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The Inclusionary Populist Communication Style on Facebook: The Case of Ada Colau in Barcelona

Abstract

Communication is one of the core elements of populism, especially in social media. Through such digital platforms, political leaders can communicate directly with citizens and build both their discourse and their political leadership. Although the literature has so far identified the existence of a populist political communication style, the expansion of populism and its connection with social media are extending and diversifying the concept, as well as adding new repertoires. In order to analyse this, we propose a study of the communication strategy of the mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau who, with a background of citizen activism, became mayor of the city in 2015 thanks to a political organisation situated as left populist. The methodology is based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of Colau's Facebook profile. A total of 226 posts between 2015 and 2017 are analysed. The results make it possible to identify a new specific modality within the populist style of political communication, namely the inclusionary populist type. This focuses on issues related to defense of the rights of the weakest social groups and works within a framework of social justice and solidarity with others. Likewise, the study confirms how Facebook is configured as a preferred platform for the construction of political leadership.

Keywords

Populism, political communication, Facebook, social media, digital media, Spain.

1. Introduction

The changes undergone by political communication as a result of the introduction, extension, and consolidation of the Internet and social networks are still profound. Extended use of digital technologies has transformed political communication, giving rise to a mixed system in which old and new coexist and interrelate, thus generating a hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2017).

Politicians who are most able to incorporate and adapt to digital media have gained a significant advantage over the rest (Karlsen & Enjolras, 2016). This feature of social media, which Castells (2009) has called "mass self-communication," also allows the politician or party to circumvent the mainstream media. Politicians can thus be free of the usual

journalists' mediation regarding their messages. In the digital milieu, the media can no longer monopolise selection and hierarchisation of politicians' messages and neither can they frame them according to their own criteria. Hence, political leaders and parties have found that, without mediation by journalists, their opportunities for communicating directly with citizens have significantly increased. In this situation they can activate dynamics of self-mediation to construct their political messages and directly convey them to citizens.

Among those who are most assiduously using the self-mediation offered by self-communication are populist political actors. They are resorting to social media to construct their discourse, achieve visibility, and address voters directly (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2018). Digital media are also being intensively used by populist leaders and parties (Alonso-Muñoz, 2019). They are thereby bringing about changes, introducing novelties into political communication, and imposing their own styles of communication (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; de Vreese *et al.*, 2018), which are enjoying more and more influence outside populism.

The literature has traditionally focused on studying right-wing populist communication strategies (Krämer, 2017). However, recent times have brought a growing presence of left-wing populist parties, especially in Spain. The aim of this study is to analyse how the mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, has constructed her political profile and discourse on Facebook. As a result, the main communicative elements of left-wing populist discourse can then be identified, and the way in which political leadership is shaped as an influencer in the digital milieu can be demonstrated. This analysis will therefore make original contributions to study of the interaction between political communication, the appearance of influencers, and populism in the digital environment.

2. Populism: a slippery concept

The term *populism* presents diffuse contours and its definition is complex. Despite, or perhaps partly because of this, it has been a much-used term in recent years, in both academic and conversational language.

Regardless of the difficulty in grasping its meaning, the term *populism* usually has pejorative connotations and presents a negative dimension. It is probable that, together with other factors, this is related with the difficulty of positively evaluating the historical precedents that are used as a basis for classifying the phenomenon (Diamanti, 2010). This is so much the case that some authors see populism as a symptom of an alarming malaise afflicting the democratic system (Bobbio, 1987, pp. 23-42).

Quite a large number of parties and movements are considered to be predecessors of, or historical references for contemporary populism. Amongst those that tend to be cited are the movement led by Louis Napoleon in France, the Russian Narodniks, the People's Party in the United States, Italy's Fronte dell'Uomo Qualunque (Common Man's Front), the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico, and Peronism in Argentina.

Among many other parties that could be cited as examples of contemporary right-wing populism are Front National in France, founded by Jean-Marie Le Pen, Forza Italia and Il Popolo della Libertà, founded by Silvio Berlusconi, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), and Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). Notable among left populist parties are the Movimiento Quinta República (MVR), founded by Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Die Linke in Germany, and Podemos and BComú in Spain.

One of the features of populism is that it is manifested, is *incarnated*, in ideologically very different and even conflicting phenomena. In this regard, Taggart (2000) draws attention to its chameleonic nature and the fact of its being able to appear in different periods and contexts. The notion of populism has been discussed for decades and many different definitions have been proposed. Hence, Canovan (1999), for example, concludes that it is a

notoriously vague term, while Mény and Surel (2002) refer to its constitutive ambiguity, and Taggart (2000) calls it a slippery concept.

