

# Weblogs and electoral processes: the Spanish political blogosphere with regard to the 2008 general elections

## GUILLERMO LÓPEZ GARCÍA

Full-time lecturer in Journalism at the Faculty of Philology, Translation and Communication of the Universitat de València

Guillermo.lopez@uv.es

### Abstract

Weblogs have emerged in public debate as an important element to be considered in election processes. This article presents the work in progress of quantitative and qualitative research of the role played by weblogs in the 2008 general elections in Spain. The analysis compares weblogs written by citizens associated with ideological networks with weblogs published by journalists or professionals within the traditional media. The results of the study show how citizen weblogs are more flexible in their coverage of topics and their frequency of publication is more frequent than those published in newspapers. On the other hand, even though weblogs expand public debate, their dependence on traditional media and their tendency towards certain ideological radicalism raises doubts as to the capacity of this medium to become an alternative to traditional political communication.

### Key words

Political communication, Spanish blogosphere, political blogs, Spanish General Elections 2008.

## TÍSCAR LARA

Assistant lecturer in Journalism at the Faculty of Humanities, Communication and Documentation of the Universidad Carlos III

tiscarlara@gmail.com

### Resum

Els weblocs s'han instal·lat en l'esfera del debat polític com un element més que s'ha de tenir en compte en els processos electorals. En aquest article es presenta l'avanç d'una recerca quantitativa i qualitativa del paper d'aquest format de publicació a les eleccions generals del 2008 a Espanya. L'anàlisi se centra en la comparació entre els weblocs escrits per ciutadans agrupats a l'entorn de xarxes ideològiques i els weblocs publicats per periodistes o professionals adscrits a mitjans de comunicació tradicionals. En els resultats de l'estudi s'observa que els weblocs ciutadans resulten més flexibles en la cobertura temàtica i mantenen un ritme de publicació més àgil que els weblocs liderats des dels diaris. D'altra banda, si bé contribueixen a l'extensió del debat públic, la dependència dels weblocs respecte als mitjans convencionals i la seva tendència a un cert radicalisme ideològic qüestionen la capacitat d'aquest mitjà per erigir-se com una alternativa a la comunicació política tradicional.

### Paraules clau

Comunicació política, blocosfera espanyola, weblocs polítics, eleccions generals 2008.

## 1. Introduction

The incidence of blogs as the main representatives of the different publication tools associated with Web 2.0 in the area of communication has been an undeniable fact for some years now. At present, with more than 133 million blogs available on the Internet,<sup>1</sup> they have crossed the frontiers of more technology-focused users to become a vehicle for expression in which the public at large participate. And although starting only recently, this is also the case of the main interlocutors of political discourse as had been configured in our society to date: namely politicians and the media.

In this study we aim to investigate the behaviour of the most successful blogs run by journalists and private individuals in Spain with more evident interest (due to their themes and to their ideological beliefs, normally implicit) in influencing public opinion. Within this context, the 2008 general elections undoubtedly constitute an unrivalled opportunity.<sup>2</sup> Not only because of the political intensity involved in election processes,

nor because of the process of swings in votes that inevitably must occur during the campaign period. In addition to these factors, which have an undeniable importance but are structurally related to any campaign, the 2008 election campaign can be considered as the one where politicians and the media finally dived into the Internet (although it was, almost always, with an instrumental interest). And it is also the campaign where the Spanish political blogosphere achieved, correlative, a more evident presence in public debate.

## 2. Blogs in politics

Although, in Internet terms, blogs are a relatively old invention and, in fact, we can find a predecessor from 1992 (Baviera 2008; 187), their popularisation did not come about until the very growth in the web and the parallel development of the aforementioned Web 2.0 tools have allowed them to play an active role, namely during this decade.

In the political sphere, the first appearance of blogs as a factor that must be taken into account was in the democratic primaries for the US presidential elections of 2004. The governor of Vermont, Howard Dean, developed a campaign based on interrelation with the public through the Internet, in particular with the sector that best united ideological commitment and technological competence: "Democratic bloggers", who mostly supported Dean during his involvement in the primaries.<sup>3</sup>

Two years earlier there had been the case of the Republican senator Trent Lott, whose unfortunate words praising a pro-segregation senator in a public act ended up costing him his place as leader of the party in the senate. This happened thanks to the action of several different political blogs that kept public debate going on this issue until it was put on the media agenda, although the conventional press had ignored it at first. This cause-effect relationship between the lack of action on the part of the press, the perseverance of blogs in specific niches and Lott's consequent resignation baptised blogs by demonstrating their potential to keep debate active and to place issues on political and media agendas (Scott 2004).<sup>4</sup>

The importance of blogs in generating opinion did not go unnoticed by the two candidates, George W. Bush and John Kerry, who had already given them considerable attention during the 2004 campaign. This attention merely increased in successive elections, becoming crystallised in the successful campaign of Barack Obama in 2008, focused on coordinating thousands of followers joining the Democrat campaign to achieve a base with remarkably deep electoral support among the public (i.e. young people), which ended up bringing him victory.

