

Political visions. The imaginary system of *Cambiemos* (Argentina, 2015-2018)

Visiones políticas. El sistema imaginario de *Cambiemos* (Argentina, 2015-2018)

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ABSTRACT

Based on a synchronic method, this article shows the preliminary results of an ongoing research about the political imagination deployed by the ruling Argentine coalition, *Cambiemos* (2015-2018). We exhaustively take into consideration the (audio)visual pieces of its political communication. Then, we identify regularities to organize a grammar of political imagination around multiple medium and short-term goals. The conclusions allow to understand how the political communication of *Cambiemos* works in an original way with the new media landscape, marked by the culture of connectivity and the coexistence of different media systems.

Keywords: imagination; *Cambiemos*; government; social discourse; system; argumentation.

RESUMEN

A partir de un método sincrónico, este artículo comunica los resultados preliminares de una indagación en progreso acerca de la imaginación política desplegada por la coalición argentina gobernante, Cambiemos (2015-2018). Se relevan de manera exhaustiva piezas (audio)visuales de comunicación política y se identifica, en función de las regularidades percibidas, una gramática de imaginación política organizada en torno a múltiples fines de mediano y corto plazo. Las conclusiones permiten comprender cómo la comunicación política de dicha fuerza trabaja de manera original con el nuevo paisaje mediático, signado por la cultura de la conectividad y la convivencia de diferentes sistemas de medios.

Palabras clave: imaginación; *Cambiemos*; gobierno; discurso social; sistema; argumentación.

RESUMO

Baseado em um método sincrônico, este artigo apresenta resultados preliminares de uma pesquisa em andamento sobre a imaginação política empregada pela colisão argentina dominante *Cambiemos* (2015-2018). As partes (áudio)-visuais da comunicação política são exaustivamente analisadas. Uma gramática da imaginação política organizada em torno de múltiplos objetivos de médio e curto prazo é identificada com base nas regularidades percebidas. As conclusões nos permitem compreender como a comunicação política da colisão funciona de maneira original com o novo cenário midiático, marcado pela cultura da conectividade e pela coexistência de diferentes sistemas midiáticos.

Palavras-chave: imaginação; *Cambiemos*; governo; discurso social; sistema; argumentação.

How to cite:

Dagatti, M. & Onofrio, M. P. (2019). Visiones políticas. El sistema imaginario de *Cambiemos* (Argentina, 2015-2018). *Cuadernos.info*, (44), 79-98. <https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.44.1628>

INTRODUCTION

From the political news and documentaries in the early 20th century to the family albums of politicians on Facebook and Instagram, images have played a fundamental role in the configuration of the political field¹. However, the culture of connectivity² –based on the Internet and digital social networks– entailed a change in the visibility regimes, the ways of showing politics, its preferred imagination devices, which altered those deployed three decades ago by videopolitics based on the pivotal role of television as a show platform (Sarlo, 1996; Sartori, 1998). We know, as a result of extensive literature³, that the increasing complexity of mediatization involves new dynamics of production, circulation and consumption of the different meanings of the political.

Within the framework of a research on discursive hegemony and political identities in contemporary Argentina, our paper shows the preliminary results of an ongoing investigation about the political imagination displayed by the *Cambiemos* government party (Argentina, 2015-2018). *Political imagination* encompasses, for us, not only the inventory of images that this coalition displays in its ways of representing what politics is, but also the interpellation mechanisms concerning citizens. We can confidently point out that this study is a privileged way of accessing the state of social discourse and, specifically, that of the political field (Angenot, 2010).

The paper's structure is as follows: first, we present the background of our research, both the theoretical framework and the literature review; secondly, we offer a description of the work methodology, to then systematically analyze the imaginary logics of *Cambiemos*: that of the close government, that of the State-machine, that of the pastoral government, that of the transparent government, that of the protocol government and the common-everyday. We end the paper with final considerations considering the aforementioned objectives.

BACKGROUND: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Our research fits theoretically and methodologically within the framework of Marc Angenot's social discourse theory (1989, 2010, 2011). By social discourse the author refers to the generic systems, the thematic repertoires, the rules of sentences' creation that, in

a society, organize the *sayable* –the narratable and debatable– and ensure the division of discursive work. Studying it means constructing a global regulatory system, whose nature is not immediately offered for observation; i.e., rules of production and circulation, as well as a set of products historically occurred.

Speaking of social discourse means addressing texts –in line with Durkheim's principles– as social facts and, from there, as historical facts. It implies leaving aside a functional perspective of the circulation of meaning: "It is to see, in what is written and said in a society, facts that 'work independently' of the uses that each individual attributes to them, that exist 'outside individual consciences' and that have a 'power' by virtue of which they are imposed" (Angenot, 2010, p. 23). His study involves isolating, from global social facts, a set of practices through which society is *objectivized* in texts and languages, linked in turn to other practices and institutions.

