Communicational confrontations: Longitudinal analysis of a media-based contest

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The media-based communication between social movements and other actors is relevant to achieve their goals. This article addresses the dynamic and contentious aspects of the media-based communication generated by the Magallanes Social Movement and the Government of Chile. A quantitative analysis was made of 217 news and 499 quotations published during the events. The results indicate that the parties adopted differing communication strategies like making calls for action, talking positively about the own group, among others. Furthermore, the content of communications varied over time, but the strong relation between the communications issued and the occurrence of particular protest events suggests that while a communicational contest is certainly an interactive process, both camps do not just argue through the words, but also through the events that each camp organizes.
Keywords: social movements, protests, magallanes, communication, contest

Confrontación comunicacional: Análisis longitudinal de un enfrentamiento a través de los medios
La comunicación que se establece entre los movimientos sociales y otros actores a través de la prensa es relevante para alcanzar sus metas. Este articulo aborda los aspectos diná-micos y contenciosos de la comunicación mediada por la prensa del Movimiento Social de Magallanes y el Gobierno de Chile. Se realizó un análisis de contenido cuantitativo de 217 noticias y 499 citas publicadas durante los eventos. Los resultados indican que los actores adoptaron diferentes estrategias de comunicación como hacer llamados a la acción, hablar positivamente sobre el propio grupo, entre otros. Además, el contenido de estas cambia a través del tiempo. La fuerte relación entre la comunicación y la ocurrencia de eventos de protesta sugiere que mientras el enfrentamiento comunicacional es evidentemente un proceso interactivo, ambas partes discuten a través de palabras y los eventos que organizan.
Palabras clave: movimientos sociales, protestas, magallanes, comunicación, confrontación

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Confronto comunicacional: análise longitudinal de um confronto através da mídia

A comunicação estabelecida entre movimentos sociais e outros atores por meio da imprensa é relevante para o alcance de seus objetivos. Este artigo aborda os aspectos dinâmicos e contenciosos da comunicação mediada pela imprensa do Movimento Social de Magalhães e do Governo do Chile. Foi realizada uma análise quantitativa de conteúdo de 217 notícias e 499 citações publicadas durante os eventos. Os resultados indicam que os atores adotaram diferentes estratégias de comunicação como fazer apelos à ação, falar positivamente sobre o seu próprio grupo, entre outras. Além disso, o conteúdo dessas mudanças ao longo do tempo. A forte relação entre a comunicação e a ocorrência de eventos de protesto sugere que, embora o confronto da comunicação seja evidentemente um processo interativo, ambas as partes argumentam por meio das palavras e dos eventos que organizam.

Palavras-chave: movimentos sociais, protestos, magalhães, comunicação, enfrentamento

Confrontation communicationnelle: Analyse longitudinale d'une confrontation par les médias

La communication établie entre les mouvements sociaux et les autres acteurs par le biais de la presse est pertinente pour atteindre leurs objectifs. Cet article aborde les aspects dynamiques et controversés de la communication médiatisée par la presse du Mouvement social de Magallanes et le gouvernement du Chili. Une analyse quantitative du contenu de 217 articles d'actualité et 499 citations publiés lors des événements a été réalisée. Les résultats indiquent que les acteurs ont adopté différentes stratégies de communication telles que lancer des appels à l'action, parler positivement de leur propre groupe, entre autres. De plus, le contenu de ces dernières évolue avec le temps. La relation étroite entre la communication et la survenue d'événements de protestation suggère que si la confrontation de la communication est évidemment un processus interactif, les deux parties se disputent à travers des mots et des événements qu'elles organisent.

Mots-clés: mouvements sociaux, protestations, magallanes, communication, confrontation

Several authors have highlighted the importance of communication established between representatives of social movements and other actors in protest cycles, through channels provided by the mass media (Gamson, 2001; Gamson et al. 1992; Klandermans, 1994; Koopmans, 2004; Koopmans & Olzak, 2004; Koopmans & Statham, 1999; Mc Curdy, 2012; Obregón & Tufte, 2017; Thomas, 2017). This importance has to do with the media's ability to both generate and manifest public opinion (Rucht, 2014), and with that the media could allow the movements to express their demands and gain sympathy which is fundamental to achieve their goals (Gamson, 2004).

One of the primary objectives of a social movement is therefore to establish a media presence (Bennet & Segerberg, 2015), as failure to do so would leave their cause invisible to their intended audience (Gamson, 2001, 2009), and would result in their exclusion from the debate and from the resolution of social issues (Koopmans & Olzak, 2004).

Furthermore, even in social movements where social networks are consolidated as means of communication and alternative information (Obregón & Tufte, 2017), a considerable proportion of communication exchange between social movements and the various political actors involved in the conflict continue taking place through media channels (Koopmans, 2004). If the issue is considered by the authorities to be worthy of attention, they will react to the media activity answering to social movements via the same channel. The movement will in turn use this response to re-evaluate and adapt their strategies (Koopmans 2004). Thus, the media becomes an interaction space (Mc Curdy, 2012) in which the actors deploy various communicative tactics that enter dialogue, not only with parties that agree with and support them, but also with those who disagree with their message and seek to attack them (Klandermans, 1994). Meanwhile, they are observed and

assessed by those actors who maintain more neutral positions (Gamson, 2004; Koopmans, 2004).