For present purposes we shall take Mudde's definition: "a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (2004, p. 543). Freedman's (1996) notion of "thin centered ideology," should be understood as a simple, schematic, limited ideology that always appears in combination with others (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

Populism has been analysed from different perspectives. For some, it is basically a political ideology (Mudde, 2004), while for others it is a political strategy (Weyland, 2001). Populism has also been described as a communicative style (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; de Vreese *et al.*, 2018). It is precisely this viewpoint that is most interesting for this study because of the fundamental importance acquired by communication in projects of the populist left, and the new context of opportunities opened up by the social media.

Both left and right populism are fundamentally based on the distinction between *the people* and *the elite*. When populists refer to the people, they are implicitly or explicitly including some groups while at the same time excluding others. This dialectic is based on an *us* and a *them*, which harks back to Carl Schmitt's friend-enemy scheme.

The existence of a charismatic leader who seeks direct communication with the electorate is a characteristic that tends to appear with populist movements and parties. The populist leader who cultivates this relationship with an audience tends to address and appeal to followers speaking in first person plural (*we*) (Stockemer & Barisione, 2017). Mudde (2004, p. 545), unlike other authors (Taggart, 2000; Weyland, 2001), believes that charismatic leadership "facilitates" populism rather than defining it.

Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2013) distinguish between two main typologies of contemporary populism: exclusionary and inclusionary. The former refers to the populism of the European radical right and the latter to Latin American left-wing populism. The groups that radical right-wing European populism seek to exclude are of a different type and have, in particular, a sociocultural ethnic-based dimension, which implies excluding people who are different. Latin American populism, by contrast, presents an inclusive, more socioeconomic dimension, based on including underprivileged people.

3. The populist style of communication

Jagers and Walgrave (2007) link populism with a certain style of communication, and there is considerable agreement with regard to identifying a populist style in the domain of political communication (de Vreese *et al.*, 2018; Zulianello, Albertini & Ceccobelli, 2018; Block & Negrine, 2017; Casero-Ripollés, Sintes & Franch, 2017; Bracciale & Martella, 2017; Aalberg *et al.*, 2016; Rooduijn, 2014). This has four components that fit with Mudde's (2004) definition as well as with the typology of anti-political rhetoric described by Sorice (2013).

The first is the communicative construction of *the people* which, at the same time, means a call to bring their interests to the fore when making decisions, as well as placing them at the centre of the political agenda. The second is anti-elitism, expressed in attacks on the political and economic elite, in particular, and the establishment in general. The third component is exclusion of other groups, which is evident in rejection of migrants and minorities. The fourth is crisis narrative, focused on criticism of the financial system, capitalism, and austerity policies (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014; Rooduijn, 2014).

Also characteristic of populism is the resort to anti-political rhetoric (Sorice, 2013), which is defined as being emotional and as having a considerable capacity for whipping up passions rather than appealing to reason. These features then become ideal ingredients for the domains of the media and communication.

According to Sorice (2013, p. 23-36), there are four kinds of anti-political rhetoric. The first would be anti-system and aimed against the institutions and state organisation. The second is anti-state rhetoric against the central state, intrusive government, the tax-collecting state, and judges. The third, anti-parliament rhetoric, attacks professional politicians, parties in the system, and journalists. Finally, the target of anti-intellectual rhetoric is academics, teachers, technology lovers, and civil servants.

One of the resources of populist communication is opting for provocation and controversy, which can reach the point of self-scandalisation (Haller, 2015). Populism involves a theatrical kind of staging in which emotions, intimidation, breaking taboos, vulgarism, and negative affects prevail (Bracciale & Martella, 2017). Similarly, it tends to resort to ambivalence, giving out contradictory, ambiguous messages, or fearmongering (Wodak, 2015).

4. Social media and populism

The third age of political communication is marked by six tendencies: media abundance, intensified professionalisation of political communication, increased competitive pressures, a centrifugal process of diversification, changes in the ways people perceive politics, popularisation of anti-elitist stances, and populism (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999, p. 219). Expansion of the social media must also be added to this list since digital platforms offer numerous communicative opportunities for populism (Casero-Ripollés, Feenstra & Tormey, 2016; Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018; Ernst *et al.*, 2019).

As Ernst *et al.* (2017) point out, populist politicians need direct access to citizens' complaints, and this is provided by digital media. Second, social media offer populist politicians a fundamental element, which is to say the chance of having closer relations with these citizens (Kriesi, 2014, p. 363). Third, social media, and Facebook in particular, facilitate personalisation of messages by populist politicians. They can load them with emotivity, a common feature of their communicative style, as well as including personal perceptions and feelings in their messages or details of their everyday lives, and other information related, for example, with their families (Jacobs & Spierings, 2016).

Moreover, social media allow contact with specific groups, thus providing populists with the opportunity to use the harsh and often offensive language of many of their representatives (Engesser *et al.*, 2017). Appeals to negative emotions like fear are part of the usual repertoire of populist discourse (Bracciale & Martella, 2017; Wodak, 2015; Moffitt & Tormey, 2014). Social media make it possible to activate these communicative strategies for little economic cost, which tends to equalise the possibilities and opportunities of the established parties, and also those of new populist-style parties.