This process, which was not unique to blogs (the use of distribution lists and social networks such as Facebook was also very important, to name just two instruments) has ended up clarifying, at the very least, that the communicative ecosystem in which we operate is a lot less clear than the one we used to have just a decade ago (López García 2006a; 237-241) and that influence in elections is no longer based solely on traditional means (Bimber 1998; 133-160).

A review of the Spanish case shows us that the evolution of the political blogosphere has been an equally fast process, starting precisely in the previous elections in 2004. At that time, the political blogosphere had a certain importance in the days of intense political debate after the attacks of 11 March (Sampedro and López 2005).

The experience of 11 March and the role, real or supposed, played by the digital media in the subsequent events, among them blogs, meant that a space for debate was created very quickly on the Internet channelled through blogs and social networks. The climate of ideological confrontation, with moments of great agitation (especially on the part of the conservative opposition) generated a suitable Petri dish to intensify political debate and especially its radicalism.<sup>5</sup>

For their part, Spanish politicians and the media, after an almost classic initial rejection of the new publication format,

started to become interested in blogs shortly afterwards, as from 2005. In 2007, during the elections for the autonomous regions and municipalities, we can find live political debate channelled through blogs both by political leaders (such as José Blanco, Rafael Estrella, Iñaki Anasagasti, Ana Pastor, etc.) and also by journalists and "anonymous" citizens.

It is within this context that we reach the general elections of 2008, where politicians clearly attempt to take over the technophile discourse and commitment to digital networks. Proof of this is the gesture of complicity given by the PP to Internet users in December 2007, when their leader, Mariano Rajoy, announced that he would eliminate the digital duty if they won the elections.<sup>6</sup>

At present, the Spanish blogosphere has already notably developed (Garrido and Lara 2008), with ideologically-based social networks (Red Liberal, Red Progresista) that are very active and with the systematic inclusion of politicians and media.

### 3. The 2008 election campaign from the blogosphere

The analysis we propose to carry out is based on reviewing sixteen blogs. The criteria for making what is, in principle, a considerable (from the huge range of blogs available decided to analysing news stories) but we hope also representative selection are as follows:

- Firstly, as is evident, their centrality in the Spanish blogosphere, their impact in terms of visits, the links they get, as well as comments and influence. With regard to blogs associated with the media, the previous factors are linked to the importance of the medium they belong to.
- Secondly, we have attempted to achieve a balanced composition from two points of view. On the one hand, ideological, around the left-right axis, where we find a 50:50 division; and on the other hand, topological, i.e. the origin of the blogs. From this point of view, we have found seven blogs belonging to key ideological social networks (Red Liberal, Red Progresista and Las Ideas) run by more or less anonymous citizens, and a further nine belonging to the field of the Spanish media and are run, in most cases, by journalists.<sup>7</sup>

#### 3.1 Rate of article publication

A simple way to discover the approach taken by the sixteen blogs for the election campaign and their degree of involvement is to observe how frequently articles were published. If, moreover, we compare this frequency with that of the period before the campaign, we can establish base trends and observe if they were common to the majority of blogs.

For this reason, we chose to extend the study back to 1 January 2008, coinciding with the change in year. The recording of articles (and comments and, if applicable, also links) of the blogs were therefore as follows:

- Pre-campaign: from 1 January to 21 February 2008 (52 days).<sup>8</sup>
- Campaign: from 22 February to 10 March 2008 (18 days).

An additional advantage is that the period selected as the official "pre-campaign" lasts practically three times that of the campaign, something to be taken into account when comparing them in the table below (and that is also reflected in the calculation of the daily average).

These data allow us to extract, fundamentally, two conclusions. The blogs associated with the media are victims of the restrictions and insufficiencies that, on the Internet, mean they have to behave in accordance with the customs of printed newspapers. Moreover, since the people who write these blogs are, rather than bloggers, "columnists with blogs", their frequency is similar to the frequency with which they would appear in a press column: a daily article (in one, that of Javier Ortiz, correspondent for the hard copy newspaper) published almost always at the same time, with the "day's edition" of the digital paper. The same thing happens with the personal blog of Arcadi Espada which, not by chance, is called *Diarios* (although its frequency of publication is slightly less than "diario" or daily).