As *relative homeostasis*⁴, social discourse is divided into fields⁵, which constitute a system of genres, thematic repertoires and styles, spatially distributed in such a way that a topography allows them to be mapped. The unity of a given field –like the political field– is that of a discursive market, marked by the competencies of the collective and individual agents that operate in it.

The notion of social discourse is linked in Angenot's work with that of discursive hegemony. Inspired by Antonio Gramsci, the category refers to "a regulatory system that predetermines the production of specific discursive forms" (Angenot, 2010, p. 30). Even when at first sight the proliferation of statements would give the impression of an extreme diversity of themes, opinions, languages, argot and styles, "a complex set of prescriptive rules of diversification of the sayable and of cohesion, of coalescence, of integration" (p. 24) organizes the sayable and the thinkable in a society, at a certain historical juncture, and establishes its limits, divisions and hierarchies. It is about investigating invariants and recurrences, collective assumptions, the common places of an era⁶.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE CAMBIEMOS POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

The contributions of our research should be seen in the light of the state of the art on *Cambiemos* government communication. The theory of social discourse has not worked on this aspect of the political field, much less that of Argentina, although it is possible to trace

research inspired by said frame in Dalmaso and Boria (2001, 2004).

In the field of political communication, we are interested in recovering the distinction between electoral communication and government communication⁷, which we consider the operative *prima facie* to investigate the imaginary logics of *Cambiemos*. Within the first group of research regarding electoral communication, we can mention authors such as Fara, (2005), Amado Suárez, (2013), Dell'Oro, (2013), Chihu Amparán (2010), García Beaudoux and D'Adamo (2006), García Beaudoux, D'Adamo and Slavinsky (2005) and Karp and Zolleis (2003). These broadly develop a study of the communication strategies of political parties and their relationship with the voters. Germano (2013) and Kavanagh (2003) place these strategies within political marketing, stating that, if there is leadership on the part of the candidate, communication techniques serve to enhance a specific political project. One of these techniques from marketing is the so-called storytelling (Salmón, 2016; García Beaudoux & D'Adamo, 2012), a narrative format oriented to tell stories that has been used progressively within several political campaigns.

The second group is the one that covers government communication. This differs from the first one mainly because the main objective is not so much an immediate persuasion –to receive the vote of most citizens– as to generate long-term consensus (Riorda & Ávila, 2016; Riorda, 2008). Different analysts agree that a government must build a myth or story credible and legitimate for most of the population (González, 2016; López & Russo, 2016; Fernández Pedemonte, 2016; Herrera, 2016; Gondo, 2016; Ponce, 2016). They state that the effective management of government communication generates consensus and popular acceptance. When a force governs, these two areas overlap, especially in times of *electoralization* of government times (Riorda & Elizalde, 2014).

The political communication of *Cambiemos* has not been the subject of systematic research. The works of Vommaro, Morresi and Bellotti (2015), Vommaro and Morresi (2015) and Vommaro (2017), the largest specialists in *Cambiemos-PRO*, have investigated different dimensions of the political phenomenon: its ideological composition, its construction and political negotiation practices, its inscription within a center-right zone of the Argentinean political topography, its social worlds of belonging, its staging mechanisms. However, they have not advanced in a systematic study of the discursive logic of their imagination.

Considering our theoretical-methodological framework and the state of the art, our contributions are oriented in two directions. On the one hand, advancing, as a general objective, in the analysis of systems of global regulation of the politically *imaginable*, whose relationship with the *sayable* and *thinkable* has never been worked within the Angenotian theory; on the other hand, analyzing, as a specific objective, what are the imaginary logics that *Cambiemos* has deployed to try to build its ethical world (Maingueneau, 2008).

THE GOVERNMENTAL IMAGINATION OF *CAMBIEMOS* (2015-2018): METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

What do the images of a political force tell us, what do they tell us in their multiplicity of the discursive market of politics? Under the apparent chaos of series and layers of statements, increasingly accelerated and reticular in their circulation, any political force displays regular forms of visuality; offers ways to imagine politics.

The images persuade, and their capacity for seduction has been –when not feared or denied– neglected. We will investigate a basic aspect of contemporary politics, closely linked to the visual worlds displayed *in* and *by* convergence societies. We will deal with the (audio)visual communication of the government of *Cambiemos* (2015-2018), considering those images and imaginaries that circulated through different media and communication formats, from posters on public roads to digital networks.

To explore its hyper-mediatic imagination⁸, we will study the publications and posts of the official Casa Rosada account: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and its website. We are interested in describing its dominant visual coordinates from its objectification in specific concrete forms.

The work methodology is as follows: from a synchronous cut, we collected the (audio)visual pieces that the national government produced during the presidency of *Cambiemos* –from December 10, 2015 to October 22, 2018. We then define the perceived regularities and propose five predominant logics, which encompass most images observed⁹. Next, we propose provisional descriptions on the *imaginary* features of each one of them and infer, based on them, the arsenal of argumentative means that constitute at first sight nodes of the global system of production, distribution and stratification of its hyper-mediatic governmental imagination.