Despite their importance and increasing centrality in the political scene, the forms of communication used by populist groups in social media have not yet been fully explored in the literature.

5. The appearance of Barcelona en Comú (BComú)

The onset of the economic crisis in 2008 had a great impact on the Spanish economy with an enormous rise in unemployment, generalised austerity policies, and serious deterioration of living conditions for citizens. This was the background that gave rise to the coalition Barcelona en Comú (BComú). Both the economic crisis and the 15M rebellion played key roles in its appearance. The latter was a social movement which arose in 2011 when demonstrations and protests were held in several cities, Barcelona among them. 15M or the *Indignados* Movement called for greater citizen participation in decision-making processes, renewal of the Spanish political system, redefinition of political representation, and more limited power of banks and powerful financial institutions (Calvo, Gómez-Pastrana & Mena, 2011; Castells, 2015).

Online communication and mobilisation played key roles on this movement (Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2014), which was influenced *inter alia* by anti-globalisation organisations, the so-called Arab Spring movements, and mass protests in Iceland. In turn, 15M inspired other protests like #Occupy in the United States and United Kingdom, as well as leading to the appearance of new political parties. Especially notable among these are Podemos, led by Pablo Iglesias, and BComú, which is headed by Ada Colau (Feenstra *et al.*, 2017).

BComú ran in the local elections backed by a coalition agreement presented on 10 February and consisting of the following groups: Guanyem Barcelona [Ganemos Barcelona] (the platform led by Ada Colau), Podemos (the new Spanish party arising from 15M or the *Indignados* Movement); Iniciativa por Catalunya-Verdes and Izquierda Unida y Alternativa (successors of the old communist parties of Catalonia and Spain); Procés Constituent (left pro-independence party), and Equo (left-wing ecologist party). The coalition was also supported by several left-wing social movements and citizens, as well as eminent figures from university and cultural circles.

BComú's candidate to stand for mayor of Barcelona was Ada Colau. She was already prominent as leader and spokesperson of the anti-eviction movement Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH – Platform for People Affected by Mortgages), a very active group combatting evictions and campaigning for the right to housing with considerable repercussion in the mainstream media (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2016).

After the restoration of democracy in Spain, Barcelona had been governed from 1979 to 2011 by the Catalan branch of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE – Spanish Socialist Workers Party) and Partido de los Socialistas de Catalunya (PSC – Socialist Party of Catalonia), with the support of other left-wing parties. In 2011, the centre-right nationalist coalition *Convergència i Unió* (CiU – Convergence and Union) won the mayor's office for the first time.

In the elections of 24 May 2015, CiU started out as favourite but Ada Colau and BComú won by a very small margin –just over 17,000 votes– after an intense electoral campaign. With almost 177,000 votes, Colau achieved eleven of the forty-one local government representatives, by comparison with the ten gained by CiU. With these results she became mayor of Barcelona, thanks to support from other left-wing parties.

In terms of people who make most use of social media, the citizens who voted for Colau appear as being second only to those who voted for the anti-system party *Candidatura de Unidad Popular* (CUP – Popular Unity Candidacy) (García-Carretero & Pérez-Altable, 2017; García-Carretero & Díaz-Noci, 2018; CIS, 2015). This group of voters also sent the largest number of mobile messages, SMSs, posts, and tweets about the elections. This evidence underscores the importance of digital communication for the social bases of the populist left.

6. Aims and methodology

The aims of the study are as follows:

1. To analyse the discourse in Facebook posts by the Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, giving special attention to the use of elements linked with the populist style of communication.
2. Analyse how the Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, has used Facebook to construct her profile as an alternative political leader and a digital influencer.

This will make it possible to identify the main elements of communication in left-wing populist discourse and to show how political leadership and influence are constructed in the digital realm.

The methodology is based on quantitative content analysis, considering categories like frequency of Facebook posts by year and month in the period studied. Frequency of use of different languages in the Facebook posts is also studied. Hence, posts in Spanish and Catalan have been taken into account, together with those published in both languages (Spanish and Catalan), others published in English, and posts in all three languages (Spanish, Catalan and

English). Finally, the posts have been classified according to whether photographs, videos, documents, or links to websites have been incorporated and, in the latter case, identifying the source.

Furthermore, Colau's tone has been studied in her Facebook posts (positive, negative, or neutral) and a process of content classification based on grounded theory (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) has been carried out. As a result, several categories of analysis based on observation of the data have been created (see Table 1). As for content, the characteristics pertaining to anti-political rhetoric established by Sorice (2013) have been taken as defining elements of the populist communicative style. The following categories have been created as a constitutive part of this anti-political rhetoric: *anti-system rhetoric* with two distinct subcategories to refer to mentions of capitalism and big corporations; *anti-state rhetoric*, with the sub-categories of central state, intrusive government, tax-collecting state, and judges; *anti-parliament rhetoric* with specific sub-categories for considering allusions to politicians and parties; and *anti-intellectual rhetoric* in which the sub-categories of intellectuals, technology lovers, civil servants, and journalists have been established.