This means that their capacity to react and their dynamism on the web is much less, giving the sensation that they publish "the day's article" on their blog to a certain extent through obligation, irrespective of whether the issue they are dealing with is more or less interesting. We can see that, in fact, only one of the blogs associated with the digital media, that of Jiménez Losantos, has a frequency of more than one article a day and this only very slightly (1.1 articles on average), in the pre-cam-

paing (and we should note that Jiménez Losantos' blog appeared a few days before the campaign, so that the average refers to a short period of just ten days).<sup>9</sup>

It is quite the opposite (and this is now becoming the norm) when we look at the blogs of ideological networks, accompanied in this and other factors by *Escolar.net*. All of them, apart from *K-Government* and (by very little) by the blog of Marc Vidal, exceed the rate of publication of one article a day. And, moreover, many go way past this rate, to the extreme of *Contando Estrelas* with 89 notes published throughout the campaign (at a rate of almost five a day) and, in particular, *Netoración 3.0*, with no fewer than 109 articles published, more than six a day on average.

It's reasonable to argue that many of these articles are very brief or simply links or videos that lead us to external content (as often happens, in fact, with *Escolar.net*); or that their quality is very often debatable. Notwithstanding this, and irrespective of whether it is true or not, what we cannot ignore is that such a model resembles much more what the Internet public is used to - a fast response and varied content.

Simplifying quite a bit, we might say that, in the same way that press columnists (and bloggers) must choose a theme for each article, often the themes "choose" the bloggers, so that a new article tends to be published quickly (although this does not necessarily mean that the articles are short).

The second conclusion we can draw from the data is much simpler: although in most cases we can note the "election campaign" effect, with more or less perceptible rises in the rate of publication, these increases are usually higher when there is a higher rate of publication in the pre-campaign period. This is what happens, for example, with *Netoración 3.0* (going from 4.48 notes a day to 6.05), *Escolar.net* (from 2.32 to 3.88),

**Table 1. Articles published during the campaign and pre-campaign and daily average**

Blogs	Total number of campaign notes and daily %	Number of pre-campaign notes and daily %
El Mundo por dentro	18 (1.00)	39 (0.88)
Diarios de Arcadi Espada	12 (0.66)	30 (0.58)
Escolar.net	70 (3.88)	121 (2.32)
El dedo en la llaga	17 (0.94)	49 (0.94)
Presente y pasado	16 (0.88)	35 (0.67)
El blog de Federico	12 (0.66)	11 (1.10)
Las dos orillas	22 (1.22)	14 (1.55)
La caravana de Rajoy	15 (0.83)	0
La caravana de Zapatero	09 (0.50)	0
Netoración 3.0	109 (6.05)	233 (4.48)
Blog de Marc Vidal	16 (0.88)	48 (0.92)
K-Government	09 (0.50)	36 (0.69)
A Sueldo de Moscú	36 (2.00)	55 (1.05)
Desde el Exilio	49 (2.72)	72 (1.30)
Contando Estrelas	89 (4.94)	251 (4.82)
Batiburrillo	82 (4.55)	136 (2.61)

Source: authors' own.

*Batiburrillo* (from 2.61 to 4.55) and, above all, cases such as *A sueldo de Moscú* (from 1.05 to 2) and *Desde el Exilio* (from 1.3 to 2.72), where the rate of publication doubles.

In contrast, and once again blogs associated with the large digital media are "victims of their frequency" and their rate hardly varies, irrespective of whether the crucial day of the election is approaching, it's the night of the election, etc. The communication model that is being presented to the public is therefore very similar to the one that existed before. And more so if we take into account the fact that authors of blogs associated with the digital media almost never interact with their readers via comments. We believe, and it's worth repeating, that this approach noticeably reduces the effectiveness of their message.

### 3.2 Content

The quantitative analysis serves to define the existence, as a general criterion, of two types of blogs:

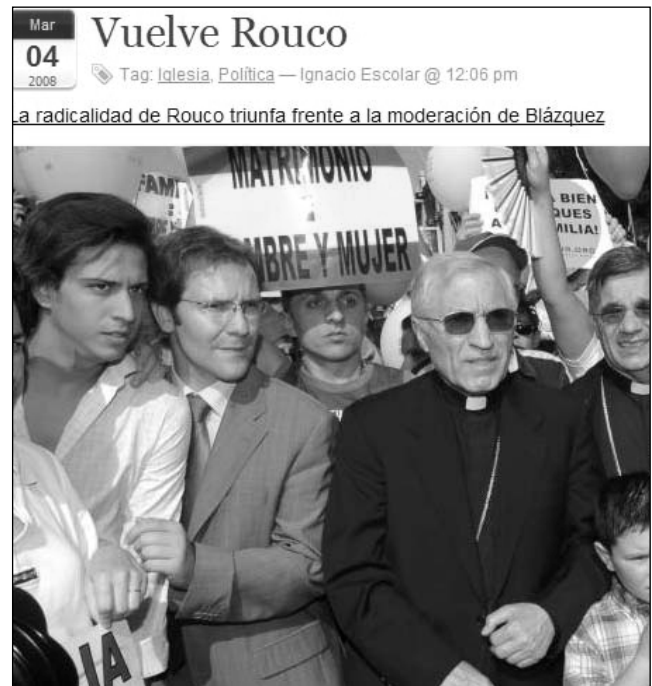
- Those developed "from the bottom" on the part of more or less unknown individuals (at the time they start to write their blog), usually members of ideologically-based social networks.
- Those generated "from the top" of a digital medium, normally in correlation with an activity already being carried out in the print version (a journalistic column or, in the case of the newspaper *El País*, the chronicle for the campaign).