We recognize that the definition of a corpus of work is presented as a first limitation, since the emergence of the Internet-based media system and digital social networks has generated an exponential proliferation of political images. The mass media system –the diffusion of a spot in television channels, for example– coexists with a dozen official accounts on the Internet that publish on a daily basis, making the task of a comprehensive approach increasingly difficult. However, we believe that it is possible –and methodologically necessary– to build typologies that allow us to organize, even if provisionally, the visual proposal of the *Cambiemos* government. With this purpose, we will consider the media-institutional logics of imaginary production, both in normal times and in electoral periods¹⁰.

How does *Cambiemos* show itself? How does the visual proposal of the now ruling party offer imaginaries *about* and *on* politics? With more doubts than certainties in this instance, we are interested in reflecting on this multiplicity of images that shape the national government –even in electoral times– and put it on the scene as a decisive actor. Considering the work corpus, we note that the political communication of the *Cambiemos* government presents different lines of imagination, which suggest the coexistence of dynamics that are significantly different from each other, although not contradictory.

CAMBIEMOS IMAGINARY LOGICS

From recipes for making *locro*¹¹ or cupcakes to the visit of Angela Merkel or the president of the International Olympic Committee, from the inaugurations of public works to press conferences and institutional spots, the repertoire of visual statements of the *Cambiemos* government is as broad as one can imagine. In our view, this breadth implies a hypothesis about politics and about matters of citizen interest. In the next pages, we will try to provide arguments in this direction and to draw provisional conclusions with a view to future investigations.

We aim to account for this multiplicity of imaginary aesthetics, to undertake in future works some approaches to the global production grammar that sustains them. As a preliminary result of our recollection, we detect at least six images' logics: of the close government, of the State-machine, of the pastoral government, of the transparent government, of the protocol-government and the common-everyday. These intersect, overlap daily, are reinforced or segmented according to more

or less specific targets, but in no way are excluded. Below, we will very briefly describe each of them and their main features.

THE CLOSE GOVERNMENT LOGIC

This is perhaps the most novel with respect to other political imaginaries in contemporary Argentina. It prevails on Instagram and YouTube, it takes to the extreme the extension of what is politically said or imagined; from a post of the dawn at the Casa Rosada to substantial or ludic photographs: a nadir photo of part of the facade of the Government House or one of Beto the elf, the guardian of the Casa Rosada's garden (figure 1).

Most of the posts relate to this logic in the case of Instagram. The photographs or short videos (which never exceed thirty seconds) stage mornings and afternoons, rain and sun, interiors and exteriors of the Casa Rosada, architectural details and views from the balconies, empty and busy places. On the one hand, there are spaces, atmospheres and climates that put-on stage the daily life *in* and *from* Balcarce street: a sort of behind the scenes daily and informal, out of all protocol. The recurrent use of stickers that the application makes possible, with the time or the temperature, reinforces the deictic sense of the post and the image's noema, reminding us that it is now, and we are here (figure 2).

Regardless of what is being said, there is an entire area of *Cambiemos*' imaginary that bets on the frequent, everyday relationship. To be in contact, in dialogue, to check the channel's updates: it is the phatic function of the language, which complements the expressive one, that of an emitter willing to show itself under aesthetic codes turned into common places of the Internet era (Prada, 2018). Moreover, we talk about a true aestheticization of everyday life (Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2015), which integrates an aesthetic-emotional dimension into it (figure 3). The two language functions would largely demonstrate the adaptation of the Casa Rosada user to the logic of connective media (Van Dijck, 2016).

On YouTube, although sporadically and with another dynamic, the close government reappears in the form of short tutorials that combine animation and personification. In less than two minutes the videos teach us from how to make Easter eggs or a good *locro* to how to save energy at home. The combination of sans serif and cursive typefaces with animated icons suggest freshness and proximity.

In *Cambiemos*' visual statements we observe, transversally, a type of enunciation that oscillates



Figure 1.
Beto, the guardian of the garden

Source: Instagram
@casarosadaargentina.



Figure 2.
Wednesday

Source: Instagram
@casarosadaargentina.



Figure 3.
Sunset at Casa Rosada

Source: Instagram
@casarosadaargentina.

between the youth imperative (with the use of first person imperative moods, such as *sumate*, *anotate*, *participá*) (Casa Rosada – República Argentina, 2017a) and a pedagogy whose tone is less that of gnoseological asymmetry than that of a family complicity. In other words, the pedagogical and prescriptive components, inspired by instruction manuals or recipes, are blurred by a lush, colloquial and informal tone, reinforced by the prevailing *voseo*¹² (figure 4), with the use of phrases such as “*Utilizá lámparas de bajo consumo o led*”, “*Lavá tu ropa con programas económicos o de agua fría*” (Casa Rosada – República Argentina, 2017a: 0:59).

