

Influence of the agenda and framing study in the electoral framework of the *Procés* of Catalonia

Influencia de agendas y estudio de *framing* en el marco electoral del *Procés* de Cataluña

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Acknowledgements: Communication and Social Sciences (SEJ-619) Research Group. University of Seville. Manuel Ignacio Lancharro Montiel, researcher and expert in Digital Statistical Analysis.

How to cite this article / Standard reference

Pérez-Curiel, C., Jiménez-Marín, G. y García Medina, I. (2020). Influence of the agenda and framing study in the electoral framework of the *Procés* of Catalonia. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 75, 27-51. <https://www.doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2020-1415>

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Moments of convulsion and change define the Catalan political context. The issue of independence monopolizes the media coverage of Spain and the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) notes an unprecedented increase in citizen concern (2017). **Methodology:** The hybridization between agendas (political, media and public) is analyzed on the basis of a specific sample of 526 tweets of candidates for independence and constitutionalism, 107 press covers and 4 CIS reports, in order to ascertain the equivalence of issues and the effects on the population. **Results:** The issue of Catalonia is the main topic on *Twitter* and in the headlines. 29% of Spanish people consider it as the most important electoral issue. At the same time, the frame of conflict is at the heart of the discourse. **Discussion and conclusions:** The projection of the digital political agenda in the agenda-setting is confirmed, as well as the influence on the decision and priority of matters of public interest, recorded in population polls. This effect is particularly acute in situations of political conflict linked to Catalonia's Independence Process, called '*Procés*'.

KEYWORDS: *Procés* of Catalonia; political influencers; agenda-setting; *framing*; *Twitter*; CIS.

RESUMEN

Introducción: Momentos convulsos y de cambio definen el contexto político catalán. El tema de la independencia monopoliza la cobertura mediática de España y el Centro de Investigaciones

Sociológicas (CIS) constata un aumento sin precedentes de la preocupación ciudadana (2017). **Metodología:** Se analiza la hibridación entre agendas (política, mediática y pública) a partir de una muestra específica de 526 tweets de candidatos independentistas y constitucionalistas, 107 portadas de prensa y 4 informes del CIS, con objeto de conocer la equivalencia de temas y los efectos en la población. **Resultados:** El asunto de Cataluña es el tema protagonista en *Twitter*, en las portadas de prensa y un 29% de los españoles, lo sitúa como primer problema en las encuestas. En paralelo, el *frame* de conflicto se sitúa como eje del discurso. **Discusión y conclusiones:** Se confirma la proyección de la agenda política digital en la agenda *setting*, así como la influencia en la decisión y prioridad de los asuntos de interés público, registrados en los sondeos poblacionales. Un efecto que se agudiza especialmente en situaciones de conflicto político, vinculadas al Proceso de *Independencia de Cataluña*.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Procés de Catalunya*, *influencers* políticos; agenda *setting*; *framing*; *Twitter*; CIS.

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Translated by **Paul Jeremy Turner** (Ph.D., University of Kent, England, United Kingdom).

1. Introduction

On 6th September 2017, the Catalan Parliament approved the Referendum Law and marked the beginning of a new conflict. Statute, Declaration of Sovereignty, Law of Consultation, Sentences of the Constitutional Court and Article 155 precede the call for autonomous elections (21D) forced by the confrontation between Catalonia and the State (Carrasco-Polaino; Villar-Cirujano; Tejedor-Fuentes, 2018, Pérez-Curiel; García-Gordillo, 2018). In this context, the national and Catalan press define a selection and framing of news on the independence and electoral process which, according to CIS data (2017), increases public interest and may have an impact on social disruption and fragmentation. Previously, and in the digital space of *Twitter*, the candidates of the most voted parties in the elections (21D) publish tweets with a similar focus and theme to the one later projected by the media in their headlines. A relation of causality is generated that marks the Catalan conflict as an issue of relevance in the political, media and public agendas.