Furthermore, in keeping with the communicative populist style defined by Jagers and Walgrave (2007), basic elements in constructing the crisis narrative have been identified, especially allusions to the financial system, capitalism and austerity policies. In keeping with the framework of Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2013), a distinction between inclusionary and exclusionary populism has been established. Within the category of inclusionary populism, the following sub-categories have been identified: evicted people, immigrants, refugees, poverty, energy poverty, child malnutrition/child poverty, women, while a further sub-category has been included, this time identifying the publications in which Colau criticises people who, in her view exclude others.

With regard to the form of populist communicative style, the following headings are used: messianic leadership (in keeping with Stockemer & Barisione, 2016); the communicative construction of "the people" (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007); provocation and controversy, self-scandalisation, and emotionalising, to use Haller's concepts (2005); ambivalence, contradiction, and ambiguity (Wodak, 2015); and fearmongering (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014; Wodak, 2015).

Finally, after analysing the content of Colau's posts, a list of thirty words has been produced in order to determine their frequency of appearance in the period analysed (see Table 2).

The sample consists of all the posts published on Facebook by Ada Colau between 13 June 2015 and 13 June 2017. This period covers the beginning of her mandate as mayor, or her first two years governing the city. In total, 226 Facebook posts have been studied by means of a process of manual codification. In order to guarantee the accuracy of the process, 23.45% of the posts have been analysed by two coders. Intercoder reliability, according to Scott's Pi was 0.90.

Table 1: Categories in the model of analysis of Facebook posts by the Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau.

TYPOLGY OF POST							
Photograph		Video		Document		Link to website	Source
TO NE							
Positive		Negative		Neutral		Not classified	
CONTENT							
ANTI-POLITICAL RHETORIC (SORICE, 2013)							
Anti-System							
Capitalism				Big corporations			
Anti-State							
Central state		Intrusive government		Tax-collecting state		Judges	
Anti-Parliament							
Politicians				Parties			
Anti-Intellectual							
Journalists		Intellectuals			Teachers		
POPULIST COMMUNICATIVE STYLE (JAGERS AND WALGRAVE, 2007)							
Crisis narrative							
Financial system		Capitalism			Austerity policies		
OTHER ARGUMENTS/ACTORS							
Tourism		Big landowners			Laicism		
INCLUSIONARY POPULISM (MUDDE AND ROVIRA KALTWASSER, 2013)							
Evictions	Immigrants	Refugees	Poverty	Energy poverty	Child malnutrition, child poverty	Women	Criticism of excluders
EXCLUSIONARY POPULISM (MUDDE AND ROVIRA KALTWASSER, 2013)							
FORM							
Messianic leadership (Stockemer and Barisione, 2016)	Communicative construction of "the people" (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007)	Provocation and controversy (Haller, 2015)	Self-scandalisation (Haller, 2015)	Emotionalising (Haller, 2015)	Ambivalence, contradiction, ambiguity (Wodak, 2015)	Resort to fear (Moffitt and Tormey, 2014; Wodak, 2015)	

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2: Key words analysed in Facebook posts by the Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau.

Key words
Austerity
Change (noun), change (verb)
Citizenship, citizens, men and women citizens
Corruption, corrupt
Democracy, democratise, democratic
Inequality, inequalities
Equality
Crisis
Refugee(s), people seeking refuge, without refuge, refuge cities
Freedom, freedoms
Participation, participate
Precariousness, precarious
Privileges
Revolving doors
Sovereignty, sovereign
Black Cards (corruption scandal)
Transparency, transparent
Eviction(s)
Cuts, cutting (social spending)
Emergency, housing emergency
PAH
“Sí se puede” (Yes, We Can)
Housing, empty houses, empty flat(s)
Public rental
Real-estate bubble/speculation, speculative surge, speculation
Apartment/tourist accommodation, illegal apartments, tourist flats
Tourism, tourist model
Abuses, abuse of power

Source: Own elaboration.

7. Results

7.1. Frequency of publication, use of languages and links

The total number of Ada Colau’s Facebook posts during the period analysed was 226, 33.19% (n=75) of which were published in 2015, 46.46% (n=105) in 2016, and 20.35% (n=46) in 2017. As for frequency of publication, there has been a downwards trend since the average number of messages per month in 2015 was 10.71, while in 2016 and 2017 it was 8.83 and 7.66 respectively.

As for language, Colau uses Spanish in 83.19% (n=188) of her Facebook posts. Although Catalan is the co-official language in Catalonia, it is only used in 7.96% of her messages (n=18), while 3.54% (n=8) of the posts appeared in both languages, 2.21% (n=5) in English, and 0.44% (n=1) in all three languages (Spanish, Catalan, and English). The remaining six posts (2.65%) have profile or other images but no text. The predominant use of Spanish and emerging use of English reveals a desire for expansion in both the radius of circulation of her messages and with her potential audience. Although her sphere of political action is local, Colau thereby reveals her interest in achieving a political presence in both the national and international spheres.