As an expansion of the political imaginary by adaptation to the discursive, communicational and semiotic memories of digital communication practices, this type of social media game inserts politics in the field of everyday life in a double sense: on the one hand, issues refer to common, mundane, ludic situations, highlighting the importance of what is common and usual for citizen-followers; on the other, the use of social networks to which we are used beyond the political sphere: on Instagram, we publish our here and now and on YouTube we search, knowing that we are going to find, all kinds of tutorials. The interdiscursive reference

to the themes, communication strategies and styles and tones of digital social networks builds an imaginary of close, friendly, accessible government.

“DOING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE”: THE LOGIC OF STATE-MACHINE

From every day to transcendental. Contrary to the ostentation of proximity, we detect in the repertoire of images of *Cambiemos* a second visual logic: that of the State-machine. This dynamic displays an imaginary of efficiency, inspired by a certain deontology alien to the will or subjective desire: *Doing what needs to be done* is the motto of a series of audiovisuals and posters that propose, through examples, that the paroxysm of governing is doing. Institutional spots—on the YouTube channel, but also on the Casa Rosada website—, posters on public roads and the mailing system (sending emails) are the main communication devices used by this second logic.

We say State-machine and not machine government, because the main statist commitment of the government is put at stake in this logic: a kind of vindication of public work as a State duty beyond any responsible political agent. It is an operation oriented in two directions:



Figure 4. How to save energy at your place?

Source: YouTube, Casa Rosada – República Argentina.

first, a kind of *depersonalization* of the process, which puts the weight on the action and not on the actor: nominalizations, passives, non-personal forms of the verb abound (especially gerund, also infinitive) (Casa Rosada, 2017b); the second, a kind of *collectivization* of the process, which places the weight on the consequences of execution based on appeals to inclusive forms of “us”: “Together we are building a greener city” (Comuna 2 de Buenos Aires, 2018), “Together we are achieving what we proposed” (Cambiemos, 2018). The government-actor –whose signature is usually perceived, either as Presidency of the Nation or Government of the City, and even sometimes with the final words of its main leaders, Mauricio Macri in the first place–blurs in almost total anonymity or in national identification groups, from the enunciative inscription. The contrast with the previous administration is explicit, not only because of this sort of disappearance of the agent, but also because the prescriptive component that usually shapes the public work appears as a moral counterpart to those who did not do what had to be done (figure 5).

The use of photographs or documentary audiovisual records –with the sound of machines working, for example– entails the realizations’ verification, generating an authenticating effect. The spots, the posters, generally contain general or panoramic shots, which expose the monumental character of the works: a kind of machinist landscape that recalls the visual record of natural landscapes.

The transmission of the public works inauguration acts, headed by Macri and officials of his team, shows a similar logic. On the one hand, and in a clear gesture of opposition to the acts of the Kirchnerist governments, transmissions lack any kind of political-partisan symbol and any type of asymmetry device: there are no flags, no parades, no scenarios, and much less governmental stands. The austerity of the staging offers us the image of a sober, efficient, precise government, as laconic as spectacular (figure 6). On the other hand, the inserts of general shots showing the work process and the finished product, while the speeches of civil servants succeed, contribute to reinforce the idea of efficiency, the passion *for doing*, a concept often stressed by the President.

The logic of the State-machine is also common in the emails of the subnational governments of *Cambiemos*, for example, that of the city of Buenos Aires. Messages whose subject is “Mariano, let’s talk about security in your neighborhood (Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, personal communication, December 3, 2018); messages that invite to dialogue and meeting, combining didactic and innovative sections:

Hi Mariano, how are you? Listening and exchanging opinions is a good way to continue improving the safety of the city together. Thus, come this Thursday 6 at 6:15 p.m. to your nearest Police Station, to talk with the police authorities about everything we can do to take care of the neighborhood (Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, personal communication, December 3, 2018).



Figure 5. Doing what needs to be done

Source: YouTube, Casa Rosada – República Argentina.



Figure 6. Inauguration of the Ribera Sur Olympic Bridge

Source: YouTube, Casa Rosada – República Argentina.

Within the imaginary of *Cambiemos*, the mention of the great public work does not operate at the expense of the small work in the neighborhoods—such as pruning or cleaning the sewers— or the polite neighborhood gestures, such as taking out the garbage on time.

From a national highway to the drain of *your* street,

the important is that the work is concrete and visible, a contact device between the government and the citizen. It is a tangible dimension of management. However, this palpable vein coexists with an idea of *eternity* or *timelessness* that public work would offer citizens. One of the government's spots says:

A highway is forever. A bridge is forever. A water network is forever. It's not just for today, it's forever. And what is done forever is the first thing we have to do. (...) It seems incredible that we are talking about something as basic as opening a tap and obtaining clean water, right? (Casa Rosada –República Argentina, 2017a 00:02 - 00:21)

The long term of the public work –the timelessness of the State– contrasts in *Cambiemos*, as usual, with the short term of the preceding populism. At the same time, the importance of public action does not forget the domestic, close, homelike character: the water network and opening a tap. The key elements are the efficiency, transcendence and tangibility of public works.

