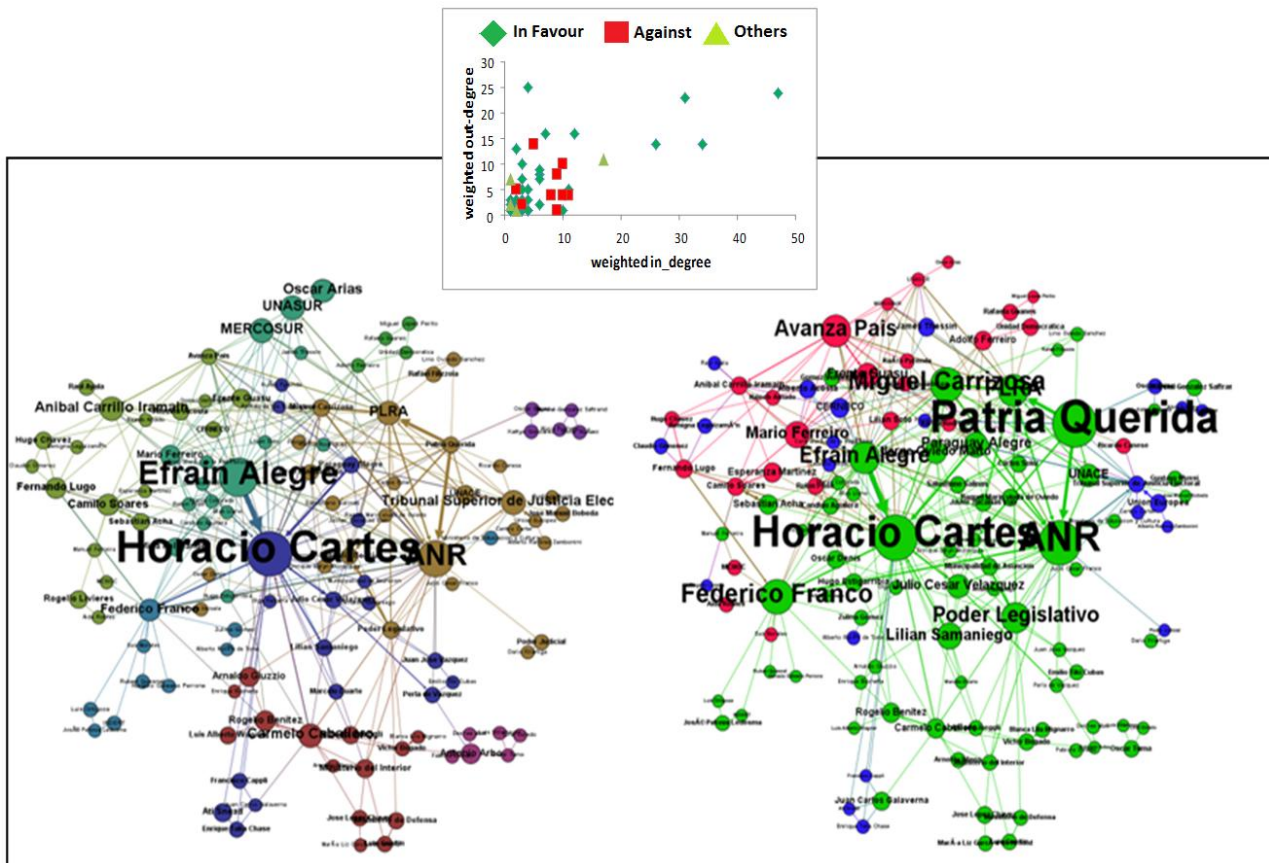
Figure 2. Graphical representation of name references made in February. Left graph: nodes sorted by communities (colour), tag size and nodes by PageRank. Central graph: nodes sorted by position towards the coup (green in favour, red against and blue unknown), tag size and nodes by weighted out-degree. Right graph: point cloud with weighted in-degree (x) and out-degree (y) according to position towards the coup



This change destabilises the position of certain actors but keeps others in dominant positions as it is the case of Horacio Cartes, who this time is, however, outclassed by the actors PLRA and Lino Oviedo.

This meant a change in the political strategy in the next month (March), when Horacio Cartes acquired a more active role against other actors, and was next to *Patria Querida* and ANR-PC one of the nodes with the most active participation in the press. This month, the nodes opposing the impeachment appeared together once again, but apart from the central nodes like ANR-PC, PLRA, Efraín Alegre and Horacio Cartes.