Of the links used, 8.85% (n=20) are for photos or videos, 0.44%, a political document (n=1), and 7.08% (n=16) are for websites of the Spanish media. Notable among the media links are the newspapers *El País* and *El Periódico de Catalunya*, representatives of the elite press and tabloids respectively, with 2.65% (n=6) and 1.77% (n=4) of the links respectively.

7.2. Tone of the posts and inclusionary discourse

The results suggest that most Facebook messages posted by Colau, 58.85% (n=133), are positive in tone and 34.96% (n=79) are negative. Only 3.54% (n=8) of the posts are neutral and another 2.65% (n=6) have not been classified as they are simply concerned with a change in image of the user profile. These results reveal that Colau habitually takes sides on Facebook showing her position on different matters. In addition, she frequently does so in a positive tone, which seeks to obtain a favourable impact among the recipients of her messages.

Moreover, the results show considerable overlap between Colau's messages on Facebook and the elements characterising inclusionary populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). The posts that can be grouped under this heading amount to a total of 58.40% (n=132). By contrast, no Facebook post by Colau that could be classified as exclusionary populism has been found.

Notable among the groups with which, on Facebook, Colau shows her solidarity and emphasises inclusion are people who have been evicted from their homes (Graph 1). She mentions them in 17.26% (n=39) of her messages. Next come women (12.39%; n=28), refugees (11.06%; n=25), and people affected by poverty (9.73%; n=22). An example in which she is concerned with refugees is given in the following post of 6 April 2016:

Cities are organised to weave alliances and offer themselves as places of refuge in the face of shameful inaction of European states whose policies are complicit in thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean. Cities can and want to offer refuge. The United Nations has praised our offer. What more can we do to get them to listen to us?

Here, Colau is stressing her concept of cities as havens for refugees, even using the United Nations as a reference of authority and discursive mechanism for legitimating and supporting her position.

At the same time, she criticises the inertia of states, which she describes as “shameful,” while also accusing them of being complicit in the deaths of refugees. She thus uses the populist rhetoric that distinguishes between the people and the elites, them and us, arraying herself in positive values (welcome and solidarity) and situating states in a negative sphere by attributing guilt.

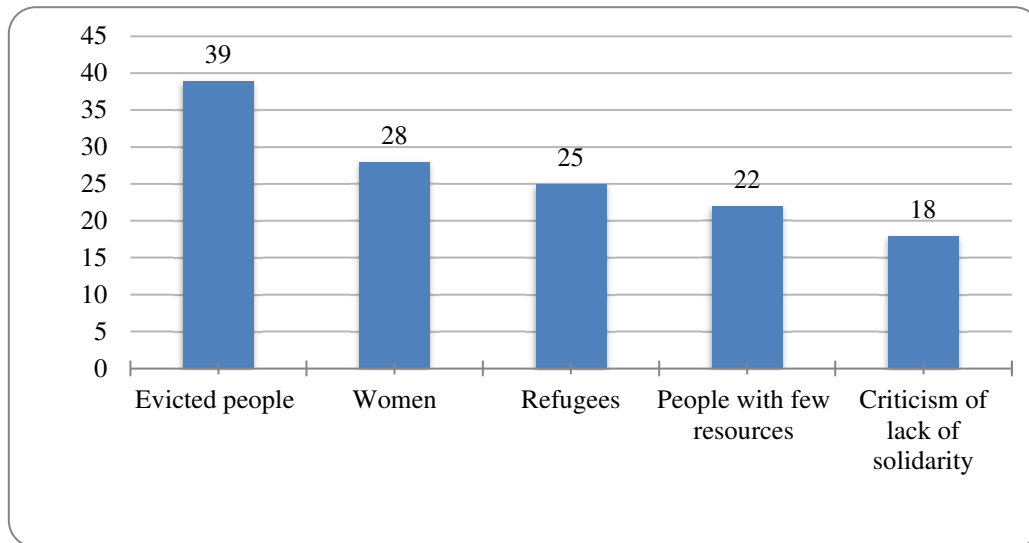
Nevertheless, Colau goes a little further in her Facebook statements since she does not spare from censure those she seems to be lacking in solidarity or having exclusionary attitudes, to whom she devotes 7.96% (n=18) of her messages.

One example is the following post where Colau inveighs against the Ciudadanos (C's) party and its leader, Albert Rivera, over their position regarding home evictions:

Cs is still not listening to the citizens. With everything that has happened, it still has not heeded the demands of the PAH (where, yes, they are experts and, yes, they do know about evictions), which are very clear demands for a halt to evictions reallocating social housing in cases of retroactive dation in payment. C's does not include these measures in its programme and neither does it support them. It supports the banks and the large IBEX companies and has the nerve to say at its meetings, ‘Yes, we can’. Mister Rivera, if you want to shout Yes, We Can, then stand in front of the houses and do it. Stick your neck out, like half the country has done, facing the police and facing the banks (13 December 2015).