Given the complexity of communication in social movements (Obregón & Tufte, 2017), media-based communication has led them to be studied principally using qualitative methodologies based on the analysis of framings, that is the analysis of construction of meaning by the leaders of social movements and other relevant actors (Snow et al., 2018). Even though some scholars have suggested the necessity of studying framing using quantitative methods (Snow et al., 2014) the complexity of studying the construction of meaning makes it difficult to achieve this goal.

A simpler way of understanding media-based communication of social movements and their opponents is seeing it as a display of communicative tactics in the press. Communicative tactics could be defined as speech techniques that enable a speaker to achieve the communication goals in a specific situation. These might interact in contentious circumstances across the time where different actors participate (Artym, 2013).

During a cycle of protest, different actors can display different communicative strategies (Obregón & Tufte, 2017) like positive self-presentation, opponent's discredit, forming negative situation assessment, among others, to modify the opinion of the audience and influence the evolution of the conflict (Ryan, 1991). These tactics constitute the concrete way in which the various actors implement their communication strategies, understood as sequences of communicative actions, organized in accordance with the goals of each actor.

Although there are some quantitative studies that have involved systematic press reviews and quantitative content analysis of frames to describe some of its most simple but highly relevant characteristics (e.g., De Benedictis et al., 2019), the use of quantitative research in the study of media-based communication developed in the context of social conflicts is still in its beginnings. As far as the authors' knowledge, up to now, no attempt has been made to quantitatively study how the communicative tactics that the social movement and its adversaries

display influence each other, and how that relates to the events that took place during the protest.

To go some way towards filling this knowledge gap, the present paper explores, in the first place, the dynamic nature of the communication process of social movements, through a quantitative and longitudinal analysis of interaction between different communicative tactics (Artym, 2013), displayed by a social movement, its allies and adversaries, as they are presented by the press. We understand that studying quantitatively the communications tactics used by each camp will not allow an in-depth analysis of each frame and we also recognize that the press selects, and therefore distorts, the content of the speeches of the actors involved in a social conflict (Snow et al. 2014), examples of this are qualitative studies of press framing in Latin American that evidence how the media tend to show a limited part of mobilizations (e.g. Browne et al., 2022; Pérez Arrendo, 2016). Nevertheless, given that our interest is to systematically study the coevolution of the communication tactics of the actors in a conflict using direct quotes and different publications, potential distortions in the content of the press do not greatly affect our results.

In second place, we will try to determine whether there is a relationship between the communication tactics used by each camp and the main events that occurred during the protests, in line with the suggestion made by Koopmans and Statham (1999) to combine the analysis of the discourses of social actors with the Protests Events Analysis (PEA), proposal that until we acknowledge has not been implemented until now.

Our case study, which will be described in detail later, is a brief but intense protest campaign carried out in the Magallanes Region, in southern Chile in 2011 that lasted 13 days and involved 37 protest events. The communicative tactics developed by the Magallanes Social Movement (MSM) and the Government of Chile (GCh), were identified through a quantitative content analysis of the media-based communications by each camp.

Communication in social movements

Be able to express their ideas on the press is essential for different actors since media is the biggest site of political dispute (Gamson, 2001). Media gives visibility to different messages that actors seek to promote to people, so they need to be effective to spread their messages (Cable, 2017). But media also is a contentious place where actors interact and confront ideas (Gamson et al., 1992).

Communication in social movements is complex (Obregón & Tufte, 2017), and from the frame theory we understand that the communication between them and other actors is seen as an interactive, dynamic, evolving and contentious process (Benford & Snow, 2000), and a subject of challenge (Gamson, 2009). This is because communication can change as the movement develop as a result of interaction with other actors (Obregón & Tufte, 2019)

During the initial stages of a protest cycle or the emergence of a social movement, it is possible that the political world will fail to recognize movements as a relevant actor (Amenta et al., 2016). However, once the movement has established itself as a social force, it is hoped that political actors will acknowledge them, giving rise to dialogue between representatives of the movement and its adversaries, all of which is mediated by the press (McAdam et al.,1996).

The actors must each attempt to convince the audience as to the validity of their world view (Ryan & Alexander 2006). This is fundamental to the movement's success because if they convert the audience, they can increase its membership (Gamson 2001; Obregón & Tufte, 2017), and boosting its strength to mobilize (Gamson, 2004).

In the communication that movements and their adversaries established through the press, they also create group identity (Benford & Snow, 2000), in the sense that the movement must define its own characteristics and those of its detractors. In this way, protagonist identity fields are defined, which refer to the attributions about the individuals and groups that support the cause of the movement, and antagonist identity fields, which refer to the characteristics of the antagonistic

individuals or groups of the movement (Hunt et al., 1994). The leaders and spokespeople of both adversaries are in charge of articulating its constituent identities, and for projecting these into the public sphere (Domínguez, 2015).