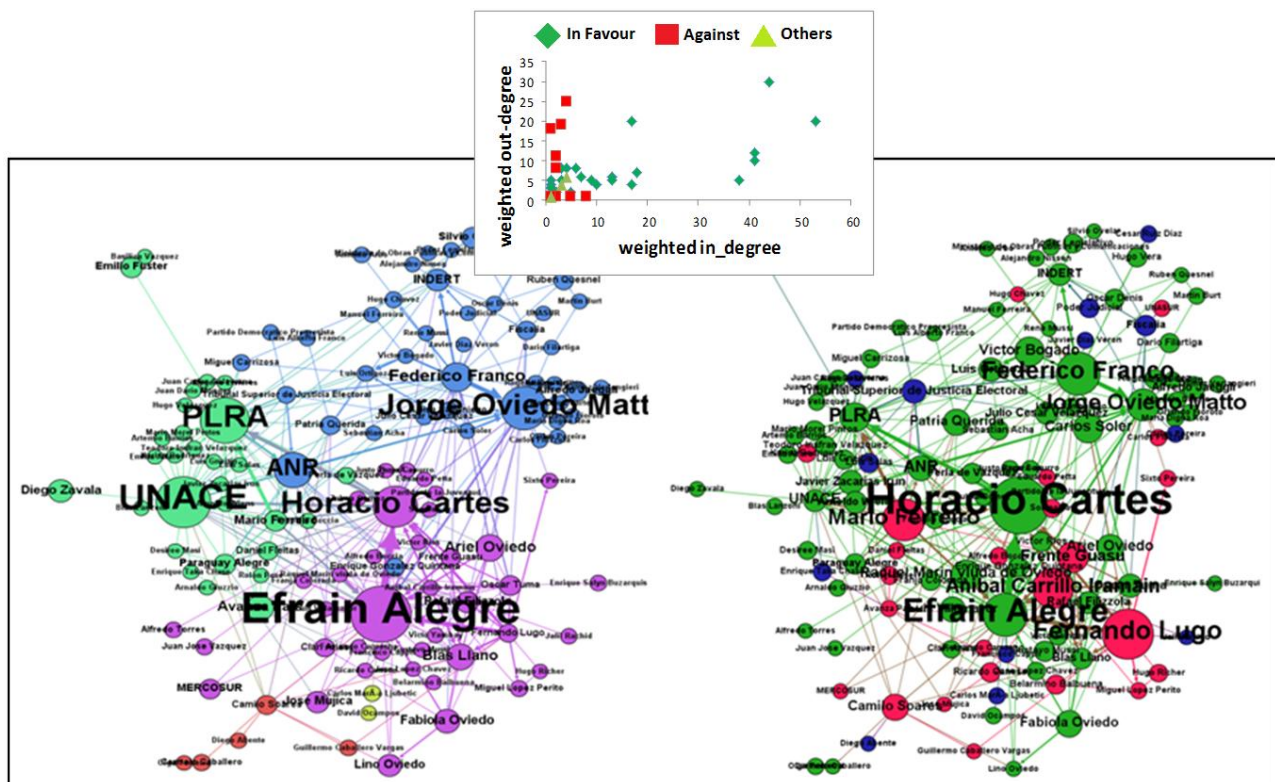
Figure 3. Graphical representation of name references in March. Left graph: nodes sorted by communities (colour), tag size and nodes by PageRank. Central graph: nodes sorted by position towards the coup (green in favour, red against and blue unknown), tag size and nodes by weighted out-degree. Right graph: point cloud with weighted in-degree (x) and out-degree (y) according to position towards the coup.



This shows how the debate was focused on this group, away from the group of central actors, which reflects a lack of references (Efraín Alegre, ANR-PC, PLRA, and Horacio Cartes) to other candidates who could place them in a central position. This month witnessed the emergence of another actor that opposed the impeachment and was positioned as an actor with a high out-degree, Avanza País, but with a peripheral role due to the fact that its references were not directed to the central nodes. Mario Ferreiro was the actor with the highest degree who managed to position himself in a central place.

As we can see in the graph of referred-to actors (left), this is based on the references since the number of references received from important nodes was not high. Mario Ferreiro appeared as a peripheral node within the community dominated by Efraín Alegre, and separated from the community dominated by the central node, Horacio Cartes. The nodes opposed to the impeachment appeared once again in the same community, which reflects a media conflict within the group and not outside of it.