These data place blogs of ideological networks (and most particularly the hybrid case of *Escolar.net*) in a privileged position. The question that must now be clarified is what novelties are offered, in terms of the discourse of these blogs or the presentation of this discourse, that make them an undoubtedly more attractive means of expressing opinion for the public than the traditional press column transferred to blogs (be it a real or metaphorical transfer) offered by most of the "traditional" media (and journalists).

Earlier we highlighted that blogs that are more popular among the public are less subject to "traditional" frequency (more or less daily): these blogs publish several articles a day, compared with the rigid daily publication of blogs associated with the digital media. Moreover, a qualitative review of these articles shows us that other additional factors differentiate them:

- The extension of the articles is variable and ranges from authentic "homilies" covering several screens to articles focusing on the recommendation of an external link or video. In fact, the very presence of links (as a core or complement to the written content) is innovative with regard to blogs, such as that by Pío Moa and Javier Ortiz, where there are hardly any (and even more so with regard to the blogs of *El País* and *El Mundo*, without any link in any note).
- The authors make great use of all kinds of graphic resources, such as image and videos inserted in the article to illustrate what they want to say or to express their opinions. For example, Ignacio Escolar published this news item in his blog of<sup>10</sup> 4 March 2008:

Image 1. Blog published on *Escolar.net*



Source: *Escolar.net*, 4 March 2008.

Moreover, at times we find images modified by the same authors, generally for political purposes as well. As an example, we present this photo-montage of Zapatero, profusely published on *Batiburrillo*:

Image 2. *Batiburrillo* photo-montage



Source: *Batiburrillo*: <<http://batiburrillo.redliberal.com/>>.

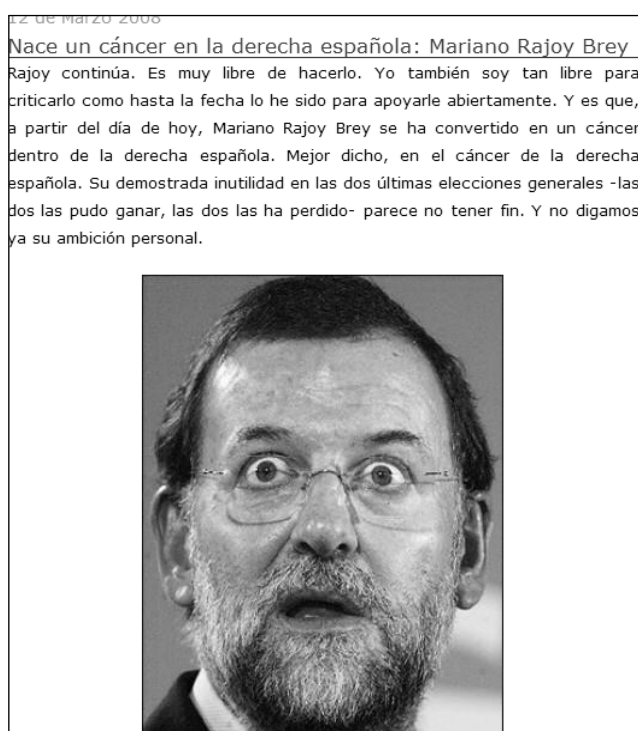
- Finally, with regard to interactivity, the authors of this kind of blog make an effort (although not always) to interact directly with the public via the system of comments on the blog. In this respect it's surprising the amount of time these people dedicate to their blogs, given that they presumably do not earn a living from them, unlike the "professional" journalists.

If we look at the type of content offered by the blogs, the differences we have noted between these two types in various aspects once again emerge clearly from at least two points of view:

- **Thematically:** the concept of "current affairs" in the "journalistic" blogs tends to focus on the big campaign issues.<sup>11</sup> In any case, and as is obvious, it never leaves the sphere of political current affairs. The exception to this rule is given by the two blogs of *Libertad Digital*, which sometimes combine their articles on political current affairs with critiques of books (Jiménez Losantos) and continual disquisitions on the Spanish Civil War, a favourite theme of Pío Moa.