In the process of identity creation, governments and the business sector are often the main antagonists of these movements, while simultaneously being the target of their demands. They are seen as actors capable of providing solutions to problems, but at the same time guilty of the inadequacies being denounced (Knight & Greenberg, 2011).

While the movement strives to legitimize its challenge, its opponents seek to preserve the status quo (Cable, 2017). In this confrontation, both actors adopt a range of strategies and tactics to neutralize the opposing party's claims (Gamson, 2004). As a result, both groups will tailor and modify their communication to ignore, discredit and attack their opponent, shrug off their attacks, disparage them using stereotypes, under-represent them, distort their objectives, and even attempt to partially absorb rival communications and reconfigure them (Ryan, 1991), so communicational tactics can be shaped in different forms (Obregón & Tufte, 2017)

In this communicational confrontation, movements find themselves at a disadvantage in terms of economic and/or cultural resources compared to political, institutional, or governmental actors (Ryan et al. 2001). This is compounded by the fact that most communicational confrontations are mediated by the press (McAdam et al. 1996), with whom institutional actors tend to have a closer relationship and maintain regular contact (Gamson, 2001; Cable, 2017; Kilgo & Harlow, 2019). However, the press is not the only media that social movements can use to communicate their ideas, some authors have claimed that they can also communicate through contentious actions (Thomas, 2017).

The Magallanes Social Movement

The Magallanes Region is the southernmost region of Chile. Due to the climate and to the region's remoteness from the center of what is a highly centralized country, cost of living in Magallanes is high compared to other regions. One of the region's key resources is natural gas, which plays an important role in the lives of local people on both a domestic and industrial level. It is the primary fuel for heating and for powering the region's buses, and is crucial to the generation of electricity (Romero, 2014).

The price of domestic gas had remained at a constant level for many years in the region, but on 29th December 2010, the GCh decided to raise it by 16.8%. This news, which was broadcast in the media the following day, took the people of Magallanes by surprise because it represented a broken campaign promise by President (Romero, 2014; Valenzuela et al., 2016).

The first to declare their dissatisfaction were the region's parliamentary representatives (Romero 2014). These were joined by a variety of regional actors, including businessmen, unions and a number of social organizations, who all came together to form the broadly representative Magallanes Citizens' Assembly (Valenzuela et al., 2016), that we will call Magallanes Social Movement (MSM). There began a series of statements made in the press, which in turn gave rise to a number of protest events. The MSM's central demand concerned lessening the planned gas price increase, and the actors targeted during demonstrations were figures from the GCh and the regional authorities.

The first major demonstration against the price increase took place on 5th January 2011, with the occupation by activists of the airport in Punta Arenas (Segovia & Gamboa, 2012). Later, a full-scale regional strike began on 11th January, bringing to a halt all commercial activity and transportation and isolating the region from the rest of the country, resulting in many tourists becoming trapped and leading to shortages of food and fuel (Romero, 2014). Although the protests caused disruption for inhabitants, they received widespread support and involved a minimum of violence.

On 17th January, the GCh announced the invocation of the "State Security Law", a measure which imposes stricter punishments (Romero 2014). The conflict came to an end on 18th January, when the two parties agreed an annual gas price increase of 3%, in line with the national price increase, and promised fuel subsidies to poorer families (Romero, 2014).

We have selected this case study for three reasons: a) the movement was relatively successful, but at the same time unexpected by all actors involved, constituting a moving backdrop against which they were forced to continually modify their communication strategies over the course of the movement; b) it was a regional movement, while the majority of studies on social movements have been conducted on functional movements (e.g. students, workers, etc.), which tend to be homogeneous in terms of the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. By contrast, regional movements tend to bring together people of different ages, genders, occupations, ideologies and socio-economic status (Asún & Zúñiga 2013), a fact that presents greater challenges for leaders in terms of achieving a confluence of interest; c) the brief duration of the protest wave combined with the high density of news articles appearing in the press allowed us to study the communication process involved in the contest day by day, and to appreciate its evolution with the greatest detail. Furthermore, the evolving and dynamic nature of communicational process has been researched primarily in the context of movements that take place over the course of months or years, and less attention has been paid to short-term protest campaigns, despite the considerable influence they may have on public opinion (Lee, 2012).

Our hypothesis was that the communicational contest between the two opposing camps constitutes not only a dynamic process in which different communication tactics are adopted by the opposing camps during the course of a social protest cycle, but also an interactive process in which the communication tactics of each camp change in response to communications from the opposing camp and the events that occur during the movement.

Method

As we already pointed, the study of social movements communication using the print media risks the potential influence of certain biases which could exclude some actors and over-represent others (Snow et al. 2014). In order to address this problem, three different publications were selected. The first two are the national newspapers El Mercurio and La Tercera. These are the country's most read news publications covering political issues, and they do have some editorial differences (Navia & Osorio 2015). The third is a regional newspaper, El Pingüino de Magallanes. This was chosen in an attempt to balance out coverage received by the two camps, as there is evidence that national newspapers tend to put less attention in events that occur far away from the national capital and to be more representative of political actors than social actors (Hughes & Mellado, 2016; Kilgo & Harlow, 2019), while local newspapers tend to give more coverage to local conflicts and the local social actors.