Figure 4. Graphical representation of name references made in April. Left graph: nodes sorted by communities (colour), tag size and nodes by PageRank. Central graph: nodes sorted by position towards the coup (green in favour, red against and blue unknown), tag size and nodes by weighted out-degree. Right graph: point cloud with weighted in-degree (x) and out-degree (y) according to position towards the coup.



In April the nodes opposing the coup managed to position themselves in a central place based on a high level of references to other actors, which is reflected in higher out-degrees in comparison to pro-impeachment actors. However, at this time there was another actor in scene, Jorge Oviedo Matto, the President of the Congress and one of the leaders of UNACE, Lino Oviedo. His presence in this place is associated to the INDERT case, which turned the actors involved into central actors in the graph for April.

The then-President of Paraguay, Federico Franco [15], won a predominant place in the network, next to Horacio Cartes. His predominant position was prompted by the boom in April of the Indert scandal [16], in which the purchase of plots of land affected the government of Federico Franco, some sectors of the PLRA and the President of the Congress, Oviedo Matto (UNACE). Even though this scandal emerged in March, it was not until April when the INDERT and Oviedo Matto occupied a central place.

This scandal affected the actors from traditional parties and turned them into central nodes of the media debate and, thus, overshadowed the attempts of the sectors opposed the coup to position their discourse against the pro-impeachment actors. This was not reflected in the references made by other actors.

The structure of the network of references reflects how the media debate focuses on seven important actors, all of them belonging to the group supporting the impeachment: Federico Franco (the then

President Paraguay) and Jorge Oviedo Matto, who are dominant in a community of references (green). UNACE and the PLRA were dominant in another community of references (blue); while Efraín Alegre and Horacio Cartes were the dominant actors in another community of references (violet).

In conclusion, this analysis reflects that the group opposing the impeachment did not become dominant in any of the existing communicative groups, which put them in a subordinate position with respect to the rest of actors. In contrast, the traditional political actors dominated all the existing debate groups, including those involved in the presidential race, those involving the then President in a case of corruption, and others that emerged as important actors in this period.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The exploration of media and news networks is important to understand and visualise the evolution of the different strategies adopted by the actors. In addition, the study of these networks serves to confirm the permanence in the structure of these networks of certain actors because, as we have seen, although the position of certain actors changes over time, it tends to become stable. As a result, this type of studies allows us to identify a certain pattern or structure within the communicational field within a given period, which places the actors in a certain position, and with reduced possibilities for mobility. However, exceptional events (cases of corruption, deaths, etc.) can temporarily change the position of actors.

In the case under analysis, this structure reflected a pattern in the location of the different political actors, with a dominant position of the traditional parties and pro-impeachment actors. This occurred as a result of the following strategies:

- Unlike the pro-impeachment groups, the actors opposing the impeachment failed to unite the response to the former group in a single actor, and thus sprayed their alternative discourse.
- The traditional parties refrained from entering the debate on the impeachment, and ignored the actors involved in the debate in their discourses.
- The media projected a polarised scenario led by the traditional political actors of Paraguay.
- Traditional parties, which were devalued in recent years, position themselves as key actors of reference, through their presidential candidates.
- The emerging parties (Avanza País and Frente Guasú) failed to become central nodes. However, their candidates (Mario Ferreiro, Fernando Lugo and Aníbal Carrillo) acquired some degree of relevance, and, therefore, became the focus of negative opinions. This differentiated these actors from the traditional parties, which divided the communicative structure in two groups, one focused on the traditional parties, and another focused on the candidates, and thus avoided mixing, focusing and wearing down their candidates.
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The analysis of the matrices showed that the political discourse ended up focusing on the traditional parties and their actors, and that this situation was altered by exceptional events, such as the death of Lino Oviedo, the leader of UNACE, and the Indert scandal which involved Oviedo Matto. As a result of these strategies and media structures, the traditional parties became the central and relevant actors in all the political discourses.

This suggests that the gap opened by the election of Fernando Lugo in 2008 as a candidate independent from the traditional parties was not consolidated with an opening-up in the news media in terms of importance and relevance. The elections of 2013 and in particular the structure of news during that period, reflects the continuity of the traditional parties in their position of power in the

political and media fields. As a result, the emerging actors failed to acquire a level of importance capable of challenging that of the traditional parties.

The communicational structure also showed an ideological polarisation around the two big parties, which prevented the ideological polarisation around the impeachment. This prevented the parties opposed to the coup from occupying a central place and led them to have a discursive dependency on the traditional parties, which meant that in order to occupy a central place they had to talk about the issues involving the central actors.