Once again, Colau uses the people-elite dichotomy to criticize her political rivals. She presents herself as part of the people and places Ciudadanos and its leader, Albert Rivera, as upholders of the establishment, and as championing banks in particular.

Graph 1: *Inclusionary populism.* Groups with which solidarity or need for inclusion is shown, and criticisms of lack of solidarity.



Source: Own elaboration.

Construction of leadership and the communicative construction of “the people” are two essential features of populism. Colau’s Facebook posts conform to both, although those that seek to construct her leadership predominate, with 61.06% (n=138) of the total. One example would be a post of 19 January 2016, where she shows her commitment to oppose abusive clauses in mortgage contracts, and also to emphasise the leadership she is showing in the administration:

I have spent many years reading mortgage contracts full of abusive clauses. Now, fortunately, we are in a position where we can influence agreements with financial institutions, introducing clauses that benefit people instead of working against them. If they wish to work with the City Council, they must not forget that no private interest can come before human rights and the common good. We are proud to ensure that the priorities of such an important institution as the Barcelona City Council will help to encourage good practice in the financial sector, as in any other sector. We are gradually showing that, if you want to do it, you can. We won’t be able to do everything in a few months, but we are achieving things and we shall announce more results in the coming months. We shall always keep forging ahead, despite the difficulties, and we will not forget who we are or why we are here.

However, the effort given to the communicative construction of the people is less since only 15.49% (n=35) of her posts have this focus. One example of Colau’s strategy is a post of 8 December 2015:

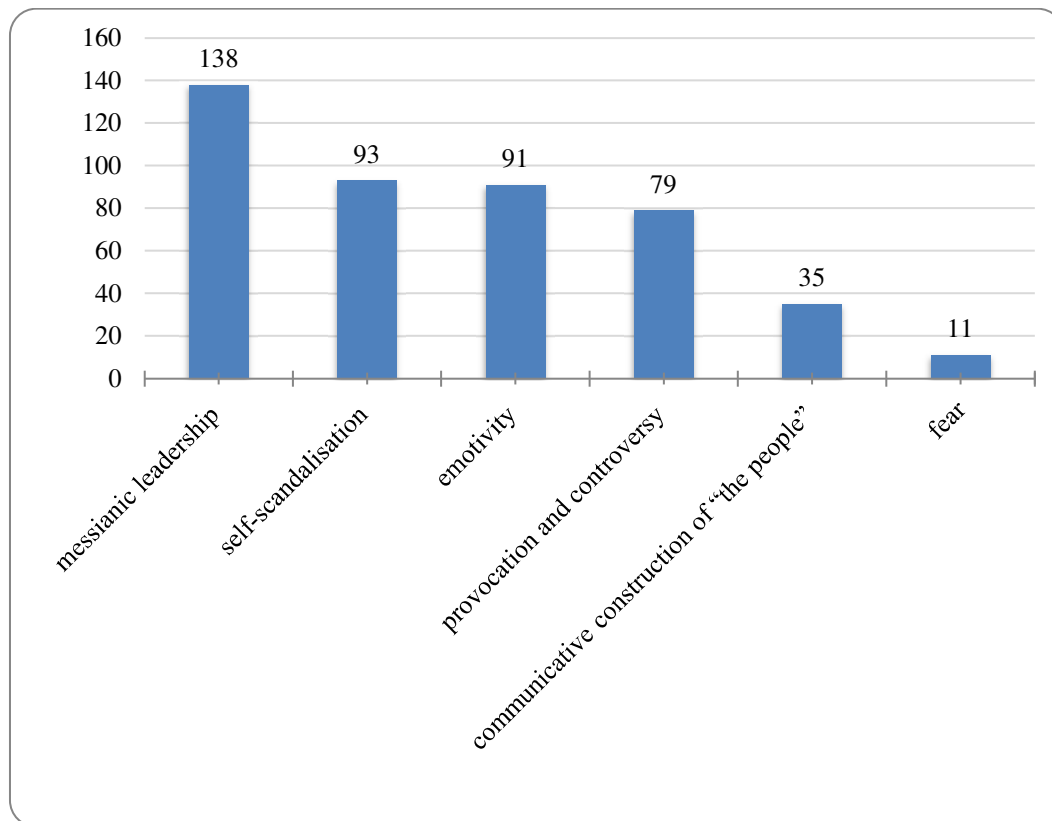
[...] We are recovering the institutions to place them at the service of the common good, giving a major role to citizens in ending corruption, privileges, and abuse of power. This is a source of enormous pride. Thank you, Pablo. I have also woken up smiling :-)

#IglesiasPresidente20D #Remontada.