Procedure and analysis of information

In order to be exhaustive, we reviewed all of the editions published beginning 10 days before and ending 10 days after the conclusion of the conflict, and found relevant news articles over a period beginning six days before the start of the protest events, and ending three days after their conclusion. The search yielded a total of 217 articles published between 30th December 2010 and 20th January 2011, of which 144 appeared in El Pingüino, 37 in La Tercera and 36 in El Mercurio.

Seeking to describe the explicit communications deployed by each social actor, in each of the articles, direct quotations – that is, those textually-represented declarations pertaining to the actor that made them, and which appeared within quotation marks – were selected. This search yielded a total of 583 quotations, and in each case the quotation itself was recorded along with information about the speaker. Of these quotations, 372 came from El Pingüino, 110 from El Mercurio, and 101 from La Tercera.

Each of the quotations was read, and a code system was developed to categories them. The system was implemented by two researchers working in parallel according to previously established criteria. The average level of agreement between codifiers was 93%, with a minimum of 89% and a maximum of 97%.

The first stage of quotation codification concerned the speaker (MSM, GCh, allies of each, other actors, and unidentified actors). In order to analyses communication between the movement and the government, 84 quotations from other actors and unidentified actors were removed, leaving 499 quotations for final analysis (85.6% of the original total), and comprises all of the quotations that can be ascribed to identifiable actors who adopted a position in the conflict.

We shall refer to the MSM participants as the "challengers". These are affected by the problem of increasing gas prices, and are the direct beneficiaries of the movement's activity. The "defenders", on the other hand, are governmental actors in opposition to the movement. The allies of the challenge camp benefit from or are affected indirectly by the movement – tending to be activists or sympathizers of organizations or parties opposed to the GCh, but not based in the region – while those on the side of the defenders do not belong directly to the GCh, but are political allies, for example, activists or representatives of political parties that support the government.

The next step was to codify communication between actors. In order to identify efforts to construct a group identity through communication, we codified the presence or absence of the first-person plural ("we"), used either explicitly or implicitly, in the speaker's statement. When present, we identified whether its use constituted an explicit reference to a specific identity, for example, references to the inhabitants of a region or members of a union, government, political party, etc.

Finally, each communication was codified according to the communicational tactics detailed in Table 1. Since there is no comprehensive classification of communicative tactics (Artym, 2013), these were defined inductively once all of the material had been reviewed. We considered the fact that during the develop of a cycle of protest,

actors frame who are ourselves and others (Hunt et al. 1994), as well as influence the evolution of the conflict by motivating supporters to take action and attacking their opponents (Ryan, 1991).

Table 1

Codes for the "communication type" category

Code	Definition	Example
Threat	Reference to a forceful measure that would be taken if a given situation is not resolved.	"The region will be brought to an indefinite standstill, and it will not be just public transport that will cease to operate"
Criticism of government	Negative comments made about the defenders.	"We seek a solution that will serve the Magallanes region as a whole, not just laughable subsidies to patch holes here and there"
Criticism of movement	Negative comments made about the challengers.	"I think that right now the Assembly is failing to represent the community of Magallanes; they have betrayed the original spirit of the movement"
Self-victimization	Indication that the speaker's group is disadvantaged or deprived.	"[with the gas price rises] it is not only flour that goes up; it's salt, sugar, transport, etc. Everything goes up"
Positive reference to own group	Emphasis of positive aspects of the behaviour or nature of the speaker's group.	"The government made its decision in the best interests of the Magallanes region, looking to the medium and long term"
Call to action	Invitation to third parties to take action within the context of the protests.	"As of now we are calling for people across our region to engage in an indefinite regional strike"
Support for movement	Support for the challengers, without belonging to that camp, or ask for support from other challengers, if it belonging to that camp.	"We are mobilizing in solidarity with the Magallanes Citizens' Assembly against the gas price rises"

Code	Definition	Example
Support for government	Support for the defenders, without belonging to that camp, or ask for support from other defenders, if it belonging to that camp.	"Minister Raineri is working hard to address the issue of energy"
Other	Quotations which cannot be assigned to any of the above codes.	"Problems have eased overnight"

Later, a descriptive and longitudinal analysis was made of the global number of communications issued by each actor, as well as their type. The longitudinal analysis studied the relationship between the communications of the various actors, and of these communications with the main protest events. Variance Analysis and longitudinal Cross-Correlations were used, with $p < 0.05$ as the criterion for statistical significance.

Results

Descriptive results

The majority of quotations are from actors in the challenge camp, constituting 38.5% of all quotations selected. In second place come allies of the challenge camp, with 31.1%. In third place was the defense camp, with 26.1%, and finally the allies of the defense camp, with 4.4%.

In general, the most quoted actor by the newspapers was MSM with 38.5% followed by its allies with 31.1%. Different newspapers quoted some actors more than others. The most quoted actor by El Pingüino was the MSM (47.6%), while in El Mercurio, and La Tercera it was the GCh with 40.0% and 46.6%, respectively.