The perception of a continuous saturation of information over time on a single issue –the *Process of Independence of Catalonia*– without precedents in media coverage and indices of growth in social concern, recorded by the barometers of the Centre for Scientific Research (CIS, 2017), constitute the support for research. The premise of a possible correlation of forces determined by the effect of the media on public opinion (agenda-setting theory) initially confirmed from the scientific sphere (McCombs and Evatt, 1995) and endorsed by more recent studies (Anduiza & Bosch, 2012, D'Adamo, García Beadoux & Freidenberg, 2007) is situated as the hypothetical axis of the analysis.

Previous studies show that political parties and especially their candidates have also been motors of influence in social networks (Pérez-Curiel & García Gordillo, 2018) and that the topics published by leaders and more viral on Twitter have occupied the front pages of the reference press (Adamic & Glance, 2005; Reese, 2007; Scott, 2005). A triple correlation of agendas and approaches (D'Adamo,

García Beadoux & Freidenberg, 2007) that affects all the actors in the process (politicians, media and citizens).

On a temporary selection from September 7 (the day after the approval of the Referendum by the Catalan Parliament) to December 22, 2017 (the day after the elections called by the Central Government), the information published (107 covers) is analyzed by three generalist media, two national (*El País* and *El Mundo*) and one regional (*La Vanguardia*).

The main objective of the research is to determine the influence and transfer of agendas (political, media and public) within the framework of the Process of *Independence of Catalonia*. Linked to this objective are other specific focuses of interest for the study:

- To observe what type of subjects and *framing* have predominated in the informative coverage on the process of *Independence of Catalonia* and its equivalence with the topics that influence the citizen's concerns.
- To relate the level of influence of the digital political agenda (subjects that the candidates of the most voted parties in the Catalan elections have published in *Twitter*), on the agenda of the media and of the citizens.

1.1. Politicians and media. Influencers of the public agenda

Politics in democracies is developed in the interrelationship between citizens and politicians, between citizens and political organizations or between citizens and institutions. This interrelation takes place in our societies through the media with a capacity for influence that affects the sphere of the powers of the State and the parties. In addition, they create opinions and contribute to the shaping of citizen opinion (Uriarte, 2010; Sanmartín, 2007). The public agenda, directly related to citizen worries, is subjected to a process of mediatization determined by the agenda-setting (Bouza, 2006) through a correlation of topics, which does not always coincide with priorities and public interest.

To inform, to shape and to guide public opinion and to control political power are primary and intrinsic functions that define media structures (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1999; Norris, 2001) and transform them, especially in electoral situations, into opinion generators and active *influencers* ahead of governments and parties. According to previous studies, 'influencing' becomes the second task to which journalists attach greater importance after reporting. The journalistic elite perceives itself with legitimacy to represent public opinion and identifies it with its opinions (Uriarte, 2000).

However, the role of influencer appears previously linked to the figure of the political leader (Fernández, Hernández-Santaolalla & Sanz-Marcos, 2018; Labrecque, Markos and Milne, 2011) and to a polarized and unidirectional discourse (Graham et al. 2013) in connivance with the new digital audiences (Castells, 2009; Sampedro, 2014). The use of *Twitter* as a tool of persuasion and propaganda in political contexts and crisis situations (Mancera Rueda & Helfrich, 2014) becomes a strategy of self-promotion of its proposals and distribution of its own contents, applying a propaganda logic based on viralizing (Pérez-Curiel & Limón Naharro, 2019; Dader, 2017; Campos-Domínguez & Calvo, 2017; López García, 2016).

The most influential candidates are those that are capable of creating a synergy between traditional media channels and social networks. The parallel media agenda emerges, which reproduces the digital format and reflects an equivalence of themes and *framing* with the political agenda. The hybridization of the public sphere (Jenkins, 2008; Chadwick, 2013; Benkler, 2015) is determined by hegemonic and counterhegemonic groups that struggle to become visible, using different processes of mediatization (Hjarvard, 2013; Holton *et al.*, 2014) of users (Scolari, 2008).