THE LOGIC OF PASTORAL GOVERNMENT

Acting like a consistent rejection of the charismatic leader figure, the depersonalization of the government's image, which can be seen as a sort of *nationalization* of management, contrary to the *personalization* of the previous government, leads us to explore a third area within the governmental imaginary of *Cambiemos* : that of pastoral government.

This imaginary stratum is based on two complementary dynamics, which we will call *totalizing* and *individualizing*. The collective and the individual and, in the middle, a sort of unrestricted circulation of the voices of each and every citizen, eased by the coordination of the political leadership. No black boxes, no secrets, no double senses. The key is the predisposition to listening, to exchange points of view; it is the concern for all, as a national collective, and for each one, valued as individuals. Unequal beings, diverse, but equivalent, that would contribute from their stand, from their experience, to the operation of the society.

The staging of citizen-neighbors, whose emblem is *el timbreo*¹³, abound in the imaginary of the ruling party. It is an aggregative, individual and connective vision of politics, which presents two large semiotic nodes. The first is an idea of close by policies, no less tangible than opening a tap and having clean water. The *timbreos'* photographs or footages show two, three, five people, the represented and the representatives, talking, smiling. Those who listen are usually politicians; those who speak, the neighbors. The bodies' proxemic allows to infer a personal treatment, without mediations. The second node is an idea of individual effort that results in collective construction. For example, the case of the famous spot based on the question: What is needed

to make an *empanada*¹⁴? The enumeration, in response code, goes from Edgardo, the cow breeder, to María Teresa, "a grandmother with a good hand for folding the edges [of the *empanada*]". A list of individuals whose task, daily and specific, the government connects and fosters from public works, transportation or production credits.

The assembly line is reproduced in abyss by the very narration of the video: the government makes an assembly of the individuals' tasks, linked by the syntagmatic connection of each scene narrated by the audiovisual enunciator, an aggregating succession of actors and actions. The work of a vast network of individuals comes together in an *empanada*. The whole and the part, the cause and the effect, the management of the tangible (figure 7).

The second dynamic within the pastoral logic is linked to the notion of team. In opposition to the concept of individual leadership, linked to the romantic matrix structured by the Kirchnerist conception of politics¹⁵, the valuation of teamwork brings political praxis in line with the world of the 21st century.

The conceptual schism that the leader/team opposition implies in *Cambiemos'* imaginary exceeds the limits of what we might call the *political field*; i.e., it far exceeds the mere question of ways of exercising politics: the seemingly more vertical and traditional leaderships of the 20th century, populist or democratic, and the seemingly more horizontal and a la mode teamwork. What initially can be seen as a simple way of imagining a form of government exercise or, in a broader sense, a form of political praxis, is revealed at a closer look as a conceptual frontier of a cultural nature, which distinguishes between a traditional and a modern conception of social organization, valid for both politics and business, for sports and for NGOs. It is a true historical hermeneutic: unlike the worn rituals of leaders, teamwork becomes the figure of a technical and professional vision of the exercise of politics, which is fully intended to be in line with the characteristics of the 21st century.

Press conferences, interviews, decentralization of authorized voices—it is no longer the charismatic leader, but a set of voices, sometimes at odds with each other, as in the exemplary case of Elisa Carrió— show an emphasis on the staging dialogic genres (figure 8). In *Hagamos equipo* (Let's team up), Vommaro and Morresi highlight this character of political connection rather than political assembly. The leader as an editor, politics as a staging¹⁶.



Figure 7. Everything is possible together

Source: YouTube, Casa Rosada – República Argentina.



Figure 8. Interview with Marcos Peña, chief of staff

Source: Instagram, @casarosadaargentina.

The leader, rather than defining ideas, directing or fulfilling the role of decision-maker, acts as a 'harmonizer', someone capable of listening to all points of view, combining some of them and implementing them in a way that seems that they all have collaborated in the path's definition (Vommaro & Morresi, 2015, p. 54).

But it is not just a team of rulers. Also features, for example, are the employees of Casa Rosada. A recurring type of post on the Instagram and Facebook accounts consists of the worker's (self) portrait, with a brief

presentation, stated in first or third person: "I have been working in this House for more than 48 years (...)" (Casa Rosada Argentina, 2018a) (figure 9); "Marta Elvira Gómez has worked at Casa Rosada for 29 years. She is part of the general services area" (Casa Rosada, 2018b). Moreover, usually the reference to the team involve all the homeland inhabitants: "We have to create a team of 40 million Argentineans," said Macri when inaugurating a community dining room in Santiago del Estero (Macri instó a formar un..., 2017). "This team of



Figure 9. Carlos Gómez, Casa Rosada's oldest waiter

Source: Instagram, @casarosadaargentina.