We found that the first-person plural was used either explicitly or implicitly, in more than half of the quotations, and that it was most common in statements made by the challenge camp, followed by those of their allies. Furthermore, the challengers were the only group to use the first-person plural in the majority of their quotations (see Table 2).

Table 2

Use of the first-person plural "we" per camp

Group	First person plural used?				Total (%)	
	Yes		No			
Challengers	141	(53.2%)	51	(21.8%)	192	(38.5%)
Defenders	48	(18.1%)	82	(35.0%)	130	(26.1%)
Challenge camp allies	70	(26.4%)	85	(36.3%)	155	(31.1%)
Defense camp allies	6	(2.3%)	16	(6.8%)	22	(4.4%)
Total	265	(53.1%)	234	(46.9%)	499	(100%)

We only discerned an explicit allusion to a particular identity in 38% of cases (98 quotations), among them principally regional identity – expressed as "Magallánica" (Magellan) or "Patagónica" (Patagonian) – which appeared in 61 quotations, i.e., 62.2% of the cases in which an identity could be determined.

Table 3 presents the proportion of each type of communication issued per group of actors. Of the 499 quotations, 35 were categorized as "other" and eliminated from the analysis, leaving a total "of 464 quotations containing clear communicative content. In general, the most commonly used communication type was "positive reference to own group", followed by "criticism of government" and "self-victimization". The communication type used least was "support for government".

Table 3

Type of communication per group

| Communication code	Group				Total (n = 464)
	Challengers (n = 179)	Defenders (n = 122)	Challenge camp allies (n = 143)	Defense camp allies (n = 20)	
Threat	10.6%	0.8%	2.8%	0.0%	5.2%
Support for government	0.0%	2.5%	0.0%	5.0%	0.9%
Support for movement	4.5%	4.1%	9.1%	5.0%	5.8%
Criticism of government	23.5%	4.9%	46.9%	60.0%	27.4%
Criticism of movement	4.5%	8.2%	2.1%	10.0%	5.0%
Positive reference to own group	23.5%	73.8%	18.2%	10.0%	34.5%
Call to action	10.1%	0.8%	4.9%	0.0%	5.6%
Self-victimization	23.5%	4.9%	16.1%	10.0%	15.7%

The challengers exhibit a diverse communication strategy, making use of seven of the eight tactics – "threat", "Support for movement", "self-victimization", "criticism of government", "criticism of movement", "positive reference to own group" and "call to action" – with the most commonly used tactics being "criticism of government", "self-victimization" and "positive reference to own group".

The defenders make use of all communication tactics; however, their communication strategy is much more uniform, with "threat" and "call to action" each appearing only once. Furthermore, the tactic used most frequently by this group (in almost 74% of quotations) was "positive reference to own group". Allies of the challengers used "criticism of government" most frequently.

Surprisingly, allies of the defenders (actors sympathetic to the GCh) too used "criticism of government" most frequently, which could suggest that this group chose to criticize the government in order to avoid damage to their own popularity. In any case, an analysis of the content of communications by these actors reveals that the majority of their criticisms refer to management of the conflict rather than to its substantive position on the contentious issue.

Longitudinal results

In order to describe the formation of the communicational dispute, the Figure 1 presents the declarations made by the various groups between the moment the gas price rise was announced and the initiation of meaningful protests (5th January 2011). All of the figures were created using relative frequencies for the actors and types of communication, as, given the discrepancy in the number of communications from each camp, absolute frequencies would conceal the differences.
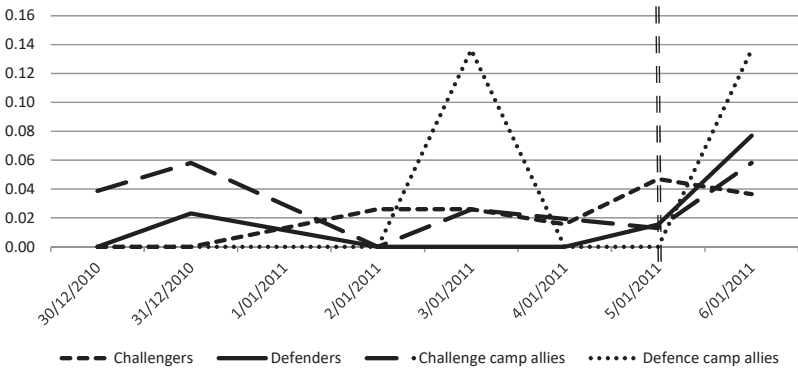
Note. Proportion of statements issued over time by actors belonging to each group. The vertical line represents the occurrence of a major protest event, and the non-vertical lines represent the groups. The vertical axis shows the proportion of statements issued each day by each group, and the horizontal axis shows the dates.