The argument of the power of traditional media to impose the agenda, given the trust and credibility they generate in citizens, is intensified in political and electoral contexts. The intermediate theory of agenda-setting is reinforced (Atwater & Fico 1986; Reese, 1989), which analyses the relationship between agendas, that of the media and that determined by interest groups and/or emerging social movements (Castells, 2012; Lazares, 1996) that struggle to transform “political, social and economic” realities (Bermúdez & Gallego, 2011). They are very effective in transferring to the public the importance of each issue with the priority they consider appropriate (Anduiza & Bosch, 2009).

In the specific case of Catalonia, immersed in elections (21D) as a result of the sum of conflicts linked to the ‘*Procés*’, the influence and control of institutions and organisations in setting the agenda, the behavioral process of the media and the participative and social process can be verified (Sánchez Medero, 2016; Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2008). The issues that set the public agenda are derived from the demoscopic registers (CIS) corresponding to questions such as *What is, in your opinion, the main problem that currently exists in Catalonia? And the second? And the third?* The comparison between agendas shows a correlation of equivalent ranks with the subjects that newspapers have previously published on their covers. The structure and content of news have an important effect both on the issues that people consider relevant and on the complexity with which they think about the topic (D’Adamo, García Beadoux & Freidenberg, 2007). Therefore, the public’s response to the main social preoccupations in a specific context and time period may be conditioned by the influence of the media. Matters of public interest, related to problems that directly affect the well-being of citizens (housing, employment, education, health, political corruption, pensions, security...) do not have a presence that is directly proportional to what the media attributes to situations of political and electoral conflict.

A first research question is asked:

PI1- How much impact does the media have on citizens in a context of political-electoral conflict?

The derived hypothesis (H1) states that the Catalan and Spanish populations consider as issues of special social interest those that have previously been published by the media.

To this perspective must be added the previous influence of the political agenda. Media care about politics and vice versa. This is inevitable. They are involved in the decision-making process and they intervene in different ways, for example, directing attention to certain public domains and hiding others (Soroka, Lawlor, Farnsworth & Young, 2012), defining the political map that the public will deal as true and that, as such, may have consequences in certain political decisions (Cohen, 1993). However, the digital revolution has multiplied the level of influence of politicians in networks, especially on *Twitter*- not only on fan communities but also on the configuration of the media agenda (Montoya & Vandehey, 2009; Pérez-Ortega, 2014; Rampersad, 2009). The inverse agenda of social media is therefore added (Aruguete, 2017; Wallsten, 2007; Meraz, 2011; Sung-Tae & Young-hwan; 2007, Casero-Ripollés; 2015).

Leaders take advantage of digital resources and the multiplying and instantaneous effect of the message in favor of electoral interest (López-García, 2016; Dader & Campos-Domínguez, 2017; Campos-Domínguez & Calvo, 2017); users activate with likes, retweets and comments a unidirectional discourse of the candidate against the bidirectionality that is supposed to the network and the traditional media transfer to the front page the political agenda that has had the greatest effect on the public.

A second research question is asked:

PI2. The traditional media are filled with the topics most broadcasted by politicians on Twitter? In relation to the question, the following hypothesis is formulated (H2):

In the electoral framework of ‘*Procés*’, the tendency of the media is to reproduce the themes-strength of political leaders on Twitter and project their influence on public opinion.

1.2. Conflict as *framing*. Media strategy and effects on citizenship

The last of the political situation that Spain has confronted, with real involvement in its future organization as a state, has been the so-called *Procés* in Catalonia, with the day considered key by its promoters of the referendum (1 October 2017), where Catalan people were asked if they were in favor of independence and “disconnection” from Spain (Carrasco-Polaino, Villar-Cirujano & Tejedor-Fuentes, 2018). The process of independence has become even stronger in the context of mediatization and digitization never before contemplated. The series of actions of the Spanish Government with the application of article 155 of the Constitution, the dissolution of the Cortes and the convocation of the elections on December 21 draw an uncertain scenario. The report of the *Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió* computed, in 2017, 40.2% of people surveyed who considered that Catalonia should be an independent state, and, on the other hand, a 27.4% that preferred an autonomous community, 21.9% of people that wanted a federal State and 4.6% who preferred a region (CEO, 2017). The comparison with previous studies (CEO, 2016) shows a consolidation of independence positions and, even, other territorial models before the established constitutional model. The reform of the *Estatut* (May 2003) marks the beginning of the so-called *Procés*. This reform, approved after a referendum (June 2006) by 73% of Catalans, defends a greater political autonomy of the community, as well as the recognition of a unique position of Catalonia in the Spanish state.