Therefore, we can see a slight “rearrangement” of the media discourses around these two actors (the traditional parties ANR-PC and PLRA). Consequently, the third or emerging political forces occupied peripheral locations, in a place of dependency on the central actors. This means that the symbolic effectiveness [17] of an emerging political discourse in the news media goes from a process of allusion or relationship to the polarisation between traditional parties.

In summary, the position of the different political and social actors is subordinated to the position adopted by the central actors (traditional parties), in their role of “mediators” or “intermediaries”, towards the discourse of the third forces. Without references to (and from) these actors, the political discourse of the third or emerging forces will continue to have a peripheral place in the structure of the communicational field. “Referential dependence” seems to be fundamental to understand the positioning of actors in the media, their future possibilities as central, intermediaries or peripheral actors, and their possibility of emergence of new political forces.

- This article is a product of the research project carried out by the same authors with the help and collaboration of the Germinal Studies and Popular Education Centre (*Centro de Estudios y Educación Popular Germinal*) of Paraguay.
- We would like to thank Enrique Ferreira, Rodrigo Centurión and Oscar González for their help in the collection and tabulation of data.

5. Notes

[1] Fernando Lugo was impeached and removed from office with the support of 115 out of 128 Congressmen and Senators from different parties, including those parties supporting its own party, the PLRA. He was accused of “poor performance of functions”. Impeachment is presented as a control mechanism over the president of the Republic, which made the removal of Fernando Lugo appear “constitutionally valid” but also “politically questionable”, due to the vague evidence used by the congressmen and the short time granted to the former president to prepare its defence (2 hours). Lorena Soler (2012b) has argued that the possibility of appealing to a deeply-ideological abstract legal resource disguised as impartial is only possible when there are no actors with capacity of incidence to dispute these arguments. Likewise, Milda Rivarola has affirmed that the variety of categorisations to describe what happened on 22 June, 2012 are borderline nonsense: coup d’état, constitutional replacement, parliamentary coup (with or without white gloves), institutional breakdown, use of legal powers of the Congress, express trial, normal and legal mechanism, democratic breakdown or rupture, etc. The author proposes to analyse this event as the termination of the social contract (Rivarola, 2012). A full analysis can be found in Soler and Carbone (ed.) (2012).

[2] The APC was formed of parties with different historical and ideological affiliation: ranging from the traditional Authentic Radical Liberal Party (*Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico*) to left-wing parties such as *Tekojoja*, *País Solidario* and *Partido del Movimiento al Socialismo*.

[3] To some extent, this change is reflected in the growing autonomy of voters, which broke Paraguay's traditional and hereditary affiliation of voters and parties. In fact, in a recent survey about electoral volatility in Paraguay, Liliana Duarte Recalde (2012) demonstrated the special incidence of this phenomenon in elections for one-person positions. In fact, the alternation in the Executive Power in 2008 seems to be consistently reflected by the indexes of national electoral volatility for the presidential formula. However, Galeano (2012) highlights that “the strong electorate support that Fernando Lugo achieved in the presidential elections of 2008 in the rural areas of the Central Department, for example, came not only from young voters historically linked to the Liberal Party, but also from voters linked to the Colorado Party” (Galeano, 2012: 187).

[4] Based on analytical wisdom, none of these items would indicate the end of the traditional parties, but would indicate their relative decline among the electorate, which is a phenomenon that has also occurred in several European countries. This change in electoral trends has been interpreted as a mid-term phenomenon by Milda Rivarola; the triumph of Fernando Lugo in 2008 and the exit from Government of the ANR-PC may be attributed to falling trend of its presidential candidates since 1992. According to this author, “with the exception of the general elections of 1998 –in which the presidential figure resulted from an alliance of two fractions/parties: ANR-PC and UNACE– the proportion of the electorate who voted for the candidate of the ANR-PC decreased consistently during the transition” (Rivarola, 2009: 33).

[5] There is an expression of new forms of representation and political change that initiated in the 2008 electoral landscape. The triumph of Fernando Lugo was unexpected in the history of the country, but so were the electoral battle and the presidential candidates who obtained the greater number of votes: a former Bishop (Lugo, with 41%); a woman (Blanca Ovelar, 30%); a military man (Lino Oviedo, with 22%) and a businessman (Pedro Fadul, 3%). In part, this scenario constituted an antecedent for the presidential elections of 2003, in which a businessman reached a percentage of votes similar to that obtained by the historic PLRA (22%) and in which Nicanor Duarte Frutos used the legitimacy acquired from outside the structure of the ANR-PC to win the Presidency. As a reflection of the context, both presidential elections registered the lowest levels of electoral participation (65%). In addition, unlike the presidential governments of Rodríguez (1989-1993), Wasmosy (1993-1998), Cubas Grau (1998-1999), González Macchi (1999-2003), the administration of Duarte Frutos (2003-2007) was the first one to emerge from outside the circle of supporters of the former dictator Stroessner.