Figure 1. Initiation of communication by each group

Allies of the challenge camp were first to be quoted in the press (30th December), followed by the defense camp (31st December), the challenge camp (2nd January), and finally the defense camp allies (3rd January). This provides an indication of how the defense camp responds rapidly to statements from allies of the challenge camp (primarily parliamentarians of opposition political parties), it remained silent when actors from the challenge camp itself were quoted, and only reappeared several days later (5th January) once the challenge camp had managed to conduct a series of successful demonstrations. Thus, the government only responded directly to the movement once the latter had become an important actor. This shows that one of the first tasks facing a movement is to secure the relevance to qualify them as a voice in the public debate. This is something that the MSM achieves through organizing successful demonstrations.

The order in which the various actors appeared in the press also provides an indication of the close relationships between certain parties and the media, with quotations from formal political actors appearing before those of the leaders of the MSM.

Despite to above, in order to systematically determine the order in which the communications occur and to establish whether the quantity of communications from each actor is influenced by the quantity of communications from other actors, the temporal cross-relations between the communications of the four actors were calculated. It was found that government communications were significantly correlated ($p < 0.05$) with communications made by the movement during the two days prior to the day studied ($r = 0.65$, $r = 0.56$ and $r = 0.61$ for two days before, one day and the same day of each government communication, respectively). There is also significant correlation between government communication and the communications issued by allies of the movement one day before each government communication ($r = 0.70$), those issued by the movement and its allies one day after ($r = 0.58$), and those issued by allies of the movement and allies of the government on the day studied ($r = 0.71$). These results appear to

indicate that the debate has a temporal order: communications issued by the movement seems to trigger responses initially from the government, then in the allies of the movement, which drives participation of allies of the government, which in turn could increase the government response two days later.

With regard to the relationship between communications according to their tactic type – analysis limited to the interaction between the MSM and the GCh as the principal actors in a period of protests – we found significant association only between "positive reference to own group" on the part of the movement or the government and having been criticized by the other either one or two days previously (r = 0.54 in the case of criticisms of the movement by the government, and r = 0.55 for criticism of the government by the movement). This suggests that positive references to one's own group are a tactic used in reaction to criticism.

We also found a significant relationship between the number of times during a given day the government and the movement made the same type of communication: positive reference to own group (r = 0.50) and criticism of opponent (r = 0.55). This may be an indication that synchrony is caused by an external factor, which we will now study in terms of the main events in the protest wave.

Figure 2 shows the use of the first-person plural by each camp, which reflects the attempt to create an identity or mobilize a "we". The figure shows how use of this tactic by the challenge camp increased following the first major protest event (occupation of airport) and then remained constant (confirmed by an ANOVA test which showed significant differences only before and after this event: f = 7.6; p = 0.02); while clear peaks of use are evident on the part of the defense camp, as confirmed by an ANOVA test which showed differences between days on which major protest events occurred (occupation of airport, strike, enactment of the State Security Law, and deal signed) or one day afterwards (included to consider the delay in the appearance of statements in the press), and other days (f = 5.7; p = 0.27). This could be

an indication of the ongoing need on the part of a new group – like the MSM – to build a politicized identity, while on the part of the government it could be part of a response strategy consisting of an attempt to foster unity in the critical days of the protests.
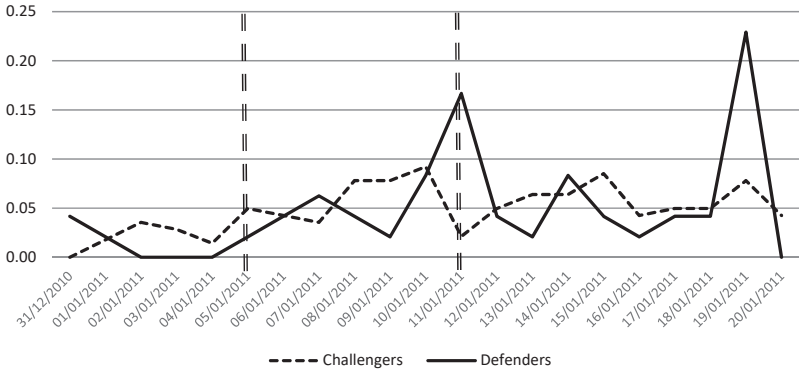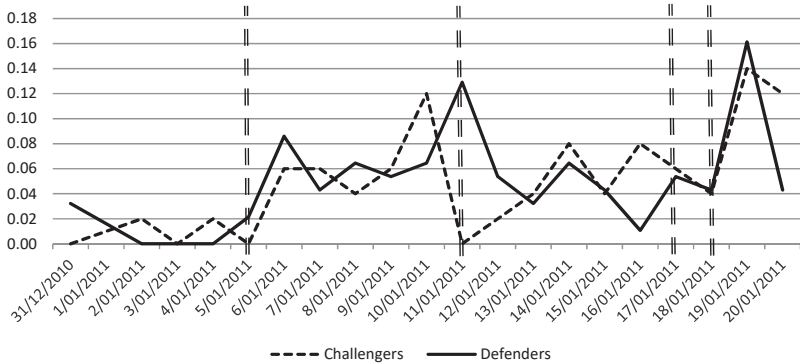

Note. The vertical lines represent the occurrence of major protest events, and the non-vertical lines represent the groups. The vertical axis shows the proportion of statements issued each day by each camp, and the horizontal axis shows the dates.