The highest point of confrontation is located in the electoral context anticipated by the Central Government, which confronts and divides parties and citizens. An ideological-political conflict and a social repercussion from social networks and media have been projected outside Catalonia and that has also overcome the frontiers of Spain.

The setting of the agenda, the selection of issues-news and the influence on receivers are reinforced in a complementary way with the theory of *framing* and the interpretation of frameworks. *What is counted* is determined by *How it is counted*, a framing effect that can explain the protagonism of the media in public opinion. Despite the vast field of framing studies (Marín Zamora, 2014; Oller, 2014; López-Rabadán & Vicente-Mariño, 2013; Sábada, 2008; Weaver, 2007) there is little research in political contexts on how '*frame setting*' takes place. The study of framing allows us to investigate the exercise of political influence (Entman, 2007; Iyengar, 2005), the practice of power (Reese, 2001) and the communicative dynamics within a political campaign (Valera, 2014; Rodríguez & Castromil, 2010).

There is an equivalence of frames in the agenda, and the conflict becomes the first issue of citizen concern, ahead of economic, religious or human interest factors (Sábada & Rodríguez, 2007). The statistical data of population opinion published by the CIS (reports of September-December 2017) indicate, as a priority, the political conflict linked to the *Procés*, which reaches its maximum exponent during the month of October (illegal referendum, the appearance of Felipe VI –the king of Spain–, the escape of companies, the approval of article 155 and the call for Catalan elections). A frame that has also marked political and media information. In all cases, the cultural and social factor

that envelopes individuals occupies a position to be taken into account in the categorization and interpretation of opinions. The media seem influential enough to attract the attention of individuals and the public, but this influence is moderated by the predisposition of the people, their schemes for interpreting reality and other characteristics of their social environment (Kinder, 2007).

Applied to research, concepts such as nationalism, independence or segregation from others, such as unity, constitution, and state configure a part of the history and transcultural identity of Catalonia; however, the evolution of political events provoked by *Procés*, where the active people participation is considered an added value for the constitutionalist and independence parties, has drawn a media framework directly related to the division and confrontation of the parties. The *framing* theory allows the media to design strategies that increase the persuasive power that is inherent in political communication and influence public behavior, mainly in elections (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The setting of the agenda and the configuration of the frameworks during electoral periods (McCombs, 2006; Rodríguez & Bouza, 2007) respond to opposite media views; the press selected for the study emphasizes those issues that represent its ideological position and creates a discourse addressed to a partner audience. The called *Procés* occupies, from the start, and unanimously, the main headlines in Spain's covers (*El País* and *El Mundo*) and specifically in Catalonia (*La Vanguardia*), as well as the covers of the main foreign media, as an event of notable historical relevance (Carrasco-Polaino, Villar-Cirujano & Tejedor-Fuentes, 2018). A unique framework, the conflict of independence, from which derives a theme related to the most common codes on the covers (*Central Government, Generalitat, independence, constitutionalism, application of 155, Puigdemont's situation, imprisoned politicians, judicial action, scapes of companies from Catalonia, parties and election results*) describes perfectly the agenda and *framing* of the process.

Around the *framing* theory, a third research question is asked:

PI3. Does the frame of political conflict that lead news related to Catalonia's independence affect in the public opinion?