The blogs belonging to ideological networks offer, however, a more varied panorama. On the one hand, they focus on aspects of political current affairs that not always have to follow faithfully the agenda previously established by the media and can even reverse the process and generate news for the media (Drezner and Farrell, 2004; 17; Aran and Sort, 2005; 115; López García, 2006b; 51-55). On the other hand, they

### Image 3. Blog published on *Batiburrillo*



Source: *Batiburrillo* <<http://batiburrillo.redliberal.com/>> 12/03/2008.

sometimes transcend the political sphere itself. *Contando Estrelas*, for example, provides many articles that not only have nothing to do with the campaign but are not even related to political current affairs: critiques of films or books, videos from YouTube, photographs whose value is eminently aesthetic, etc. Marc Vidal combines truly political analyses with others on economic affairs, very often removed from the contest of the elections and/or Spanish politics. *Desde el Exilio* dedicates a lot of attention to lashing out at defenders of the theory of climate change.

- **Ideologically:** in general, and although it may only be due to the forms exhibited, blogs with an ideological stance show a degree of ideological extremism that is usually greater than that of their "mentors" or similar in the media field. They give the sensation that they are either emotionally involved in the political criticism they give out (or more involved than journalists) or that, simply, they are aware of their role as agitators or political propagandists.

In other words, the success of these blogs does not necessarily mean, and in fact does not mean, that their political discourse is more "moderate" or "rational" than that of the politicians or journalists. In fact, in most of the successful blogs, the discourse, basically and (particularly) in form, tends to be more extremist. These blogs work much better as an instrument to incite agitation and to crystallise unconditional affinities than as centres of public debate.

And it's worth noting that, without any doubt, this extremism is significantly greater in blogs from the *Red Liberal* than in those from the *Red Progresista*. This probably has a lot to do with the fact that the political party they support, the PP, is in opposition but also to the ideological approach taken for several years now by the *Libertad Digital* and the COPE, the two main media references for these blogs, to the point that some seem to act as a simple conveyor belt for their media "mentors".

A case in point is *Batiburrillo*, which strongly defended (the PP leader) Mariano Rajoy throughout the campaign (and the pre-campaign) for the election. But shortly afterwards, on 12 March,<sup>12</sup> it was asking, almost literally, for his head, as Federico Jiménez Losantos and Pedro J. Ramírez had done before.

This becomes quite clear if we look briefly at how they focus on the political events they cover. For example, the opinion given by Luis Gómez, author of *Desde el Exilio*, on the murder of the councillor Isaías Carrasco by ETA.<sup>13</sup>

The opinion given by *Batiburrillo* is even more aggressive, if possible.<sup>14</sup> "In other words, a former socialist councillor has been murdered who was perfectly dispensable in the "anything goes" organisation chart that ETA has given as a pre-election gift. I wonder if those wielding the pistols have offered their client, whoever it is, a subscription for several legislatures." The implicit accusation is such that the author himself attempts to clarify afterwards that he does not believe that Zapatero had asked ETA directly to kill Isaías Carrasco. According to *Batiburrillo*, it might have all gone as follows:

Image 4. Blog published on *Desde el Exilio*

Vota ETA, vota Zapatero (Act.)

---

Mar 7th, 2008 | By Luis I. Gómez | Tags: Elecciones, España, ETA, Terrorismo

Diálogo, cordialidad, talante, rendición

Mis condolencias a la familia de **Isaías Carrasco**. Sus asesinos hubiesen podido estar en la cárcel. O haber carecido de medios para comprar las pistolas. Pero era preferible "dialogar".

Tristeza empañada de ira.

*Nota para espíritus sensibles:*

Que el titular es duro? Sí, muy duro. **Que la culpa de este asesinato es de Zapatero? NO. Ni Zapatero es de ETA.** Pero devolver el gobierno a Zapatero es justamente lo que quiere ETA con este crimen, luego votar a Zapatero es votar a ETA. Votar negociación es votar sumisión. Votar negociación es votar pervisión de las leyes. Votar negociación es votar financiación de ETA a través de sus pseudopartidos antidemocráticos.

Y termino: jamás he pedido el voto para ningún partido en este blog. Yo no. Lo digo más que nada por quienes están haciendo **propaganda y difamando si ton ni son** (interesante el comentario al final del artículo). Lean el blog antes de formarse un juicio. No dejen que les engañen en eso también!

Actualización, Lunes 10 Marzo 2008:

Muchas cosas se han dicho sobre este post, sobre este titular. Desde miserable hacia arriba la escala de calificativos con que he sido adornado es inmensa. Lo siento. Siento haber carecido en su momento de la

Source: *Desde el Exilio* <<http://www.desdeexilio.com>> 07/03/2008.