Colau draws attention to the prominence and key role played by citizens in political life while, at the same time, constructing an epic account of her leadership by linking it with eradicating corruption and abuse of power, and recovering political institutions to place them at the service of “the people.”

In her rhetoric, she uses several resources related with emotions (Graph 2), among them self-scandalisation (41.15%; n=93), emotivity (40.27%; n=91), and provocation and controversy (34.96%; n=79), all of which appear with high percentages in her Facebook posts. Fear has a small presence (4.87%; n=11) and she does not use ambivalence or resort to contradictions and ambiguities.

Graph 2: Populist rhetoric in posts by Ada Colau.



Source: Own elaboration.

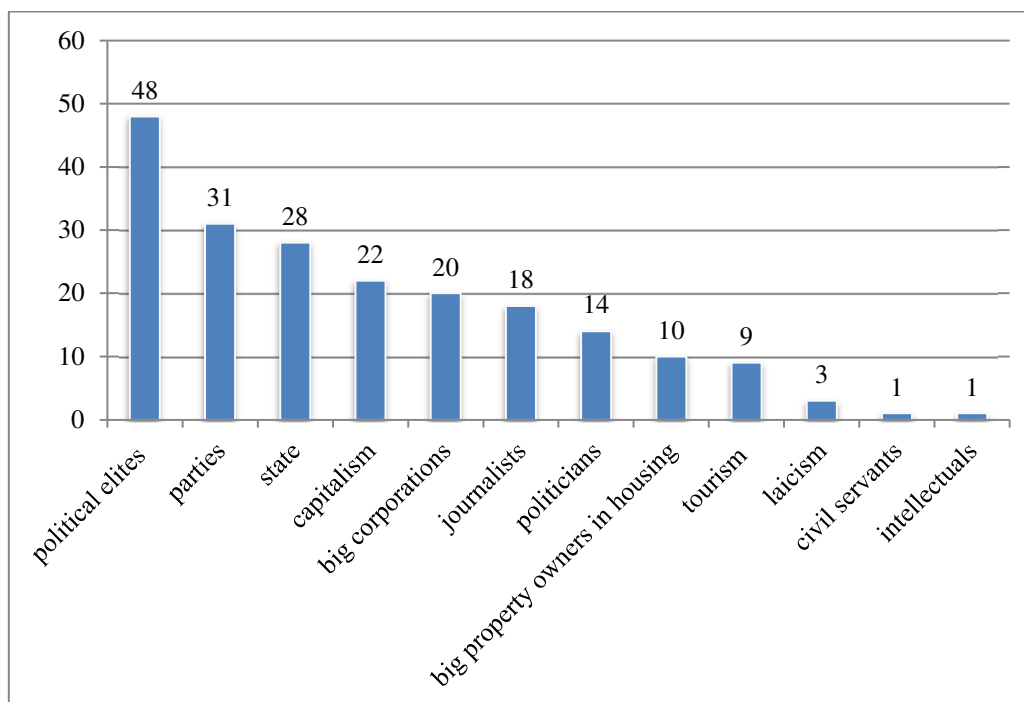
7.3. Anti-political rhetoric

Notable in the anti-political rhetoric (Sorice, 2013) employed by Colau (Graph 3) are her criticism of capitalism (14.60%; n=33) and the big corporations (8.85%; n=20), and also of politicians (6.19%; n=14), political elites (21.24%; n=48), parties (13.72%; n=31), and the state (12.39%; n=28). Journalists are mentioned in a total of 7.96% (n=18) of the posts. There is only one post each for intellectuals and civil servants. All in all, this means that the predominant typologies are anti-system and anti-parliament rhetoric.

Colau's Facebook references to the crisis (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007) are infrequent. When she uses this formula, she cites the financial system in 7.96% (n=18) of her posts, capitalism in 9.73% (n=22), while her references to austerity policies account for 7.08% (n=16) of the total.

Colau goes still further in her posts, writing about other actors and problems that are not detected in earlier literature about populist communication, namely problems caused by tourism, which appear in 3.98% (n=9) of her posts, and laicism, in 1.33% (n=3). Moreover, 4.42% (n=10) of her posts condemn big property owners in the housing sector and she blames them for citizens' difficulties in gaining access to housing.

Graph 3: Criticisms aimed at different actors.



Source: Own elaboration.

With the aim of offering a more precise definition of the characteristics of Colau’s political communication through Facebook, a complementary set of key words associated with the communicative style of populism is also offered (Table 2). These key words were taken from Colau’s Facebook posts, after which their frequency was quantified.