A third hypothesis (H3) considers political conflict as the main framework used by journalists in the process of selecting and interpreting news items

2. Method

Based on a triangulated methodology of quantitative and qualitative content analysis (Wimmer & Dominik, 1996; Krippendorff, 2004; Flick, 2004; Callejo, 2010), with a comparative approach (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), a sample is designed that covers from 7 September 2017, the day after the approval of the Referendum Law by the Parliament of Catalonia until 22 December, the day after the autonomous elections called by the Central Government, points of political and social conflict.

The method responds to the following phases:

1. The news presenting the variable "*Independence of Catalonia*", published on covers (107) by the national and regional most read in Spain during 2017 newspapers (*El País*, *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia*) (OJD), are analysed. The process is complemented with a *framing* study to investigate the media selection and interpretation frames.
2. The equivalences of the media agenda with the public agenda are recorded. We have accessed to the reports of the Scientific Research Centre (CIS) corresponding to the last quarter of 2017 (September-December) which coincides with the episodes of greatest political mobilisation in Catalonia, before the electoral convocation (21D). The first three issues that

Spanish citizens have marked as axes of social concern are selected and the correlation with what is published in the press covers is analysed.

- The results obtained in the two previous phases are related to the topics published on *Twitter* by the candidates of the most voted parties during the Catalan elections (21D) in the selected newspapers. On a specific group of 526 tweets, related to the *Independence of Catalonia* brand, the possible thematic and framing equivalences are located. The personal accounts correspond to the candidates with a constitutionalist profile: @InesArrimadas, from Ciudadanos; @miqueliceta, from the PSC; and @Albiol_XG, from the PP; and with an independentist profile: @KRLS, from Junts XCat; @martarovira, from ERC; and @XavierDomenech, from Comú-Podem.

The data is extracted via the *Twitonomy* application.

The program chosen for data processing and the creation of contingency, frequency and crossover tables and graphs is *IBM SPSS Statistics*, Version 26. The reliability of the intercoders has been calculated with Scott's Pi formula, reaching a level of 0.98. The reliability of the intercoders has been calculated with Scott's Pi formula, reaching a level of 0.98.

2.1. Procedure Variables

Numerical quantitative analysis: It reflects the computation of the news published on the media covers, with reference to the *Independence of Catalonia*.

Table 1. *Coding of quantitative content analysis.*

Reference in cover	Main news	Secondary news	Space in cover
	01	02	03

Source: own elaboration.

Qualitative analysis of topics and frames: It reflects the main issues under the code *Independence of Catalonia* appearing on the cover of the most-read press, on the *Twitter* account of the most represented candidates (number of votes) and on the CIS barometers, corresponding to the last quarter of 2017.

Table 2. *Coding by topics.*

Blocks	Independence/ Constitution	Government of Spain/ Catalonia	Aplication 155	Puigdemont's scape/ Imprisoned politicians	Scape of companies from Catalonia
Covers					
CIS					
<i>Twitter</i>					

Source: own elaboration.

These issues are classified according to the frames that are susceptible of appearing in any news (Neuman, Just & Cringler, 1992; Iyengar & Simon 1993), linked to a process of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration of the journalist.

Table 3. *Coding by frames.*

	Of conflict	Of human interest	Of economic consequences	Of moral judgment	Of attribution of responsibility
Portadas					
CIS					
Twitter					

Source: own elaboration.

The triple correlation of agendas (political/media/public) and the transfer of issues that affect public opinion determine where social worries are located in situations of political conflict, describe the radiography of Catalonia during this stage of the *Procés* and reinforce the theory of the influence of centres of power. The coincidence with electoral processes increases the possibility of dysfunction of the public agenda determined by the action of politicians and the media.