[6] Thus, voters' disaffiliation from parties and electoral absenteeism were combined with a significant decline of votes for the ANR and their displacement to two new formations: UNACE and *Patria Querida* (“Dear Homeland”) party. Both formations have as common denominator their self-introduction as “anti-establishment” political forces. Another fact that would allow us to affirm the direction of this change, even though many studies still insist on the traditional patterns of the electorate, is the high percentage of people registered in Paraguay's *Registro Cívico Permanente* (“Permanent Civic Registry”) by 2012 without affiliation to political parties.

[7] This is a clear allusion to the methodological differentiation of the ideological analysis of the discourse into ingroups and outgroups (Van Dijk, 1996). This discursive orientation of the social network analysis used in this study follows the reticular tradition of the Map Analysis (Carley, 1993) and its syntactic conception of discourses (Lozares, 2003).

[8] This is a clear allusion to the methodological differentiation of the ideological analysis of the discourse into ingroups and outgroups (Van Dijk, 1996). This discursive orientation of the social network analysis used in this study follows the reticular tradition of the Map Analysis (Carley, 1993) and its syntactic conception of discourses (Lozares, 2003).

[9] This is represented by the weighted out-degree, or the set of links that each actor has with others, which is based on the number of references made in the press to a set of actors (in terms of variety and quantity).

[10] This is represented by the Pagerank indicator, which measures the set of references, not only in terms of numbers, but also in terms of relative importance, weighting the number of references with the origin of actors referred to by a significant number of other actors. This weighting aims to establish the relevance of the references received from other central positions.

[11] This is represented with the indicator of modularity, which distinguishes the links that exist within a community from the rest of links that join them to the rest of the network. See Clauset, Newman and Moore (2004).

[12] Mario Ferreiro, a well-known TV presenter and radio host in the country, was an aspiring candidate of the political platform of the Guasu Front (Frente Guasú) from 8 March to 10 November, when, after delays in the Front's nomination of the official candidate, he formed an independent alliance of parties that supported him as its official candidate out of the of platform of the Guasu Front. The new alliance was called Avanza País (lit. "Country go Forward") and was formed by the "Socialist Movement Party" (*Partido del Movimiento al Socialismo*), the "Christian Democratic Party" (*Partido Democrático Cristiano*), the M25A party and other social movements.

[13] Presidential candidates of the ANR-PC and the PLRA, respectively.

[14] Bishop of the department of Missions and intermediary in the alliance plan between the PLRA and the sectors opposing the impeachment (Avanza País and Guasu Front).

[15] Here it is important to remember that Federico Franco, being part of the presidential team of Fernando Lugo, became the country's Presidency on 22 June, 2013, following Lugo's removal from office.

[16] In February 2013, the government bought two properties in the Paraguayan Department of Cordillera at 11 million dollars from a company called "San Agustín", which was linked to the president of the Congress, Oviedo Matto. After this operation the president of the Indert was removed from office, and the President of Congress was asked to resign, while the position of the then president, Federico Franco, in this operation was questioned. See Laíno (2013).

[17] See the notion of symbolic efficiency applied to the populist discourse (Ortí, 1988: 122), as a "symbolic message objectified in texts, actions or gestures, structured and oriented as a persuasive communication with more or less symbolic effectiveness of attraction or seduction, confirmation or conversion of the images, attitudes and motivations of the recipients".

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How to cite this article in bibliographies / References

R Juste de Ancos, L Soler, M Ortí Mata (2014): “Media, actors of references and power in Paraguay”. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 69, pp. 229 to 247.

http://www.revistalatinacs.org/069/paper/1010_Quito/13jen.html

DOI: [10.4185/RLCS-2014-1010en](https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2014-1010en)

Article received on 4 February 2014. Submitted to pre-review on 7 February. Sent to reviewers on 9 February. Accepted on 9 March 2014. Galley proofs made available to the authors on 16 March 2014. Approved by authors on: 18 March 2014. Published on 19 March 2014.