I will now present a hypothesis. One fine day, Zapatero, seeing that his re-election was becoming more complicated, probably let slip a phrase to one of his subordinates, something like: "We must win, no matter how. Remember that, if we lose, and it's not at all cut and dried, some people will have to leave Spain. The PP of today will lift up the carpet, unlike Aznar, and may find a whole lot of shit against us". So, "we must win, no matter how". This went down the chain of command and ended up with this person, probably a spy from ETA itself, who has the mobile number to talk it over with ETA, among other missions, and who does not hesitate to call them again to plan the affair. ETA people may be despicable but that doesn't mean they're idiots, as we saw just yesterday, and they are therefore rather unwilling for the supreme simpleton, better known as ZP, to lose power and consequently the presidency of the government is no longer a good deal for criminals."

There is no doubt that these ideas are located at the extreme right of the ideological spectrum. The question is: are they genuine opinions? Are the blog's authors also the creators of this "focus"? Not by a long chalk. For example, see the content of the daily article by Pío Moa on *Libertad Digital*, published the same day, 7 March.<sup>15</sup>

"Zapo (Zapatero) is the greatest collaborator ETA has had in its history. Zapo once again legalised ETA's political disguises, which means, among other things, that he gave murderers money from all Spaniards, he gave them the census of Basque citizens, he even made it easy for them to avoid legal persecution (...) Zapo's collaboration with ETA has legitimised murder as a way of doing politics and has fantas-

tically rewarded the murders, and thereby he is attacking the very foundations of the free society established thirty years ago."

The discourse of the "progressive side" tends to be much more moderate. However, this does not mean, at all, that it is any "less party-based". As with the "liberal" blogs, authors of "progressive" blogs clearly favour one political party in particular and have no problem in explaining this constantly. In one case, *A sueldo de Moscú*, votes are requested for (the political party) IU in almost all the notes published throughout the campaign (which is quite logical taking into account the fact that it is the only blog whose author presents himself as a political militant for a party and, moreover, is director of Communication for the Rivas-Vaciamadrid council, governed by the IU).

In other cases, in particular *Netoración 3.0*, the judgment warranted by the policies and actions of the (socialist party) PSOE is always very positive. So, on 4 March, César Calderón wrote an article entitled "Zapatero wins the debate with proposals";<sup>16</sup> on 2 March he unreservedly praises the presentation on the PSOE website of this party's electoral programme<sup>17</sup> and a long etcetera complemented with equally clear criticism of the (rival) PP.

An exception to this rule might be Marc Vidal, who gives a (politically) less passionate opinion of what is happening in the campaign.<sup>18</sup> The "victory of Zapatero with proposals" becomes here a "cheap and dirty debate between the two candidates to preside over the Spanish state, [but] I still have the aftertaste that what was said there doesn't have the slightest importance

for the final straight in the election campaign. Nothing would have happened if it hadn't been broadcast (...) An army of fans of each party were distributed around the radio and television broadcasters to flatter their leader of the day without providing anything and further swelling the beast". Although, it must be said, Marc Vidal is also convinced that, ultimately, "Zapatero won".

#### 4. Conclusions

The combined analysis (qualitative and quantitative) we have carried out on the blogs in the electoral campaign and pre-campaign in 2008 has clearly shown that the approach taken by the big media for this format of publication is erroneous to a large extent.

On many media the blog format continues to be merely another publication format, without taking advantage of the benefits provided by the digital medium in terms of frequency, hypertextuality, multimedia, interactivity, etc. These are basic features of the Internet that become ultimately diluted by the force of journalistic routine and custom.

One part of the problem, in the specific case in point, is that the Spanish media took a long time to develop blogs extensively as part of the content they offer (Larrondo, 2005). Even today some of the most significant media, such as *El Mundo*, publish a notoriously inadequate and restricted blog format, without links or comments. The same thing happens with blogs started exclusively in order to follow the campaign, both on *El País* and *El Mundo*, where there are no links or multimedia integration and almost no interactivity.<sup>19</sup>

Given this slow response, blogs generated by citizens themselves, and in this case the most politicised and ideologically biased sector, started to establish a foothold on the Internet much more quickly. And, moreover, did so based on the concerns of their public and with the desire to keep up a rate of content publication that is particularly lively and in any case greater than the classic rate of the written press (the daily column).

We might say, using the opportune metaphor by sociologist Pedro Arriola (a privileged advisor to Rajoy and previously Aznar), that the strategy for success on the Internet has a lot more to do with the "fine rain" of blogs and social networks than the explosion of "blogs for", created with a specific aim on the part of the media (and political leaders who start up a campaign blog "for a", and then give it up). We might say that, with communication on the Internet, if the aim is to influence, this is achieved in the long term.