40 million Argentines has to be the generation that changes the country's history forever" (Mauricio Macri, 2017b), he published on his Twitter account. Thus, we see an imaginary logic that could be described as pastoral, in the sense that the staging shows a concern, an attention, an interest for everyone and for each one, for the whole and for each individual.

THE LOGIC OF TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT

To the logics already mentioned within the visual universe of *Cambiemos* we can add one more: the logic of transparent government. This one appears, above all, in the most conventional Internet supports, such as the Casa Rosada website. Its main topics are to provide information, deliver statistics, make balance sheets accessible. Thus, for example, the report *El estado del Estado* (the state of the State), is available to any user. It also allows to consult the presidential agenda or the activities of the First Lady, knowing the main government programs, seeing photographs, videos and texts of public officials. Information and accessibility are shown as core values within the imaginary of a good government (Rosanvallon, 2015).

The processes of interaction with the Internet-based media have generated not only new types of political discourses, among which, for example, the extension of the political speech of *Cambiemos*, but also new ways of consuming politics, of participating in politics and of evaluating or controlling the operations of the political field. Politicians are under the watchful eye of journalism, but also society exercises its right to vigilance and denunciation. In this regard, the ability to adapt politics is played both in the use of an Instagram

or Facebook account and in the quantity and quality of the information that a government makes available to any citizen.

In the case of *Cambiemos*, the government assumes, through its computer resources, a facilitating role, of accelerating the feedback experience: it is about providing information, performing online procedures, favoring the interfaces between the government and citizens. The main references –six tabs– are in the center of the Casa Rosada website, without a common thread: *Red Sube* (public transportation system), *El Estado en tu barrio* (the State in your neighborhood), *Tarifa social* (governmental aids), *Objetivos de gobierno* (government objectives), *Créditos hipotecarios* (mortgage loans) and *El estado del Estado* (the state of the State). One of the top tabs displays all kinds of information, especially related to sensitive topics for public opinion, such as official advertising or the records of officials' public hearings (those requested, those granted). The simple and clear interface facilitates navigation and the constant palette of cold colors shows formality, moderation and confidence (figure 10).

The ostentation of management is also a logic of imagination within the rhetoric of *Cambiemos*, although its place is usually relegated due to the fascination with the latest dynamics within its hyper-mediated imaginary. The accessibility time is added to the time of union and teamwork.

The imagination of *Cambiemos* also bets on transparency in another area of its political communication. We refer to the spectacle of the daily life of its main leaders, true in *appearance* to their social origins: from the quasi-rococo images of Macri with

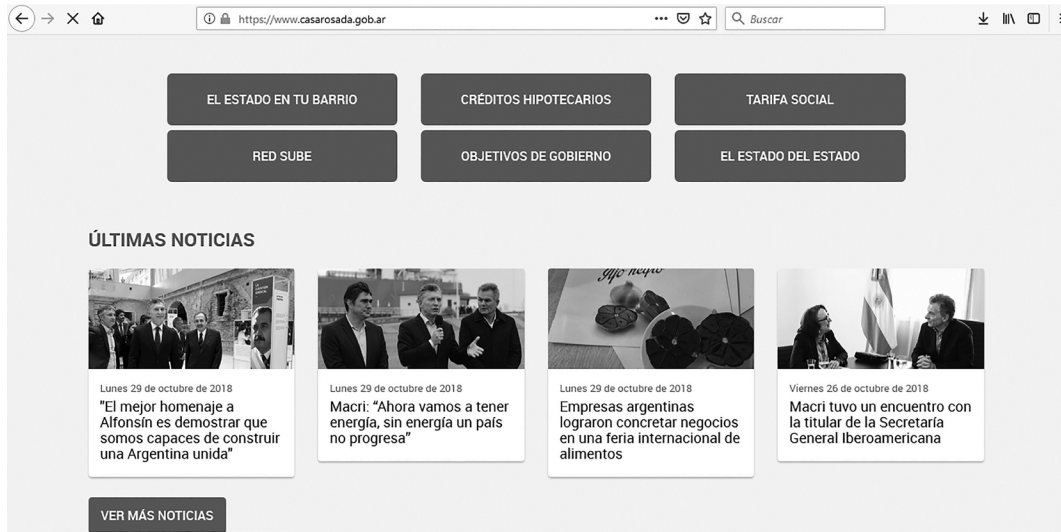


Figure 10. Casa Rosada website

Source: www.caserosada.gob.ar.

Figure 11. The President's family

Source: Instagram, @mauriciomacri.

his family to those of María Eugenia Vidal with her children. We can see the above-mentioned duplicity of rulers ruling and living their uncommon daily lives.