In this regard, seven words and their corresponding derivates –also verbal– are liberally employed by Colau: change (34.96%; n=79), democracy (23.45%; n=53), citizenry (16.81%; n=38), eviction (16.37%; n=37), refugees (13.27%; n=30), corruption (11.50%; n=26), and PAH –Platform for People Affected by Mortgages Hipoteca– (9.73%; n=22). It should be noted that this final term is intimately related with the third key word (eviction), which once again shows that Colau situates the problem of housing as one of her major concerns as mayor of Barcelona.

8. Conclusions

The findings of this study present new ideas for research into the relationship between communication and populism. In particular, it has allowed identification, within the domain of the populist style of political communication, of a new specific modality focused on inclusion as a key theme. In other words, this is inclusionary populist communication. Facebook posts by the Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, belong to this type of communicative strategy which aims to focus political debate on the weaker social groups and defence of their rights.

In her Facebook posts, Colau uses several classical elements of the populist style of communication (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; García-Carretero & Díaz-Noci, 2018). Hence, her messages appeal to the communicative construction of “*the people*” as a key element of her political discourse. Indeed, she includes herself as one of “*the people*.” At the same time, she fiercely criticises *the establishment*, especially its political and economic sectors. Her use of elements of anti-political rhetoric (Sorice, 2013) is conspicuous, especially anti-system rhetoric, against the big corporations and banks, as is her anti-parliamentary rhetoric, against parties and traditional political actors. Attacks on political and economic elites therefore characterise her Facebook posts. In fact, in keeping with the behaviour of left-wing populist

parties, she devotes considerable attention to economic populism (Bernhard & Kriesi, 2019). Criticism of capitalism, the financial system, banks as generators of inequalities and social injustice is one of the core elements of her discourse in this digital platform. She also employs narrative of the crisis, although to a lesser extent.

The novel, distinctive element of Colau's communicative strategy on Facebook is her approach to relationship with others. In line with what the literature identifies (Casero-Ripollés *et al.*, 2017), the Mayor of Barcelona, like other left-wing populists, for example representatives of Podemos, does not resort to excluding "*the others*" and is therefore different from exponents of far-right populism and their emphasis on xenophobic discourse and anti-immigration rhetoric (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; Krämer, 2017). By contrast, Colau opts for inclusionary populist communication in her Facebook posts. This strategy is observed in her considerable use of an inclusive narrative (in 58.40% of her posts).

Her concern with inclusive issues—basically right to housing, immigration, poverty, and women's rights—is very prominent in her publications and, with the thrust of these issues, her posts focus attention on defence of minorities, the weakest social groups like evicted people who have become homeless, women victims of gender violence, and refugees. All this fits into the framework of solidarity with others. Colau's communicative style goes beyond the populist practice of defence of ordinary people to take the struggle into the terrain of defending the most vulnerable and fragile members of society. Her strategy is to speak out in defence of minorities and the most defenceless groups in order to promote social justice.

In addition, the inclusionary populism employed by Colau is manifested in the languages she uses for her Facebook posts. She mainly uses Spanish, despite the importance in Barcelona of Catalan—the language of Catalonia—and English. She is thereby trying to ensure that her digital discourse will appeal to a political community that is wider than the city she governs, and that her communicative strategy will have some influence in the state and even international domains rather than being restricted to the local terrain. In this case, she relates with the universalism characterising inclusionary populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), which aims to expand to the maximum the mass base of politics.

Inclusionary populist communication also appears in the use Colau makes of Facebook to construct her profile as a political leader. First, she clearly opts for a strategy of advocacy, supporting the weaker social groups and causes in order to include and situate them at the centre of public debate. Her position is therefore far from being one of neutrality, which is limited to 3.54% of her posts. This use of advocacy is combined with a predominantly positive tone (58.85% of the total), leaving little space for emotions like fear. Hence, Colau is trying to connect more effectively with "*the people*," to include the more disadvantaged members of society in a relevant political space, and to constitute herself as a leader who is able to make positive proposals.

Colau also incorporates Facebook as an everyday tool of her communicative strategy. It is especially significant that the greatest intensity of posts is to be found at the beginning of her mandate as mayor, precisely when she is constructing her leadership by means of the self-communication facilitated by this online platform. With these frequent posts, combined with her use of Facebook as a mechanism of positive advocacy in favour of inclusion, Colau employs it as a way of generating influence beyond the city when aspiring to shape herself as a political influencer. Likewise, this objective becomes patent in the accessible, familiar language she uses when addressing the public.

Colau's communicative strategy via Facebook is interesting because she manages to expand the repertoire of the populist style of political communication. This case highlights the existence within it of several variants and typologies, which would support the argument that, in terms of communication, populism is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. One of these facets is inclusionary populist communication, which focuses the discursive strategy on inclusion, social justice, and solidarity with the weaker members of society. Populism, using

the social media, thus tries to connect with “*the people*,” starting from an inclusionary logic that situates the most fragile, disadvantaged groups at the centre of political debate, thereby producing a strategy that innovatively hybridises politics and communication in such a way as to expand the populist communicative style into new frameworks linked with the domain of social inclusion.

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