Of course, we don't mean that the most renowned journalists cannot influence the Internet public. To a large extent this is the same public. The question is whether this public is prepared to consume the same that, in many cases, it has already consumed in the press; to follow a discourse designed for a different medium and, very often, a different type of reader. It is

not by chance that the most successful blogs are those by journalists who bother to produce specific content for them, instead of rechanneling what they had previously published on paper. This is the case of Ignacio Escolar, and also of Pío Moa and Federico Jiménez Losantos.

This scenario leaves a lot of margin for "anonymous" citizens, blog managers, to let their message be heard on the social networks they belong to. In all, the fact that this is true does not mean, not by a long chalk, that these bloggers constitute a truly alternative or differentiated space of debate (and not to mention an ideological space) compared with what existed previously in conversations in cafés or in the traditional media.

Quite the opposite. The qualitative analysis has highlighted the fact that, with very few exceptions, successful blogs in the field of politics tend to compete with their ideological mentors in terms of their radicalism. Many blogs function as a simple instrument to echo political and media opinion leaders. In fact, many are created directly with this aim in mind.

The strong point of this communication model and this occupation of the blog format lies in the closed support of the traditional media which logically feels much more comfortable in this environment. It's not the only thing that can be done with a blog, nor does a blog make it impossible to have more impartial communication. The problem is that the nerve centres of the so-called blogosphere tend to concentrate precisely around this media system, either because they come from it (journalists associated with the traditional media, opinion-givers who place their blog as part of the content offered by a specific medium) or because, due to their success, they end up like that.

For this reason many blogs, and particularly those that, because they are dedicated to analysing political current affairs are located closer to this system, take a winding path during their growth, throughout a wide range of siren songs and veiled threats and promises. Possibly, together with hostility or ideological heterodoxy, the status of many of these bloggers as freelancers who keep up their blog as a simple hobby constitutes their main safeguard.

## Notes

- 1 In: <<http://www.technorati.com/blogging/state-of-the-blogosphere/>>. In any case, we should remember that many of these blogs, the majority, are inactive or only sporadically updated. In fact Technorati detected "only" 7.4 million blogs with some updating over 120 days.
- 2 It should be noted that this work forms part of the findings obtained from the authors taking part in the R&D project "Cyberdemocracy in the 2008 election campaign. The citizen use of new technologies for electoral perception, deliberation and mobilisation", led by Víctor Sampedro Blanco (professor of Journalism at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Madrid). Project financed by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (2008-2010).
- 3 As rightly pointed out by the now classic study by Adamic and Glance: "Howard Dean's campaign was particularly successful in harnessing grassroots support using a weblog as a primary mode for publishing dispatches from the candidate to his followers" (2005; 1-2). Which undoubtedly led to savings for his campaign in financial terms: "In the third quarter of 2003, Dean's campaign raised \$7.4, of a total \$14.8 million, via the Internet, with a remarkably modest average donation of under \$100" (2005; 2).
- 4 SCOTT, E. "Big Media" Meets the "Bloggers": Coverage of Trent Lott's Remarks at Strom Thurmond's Birthday Party, 2004. <[http://www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol/publications/case\\_studies/1731\\_0\\_scott.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol/publications/case_studies/1731_0_scott.pdf)>
- 5 This is the case of the, at least curious, movement of "Peones Negros", defenders of the conspiracy theory concerning 11 March encouraged by some journalists and media, among which stands out, precisely, the author of a blog, Luis del Pino (in *Libertad Digital*).
- 6 <[http://www.elperiodico.com/default.asp?idpublicacio\\_PK=46&idioma=CAS&idnoticia\\_PK=469478&idseccio\\_PK=1008](http://www.elperiodico.com/default.asp?idpublicacio_PK=46&idioma=CAS&idnoticia_PK=469478&idseccio_PK=1008)>
- 7 Two of these blogs present hybrid cases to a certain extent: on the one hand, *Escolar.net*, the personal blog of the director of the *Público* newspaper at that time, Ignacio Escolar, located off the *Público* website but, for obvious reasons, strongly interrelated with it. On the other hand, the personal blog of Arcadi Espada, *Diarios*, journalist for the newspaper *El Mundo*.
- 8 In those cases where the blog was started up after 1 January 2008, the ratio of daily publication is calculated based on the start date: for example, the blog *El Mundo por dentro*, which started up on 9 January, is calculated dividing the number of notes by 44.
- 9 The blog *Las dos orillas* is a dual blog that simultaneously publishes two articles at a time and, under these conditions, it cannot be said to publish more than one article a day.
- 10 At: <<http://www.escolar.net/MT/archives/2008/03/vuelvo-rouco.html>>
- 11 Naturally, the two blogs of *El País*, deserve to be treated separately, as they focus on relating the everyday activities of the candidate they are following.
- 12 <<http://batiburrillo.redliberal.com/011702.html>>
- 13 <<http://www.desdeexilio.com/2008/03/07/vota-eta-vota-zapatero-act/>>
- 14 At: <<http://batiburrillo.redliberal.com/011674.html>>
- 15 At: <<http://blogs.libertaddigital.com/presente-y-pasado/hechos-y-palabras-2993/>>
- 16 At: <<http://www.netoraton.es/?p=2072>>
- 17 At: <<http://www.netoraton.es/?p=2053>>
- 18 At: <<http://www.marccvidal.cat/espanol/2008/03/gestando-ladem.html>>
- 19 Only *La caravana de Rajoy*, the blog by journalist Carlos E. Cué on *El País*, offered the possibility of commenting on his articles. <[http://blogs.elpais.com/carlos\\_e\\_cue/](http://blogs.elpais.com/carlos_e_cue/)>