Macri's case is notable, especially in digital social networks such as Facebook and Instagram, where the photos of the President with his wife Juliana Awada and his daughter Antonia offer an aesthetic that in no way moves away—or that closely resembles—those interiors and exultant exteriors of elegant and refined subjects who enjoy their own well-being, whether in the United States, Jordan or Argentine (figure 11). Exaltation of

hedonism—Macri's vacations are a repeated object of criticism—filial love, romantic love, gallant parties, aristocracy lying on the grass, happy pets, a kind, graceful, carefree life.

We are far from the bricks without plaster or the unfurnished kitchens that feed the most *common* or *popular* imaginary of *Cambiemos* (Dagatti, 2018; see figures 13 and 14). However, the connection between representatives and represented seems to be played not in the aesthetic equality between the parts (nor in economic equality), but in the frank visibility of



Figure 12. Official reception

Source: Twitter, @CasaRosada.



Figure 13. Timbreo

Source: Instagram, @mariuvidal.

each of the actors with the other; after all, almost no coalition leader claims popular credentials for him or herself. The contrast with the opacity of the private life of former President Cristina Fernández –and with the origin of her wealth, a question repeatedly pointed out by the mainstream media– is notorious.

THE LOGIC OF PROTOCOL GOVERNMENT

A different logic creates a certain distance that separates the President from the everyday and turns him into an authority figure: the exaltation of the

presidential investiture and the celebration of the protocol. Although proximity no longer operates as an interface vector between representatives and those they represent, it is another way of staging the dialogue instances.

As we have already noted, in the Instagram account of Casa Rosada, playful and aesthetic motifs predominate; the Twitter account, on the other hand, is full of images about work meetings and visits to the President. Almost without intervals, every day, we are informed with accompanying photographs that “today, the President



Figure 14. Presidential visit to a Cordoba family

Source: Instagram, @mauriciomacri.

received in his office the President of the Republic of Senegal, Macky Sall” (Casa Rosada, 2018c), that “the President met with Alfred Kelly, CEO from the global technology company Visa Inc.” (Casa Rosada, 2018d), or that “the President received in his office William Franke, head of the JetSmart airline” (Casa Rosada, 2018e) (figure 12). With a noticeable contrast with the daily scenes of electoral times, the uniqueness of his body *on stage* within the halls of Casa Rosada, full of luxurious details, reminds us of the distance between him, the President, the maximum representative, and we, the group of citizens.

Heads of State or high-level officials from other countries, CEOs of international or national companies, recognized personalities of politics or culture; these protocol meetings, also daily, allow citizens to attend the usual functions of the Head of State. They separate Macri –and his officials– from the current scenarios of public life and place his figure on the background of State institutions.

THE COMMON-EVERYDAY LOGIC

The electoral communication of *Cambiemos* is far from governmental communication, although it coexists with it in periods of elections. In the first one a logic that we could call common-everyday prevails. It is usually chosen to represent the relationship of officials or candidates with citizens, with neighbors. The spaces represented through videos, posts or posters are houses (preferably humble), squares (neighborhood space par excellence), workplaces without crowds (fields, retail

stores, workers cut from the ensemble). The relationship between the representatives and those represented is close, almost familiar, hand in hand. *Timbreos*, phone calls, personal emails.

Typical values such as work, effort, or the euphoric construction of popular sectors are exalted, but these values have a dimension more private than public, more individual than collective: it is about each worker, each family, each neighbor, leaving aside all political memory. The leader and his officials have little charisma, but they thrive on proximity; or, rather, they build their charisma with the tones of proximity, contact, contiguity. Their values are listening, fallibility, closeness, humility (it does not matter if it is a millionaire or a business manager, because he/she can be a millionaire and humble at the same time). Dialogic scenes abound in which politicians invariably *listen* (figure 14). Their spots privilege general, American or medium shots, capable of covering a few bodies whose distances often suggest a personal interaction.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The image systems just described offer clues about a state of social discourse in our country. The *Cambiemos* government has deployed multifaceted imaginaries, which tell us about its capacity for communicative adaptation to different media supports and to the different population segments associated with them. If Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, act as daily contact networks –full of aestheticization, playfulness and

pedagogy–, the website of the Casa Rosada and the Twitter account prioritize an institutional imagination, protocol, having as a classic reader a citizen rather than an empathic or interactive user-follower.

When studying the political imagination of *Cambiemos* as a ruling force, we notice its ability to relate with certain contemporary logics of the mediation of politics and with new styles of political citizenship (Dalton, 2014). We refer to the fact that contemporary society, in its interpenetration with the current media ecosystem, with the scenario of acceleration and multi-temporality of NICTs (Rosa, 2010), experiences a new hegemony of the imagination of politics, which leads to the extreme certain characteristics that the so-called videopolitics had favored but in no way exhausted, while eliminating or sanctioning in a negative way others, more linked to a classical way –and perhaps momentarily saturated– of representing the visible aspect of politics.