Figure 2. Use of the first-person plural over time

As shown in Figure 3, positive references to their own group were a tactic common to both the defense and challenge camps, and increased in occurrence over the course of the protests (confirmed by two ANOVA tests which showed significant differences before and after each major protest event: $f = 4.5$; $p = 0.02$ for both camps). Specific increases in this type of communication tend to coincide with crucial moments during the protest cycle: a) on 6th January by both camps, i.e., the day after the airport was occupied by protesters; b) on 10th January by the challenge camp and on 11th January by the defense camp, corresponding to the day before and the day on which the regional strike began; and c) on 19th January by both camps, i.e., the day after the deal was signed, bringing an end to the protests.

This timescale suggests that making positive references to one's own group could be a self-recognition strategy to promote or deal with specific protest situations and to ensure that, once the cycle is complete, a coherent account of the camp's interests is guaranteed.
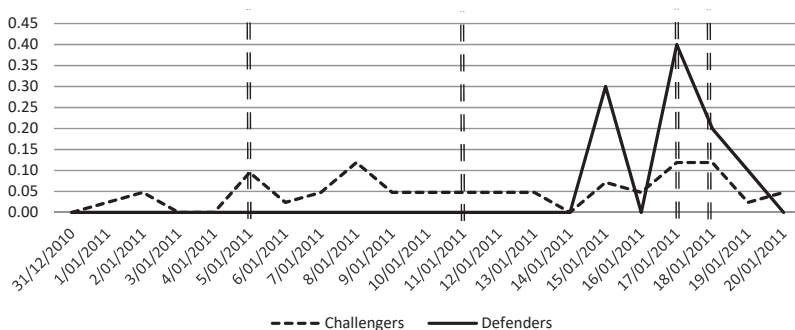

Note. Communications of type "positive reference to own group" made by the defence and challenge camps. The vertical lines represent the occurrence of major protest events, and the non-vertical lines represent the groups. The vertical axis shows the proportion of statements issued each day by each camp, and the horizontal axis shows the dates.

Figure 3. Positive references to own group over time

Figure 4 shows criticisms of each of the opposing camps. While the challenge camp uses this type of communication constantly following the first major protest event (occupation of airport), as confirmed by an ANOVA test which showed only significant differences before and after said event (f = 4.8; p = 0.01), the defense camp only resorts to it towards the end of the cycle and afterwards (as confirmed by an ANOVA test which showed significant differences before and after the enactment of the State Security Law (f = 3.4; p = 0.04).

Peaks in communications of this type by the GCh seems to coincide with the days on which negotiations were taking place to bring the protests to an end, and when it put in place stricter sanctions against the demonstrators. This suggests that an aggressive communicational

stance could be necessary to groups attempting to challenge established political players, but is only adopted by the defense camp when the disruption caused by the protests becomes sufficient to justify the repression and discrediting of the movement, thus permitting the government to make gains in the negotiation process.

Note. Communications by the challengers and defenders criticising the opposing camp. The vertical lines represent the occurrence of major protest events, and the non-vertical lines represent the groups. The vertical axis shows the proportion of statements issued each day by each camp, and the horizontal axis shows the dates.

Figure 4. Criticism of opposing camp over time

Figure 5 presents the communications classified as "self-victimization". We can see that, while the challenge camp makes use of this tactic throughout the entire protest period (an ANOVA test found no significant differences before and after each major protest event), the government to use it only as the protests increase in scale and capacity to disrupt the day-to-day life of the people of the region, i.e., from the start of the regional strike on 11th January (an ANOVA test found significant differences before and after of the strike: $f = 8.9$; $p = 0.07$).
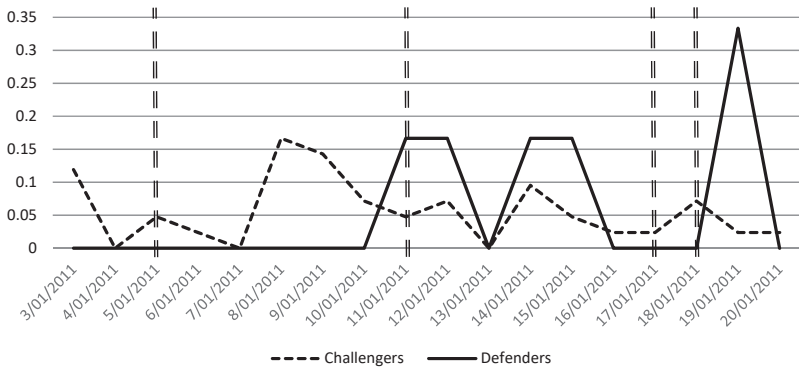
Note. The vertical lines represent the occurrence of major protest events, and the non-vertical lines represent the groups. The vertical axis shows the proportion of statements issued each day by each camp, and the horizontal axis shows the dates.

Figure 5. Communications of type "self-victimization" over time by each camp

This may be an indication that for the challenge camp, victimization is a defensive tool necessary when a movement has not yet established itself as a legitimate power in the public arena. While for the government, it could provide a means of compensating for negative hits scored by successful movements to its communication and image.