## References

- ADAMIC, L.; GLANCE, N. *The Political Blogosphere and the 2004 U.S. Election: Divided They Blog*, 2005. [Online] <<http://www.blogpulse.com/papers/2005/AdamicGlanceBlogWWW.pdf>> (Consulted: 27 February 2009).
- ARAN, S.; SORT, J. "New Kid on The Blocks. El fenomen dels blogs i la seva rellevància en la mediasfera i en la política". In: *Trípodos (Extra)*, 2005. [Online] <[http://cicr.blanquerna.url.edu/2005/Abstracts/PDFsComunicacions/vol1/02/SORT\\_Josep\\_ARAN\\_Sonia.pdf](http://cicr.blanquerna.url.edu/2005/Abstracts/PDFsComunicacions/vol1/02/SORT_Josep_ARAN_Sonia.pdf)> (Consulted: 27 February 2009).
- BAVIERA, T. "Un medio nacido de Internet: el weblog". In: LÓPEZ GARCÍA, G. (ed.). *Comunicación local y nuevos formatos periodísticos en Internet: cibermedios, confidenciales y weblogs*. València: Servei de Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2008. p. 187-205. [Online] <<http://www.cibermediosvalencianos.es/comloc/Baviera.pdf>> (Consulted: 27 February 2009).
- BIMBER, B. "The Internet and Political Transformation: Populism, Community, and Accelerated Pluralism". In: *Polity*, vol. XXXI, no. 1. Autumn 1998. p. 133-160. [Online] <<http://www.polsci.ucsb.edu/faculty/bimber/transformation.html>> (Consulted: 27 February 2009).
- DREZNER, D.; FARRELL, H. "The Power and Politics of Blogs", 2004. [Online] <<http://www.cs.duke.edu/courses/spring05/cps182s/readings/blogpowerpolitics.pdf>> (Consulted: 27 February 2009).
- GARRIDO, F.; LARA, T. "Perfil del blogger hispano. III Encuesta a Bloggers". In: *Diálogos de la Comunicación*, no. 76, January-June 2008. p. 1-8. [Online] <<http://www.dialogosfelafacs.net/76/articulos/pdf/76GarridoLara.pdf>> (Consulted: 27 February 2009).
- LARRONDO, A. "Presencia del formato weblog en los cibermedios: una aproximación a sus usos y funciones". In: *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, no. 60, 2005. [Online] <<http://www.ull.es/publicaciones/latina/200539larrondo.htm>> (Consulted: 27 February 2009).
- LÓPEZ GARCÍA, G. "Comunicación en red y mutaciones de la esfera pública". In: *Zer*, no. 20, 2006. p. 231-249. [Online] <[http://www.ehu.es/zer/zer20/zer20\\_15\\_lopez.pdf](http://www.ehu.es/zer/zer20/zer20_15_lopez.pdf)> (Consulted: 27 February 2009).
- \_\_\_ "Comunicación digital y líneas de fractura en el paradigma de la agenda setting". In: *Doxa Comunicación*, no. 4, 2006. p. 37-59. [Online] <[http://www.uspceu.com/usp/doxa/doxaIV/comunicacion\\_digital.pdf](http://www.uspceu.com/usp/doxa/doxaIV/comunicacion_digital.pdf)> (Consulted: 27 February 2009).
- SAMPEDRO, V.; LÓPEZ GARCÍA, G. "Deliberación celerica desde la periferia". In: SAMPEDRO, V. (ed.). *13-M: Multitudes Online*. Madrid: Libros de La Catarata, 2005. P. 119-158.
- SCOTT, E. "Big Media" Meets the "Bloggers": Coverage of Trent Lott's Remarks at Strom Thurmond's Birthday Party. 2004. [Online] <[http://www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol/publications/case\\_studies/1731\\_0\\_scott.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol/publications/case_studies/1731_0_scott.pdf)> (Consulted: 27 February 2009).