The distinctive features of this political imagination would be the apology of everyday life; the celebration of immediacy and proximity and the celebration of instances of dialogue (and the obliteration of those

of conflict). Its hard core would be the dialogue between representatives and those represented by them. Fairclough (2008) talks about the influence of conversational discourse on the orders of discourse on society. It is about celebrating the opinion or expression of each individual on public affairs and, as a logical obverse, of celebrating the listening, which is notoriously that of the politician.

Cambiemos hyper-mediatic imaginary–its imaginary created with memories and practices of old and new media, mass media and connective media– is organized around a limited set of visual arguments, an argumentative arsenal in terms of Angenot, whose scarcity –whose rarity– contrasts with the abundance of concrete statements, which circulate on public roads, traditional media, and digital social networks. We have studied the multiplicity of images shown by the government of *Cambiemos*. We are interested in understanding, even partially and provisionally, the reasons for the political dynamics and power games that organize and guide our common affairs. Studying the political imagination contributes to this understanding.

NOTES

1. This is not the place to discuss the relevance of the notion of field or its autonomy or heteronomy degree. The works of Le Bart (1998, 2003) and Dalton (2014) can be consulted regarding that topic.
2. The concept *culture of connectivity* refers to the recent work of van Dijck (2016), oriented to a critical history of social networks.
3. A good synthesis are the works by Verón (2013) and Carlón & Scolari (2009).
4. Defined as an '*organic*' unit, social discourse, says Angenot (2011), is not a *system* (in structuralist terms), but a relative homeostasis with its fluctuations and conflicts, from which an *atmosphere of common sense* derives, that prevails in a time.
5. According to Angenot (2011), each discursive field has common bets and constitutes a conflictive community that exploits the issues and strategies, demands entry rights, seeks homologation of products and maintains a certain compartmentalization aimed at preserving the canonical identity of the production. Each one confers a status to the agents that operate in it, which form a sort of conflicting companionship around common bets. The fields are not, in effect, harmonious collectivities, but spaces of competition where ideas are *put in opposition*, where practices face other practices, theses to antagonistic theses. Seen from the outside, every field is a device of rarefaction and censorship: it fixes what is acceptable and unacceptable, appropriate and inappropriate, compliant and non-compliant.
6. The systemic nature of discursive hegemony, as proposed by Angenot, has an advantage for the discourse analyst: to avoid the temptation of characterizing hegemonic processes as matters of owners of power. It is not about understanding hegemony as the set of discursive schemes, themes, ideas and ideologies that prevail, *predominate*, or have the highest degree of legitimacy in global social discourse or in any of its actors. Hegemony is, rather, the set of *repertoires* and rules and the topology of the *status* that confer positions of influence and prestige to these discursive entities, and provide them with styles, forms, micro stories and arguments that contribute to their acceptability.
7. We recognize that the theory of social discourse, like most theories of the discursive paradigm, is incompatible with an

instrumental and functionalist conception like the one that usually prevails, implicitly or explicitly, in studies within the scope of political communication. The reference to these studies has no other purpose than to distinguish in our article two times of politics: the *extensive* time of government communication and the *intense* time of electoral communication, a distinction that is pertinent to indicate moments of prevalence of different logics.

8. We use the hyper-mediatic or hyper-mediatized qualifiers interchangeably to refer to that contemporary society in which the media ecosystem is characterized by the coexistence of the traditional mass media system (radio, television, press) and the new Internet-based mediatization system, dominated by the media that Van Dijck (2016) calls connective (digital social networks, for example). Hyper-mediatized society –as expressed by Mario Carlón (2016)– would be a third stage, after mediatic and mediatized societies. Its characteristics have been worked profusely and systematically by said author based on his appropriation of Eliseo Verón's communication theory. On hyper-mediatization in Argentine politics, the reference works are those of Slimovich (2012, 2017).

9. The observed universe reached saturation, i.e., most of the images observed corresponded clearly to one of the five types we identified, or to an unequivocal combination of two of them.

10. By opposition to individual logics, distinction based on Verón (2013).

11. A meat and vegetable stew (translator's note).

12. In Spanish grammar, *voseo* is the use of *vos* as a second-person singular pronoun, including its conjugational verb forms in many dialects. In dialects that have it, it is used either instead of *tú*, or alongside it. In this context, it means that the official publications of Casa Rosada use a more informal language. Rather than choosing to use the canonical "tú" they go with the more colloquial –and more used in Argentina– "vos" (translator's note).

13. A campaign method as old as the elections. It consists in a politician visiting the neighbors of a commune to obtain votes to show that the people he/she represents always have an open channel of communication with their rulers or representatives. It seeks to generate a close and direct relationship.

14. A meat pie, typical from Argentina and other Latin American countries (translator's note).

15. See Dagatti (2015); specifically, chapter 5.

16. See, for example, the institutional spot *Nos juntamos* (Casa Rosada – República Argentina, 2016).

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