Conclusions

The present study has described the different communication tactics adopted by the opposing camps involved in a communicational contest taking place during the course of a brief but intense social protest cycle.

Our first finding concerned the importance for the MSM of a pre-existing identity (the Magellan and Patagonian people) to which to appeal when justifying its demands and protests. The above is explained both by the legitimacy of this regional identity among the population (Molina, 2011; Zúñiga & Asún, 2013), meaning that the

only way for the movement to build a politicized identity was to appeal to those identities already present within the population (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Secondly, we have shown that both fields employ different communication strategies, which seem to be influenced by the position of power occupied by each of the opposing camps throughout the conflict.

We have also found exploratory evidence (Figure 1) with respect to the claim by McAdam et al. (1996) that a government will only respond publicly to a social movement once the latter has established itself as a political force, and demonstrate its influence through the organization of massive protest events. Prior to this point, the GCh had remained silent in the face of challenges from the MSM, and only interacted communicatively with the movement's allies. The majority of these held political positions of democratic regional representation, and thus had prior legitimacy as a political force. This is in line with claims made by Gamson (2001), who proposed that traditional political actors are at an advantage in the competition for media attention, enjoying previously-established close relationships with the press thanks to regular daily contact. Thus, the government seems to have identified parliamentarian as important actors before acknowledging members of the movement itself.

At the same time, the initial uneven distribution of power seems to lead the two camps to adopt different communication strategies. While it is expected that both groups will try to discredit the other (Ryan, 1991; Klandermans, 1994; Shriver et al., 2013), the main tactic adopted by the government is to make positive references to itself, only criticizing the challenge camp towards the end of the period. The defense camp therefore adopts a defensive strategy. As it already occupies a position of privilege over the challenge camp (Ryan et al., 2001) and is the dominant actor in the communication contest (Ryan 1991), it seems that they only need to discredit the opponent when the latter finds itself in a more advantageous position – that is, until towards the end of the protest cycle.

Actors from the challenge camp attempt to criticize the defense camp, but they also make positive references to their own and even paint themselves as victims, emphasizing their disadvantaged position. Therefore, the challenge camp seems adopts an offensive approach, seeking to discredit their opponent while simultaneously attempting to present themselves in a positive light in order to gain the confidence of onlookers.

Owing to its advantageous situation, it is possible that the government had chosen to maintain its position through simple self-defense; while the challenge camp, being the newcomer in the communicational arena, may have opted for a more aggressive strategy that would allow them to establish its own space and to gain ground against its adversaries.

Another interesting aspect is how communication between the opposing camps changes over time. As Obregón and Tufte (2017) propose, social movements communication change over time and are constantly being constructed. This was evident during the communication contest studied, despite the fact that it was developed in a very short period of time. However, one of the contributions made by this study is to suggest that this change could be a result of both the communications made by the opposing camp and the significant events occurring during the protest cycle. Specifically, massive protest events that caused disruption to the everyday lives of the inhabitants of the Magallanes region, the application of a punitive law to subdue protesters, and the initiation of negotiations were associated with changes in the communication strategies of both camps. In addition, we also find a relationship between changes in communications in one field, with subsequent changes in communications in the other field.

The above may indicate, in line with Thomas (2017), that while the interactive communicational process occurs, both camps (challengers and defenders) do not just argue through the words, but in fact to a greater degree through of the events that each camp orchestrates throughout the protest cycle. This leads us to consider that a valuable contribution to future studies into the construction of communication

in protest cycles would be to conduct a simultaneous Protest Event Analysis (PEA) that assesses protests occurring in parallel to communication events, as Koopmans and Statham (1999) suggest. This could help to establish the causes of changes in communication, an understanding which in turn could go some way towards explaining changes in the scale and nature of protest events. Thus, bringing the two techniques together could enable us to deepen our understanding of social movements in terms of their evolution over time.

A limitation of our study is that it is a study of a single case, so we do not know the limits of the generalization of its findings. Besides, the short length of the studied protests cycle and therefore, the small number of communications available, prevented us from using multivariate statistical analysis techniques that could have controlled possible confounding factors. For this reason, it is important to remember that alternative explanations for the statistical associations found cannot be ruled out. Also, we need to address that we are reading the declarations of the actors through the eyes of the press, and even when only direct quotes where used, they were also selected by the media that covered the events.

Nonetheless, we believe that the limitations of our investigation, the two most important contributions of the present study are to show quantitatively and systematically the co-evolution of the communicative tactics that the actors involved in a social conflict deploy and their interaction with the protest and political events that are occurring, demonstrating the capacity of quantitative techniques to longitudinally describe the communicational contest process between opposing camps. This is relevant not only because of the lack of quantitative and systematic studies available, but also because it facilitates the integration of analysis of the formation and evolution of communication of social movements with Protest Event Analysis in political protest cycles. Future studies in this field could overcome the exploratory character of this work, applying more sophisticated statistical techniques, in order to obtain results that confirm or refute the finding we have presented.

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