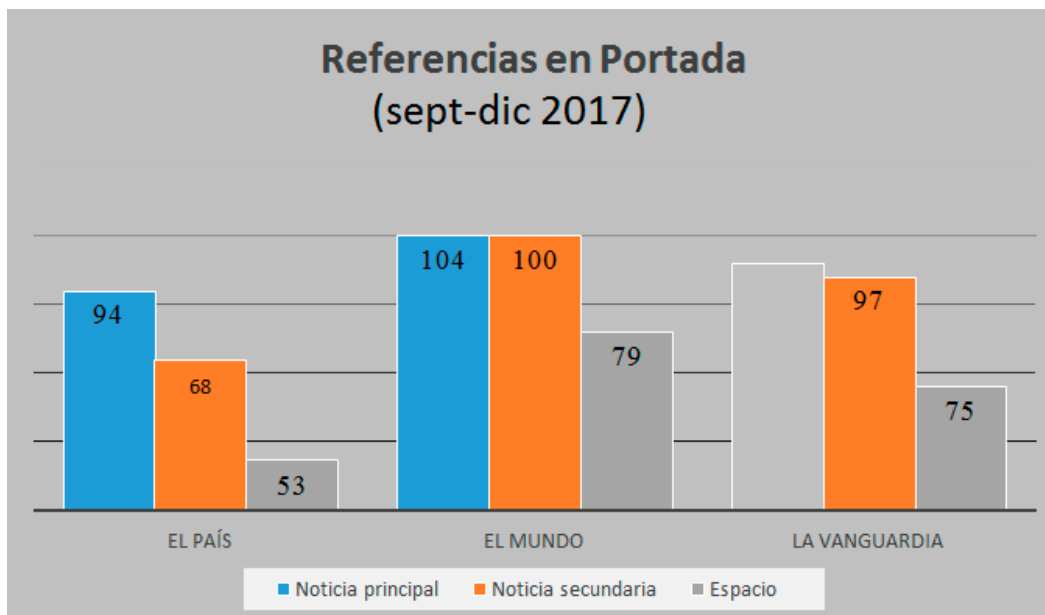
3. Results

The process of checking levels of influence and correlation of agendas is structured in three phases, each of which integrates blocks of quantification (numerical) and / or qualification (thematic and framing). The data correspond to the period September-December 2017, linked to a set of political conflicts related to the Process of *Independencia de Catalunya*.

3.1. First stage

3.1.1. Quantitative numeric block

The statistical analysis calculates the number of articles published on the covers of the three newspapers, their classification as main or secondary news, as well as the space they take up, in order of the importance the media gives to the event.



Graphic 1: variable 'Nº of news' in cover.
Source: own elaboration.

El Mundo is the newspaper that publishes most on the topic *Independencia de Cataluña*, appearing as the main and secondary news (104/100) related to all the analyzed covers (107). It is followed by *La Vanguardia* (100/97) and, in third place, *El País*, with lower coverage (94/68) which is representative. The space occupied by the published information is also directly proportional to all three cases. Thus, *El Mundo* (79%), followed by *La Vanguardia* (75%) and *El País* (53%), dedicate an important presence to the theme of Catalonia.

In all months of the study, October concentrates the largest accumulation of conflicts related to the *Procés* and published as main news in front cover (32/107). In the months before and after, coverage decreases, especially in December, a month monopolized by the electoral campaign. Against this, secondary news continues to capture the interest of the front page.

3.1.2. Qualitative thematic and *framing* block

The political context of the *Procés* describes temporary thematic focuses. In the month of September, the news event of reference is the approval of the Referendum Law in the Catalan Parliament; October is notable for the celebration of the Referendum, the appearance of the King Felipe VI (King of Spain), the application of article 155 and the call for Catalan elections; in November there were multiple events such as the imprisonment of members of the Catalan government, Puigdemont's European exile, the electoral pre-campaign, the suspicion of Russian interference in the sovereignty process, and the fall of trade in Catalonia; and the month of December ended with the early elections (21D), a fact that reduced interest in other issues of the Catalanist process.

The comparison of the media covers shows, on the one hand, the equivalence of topics and, on the other, the coincidence of approaches and frameworks of interpretation (*framing*), independently of the ideological media profile. The newspapers place the case of the *Independencia de Cataluña* as the main issue from which other specific items derive.

Table 4. *Topic typology and cover (% September-December).*

Blocks	Independence/ Estado	Government of Spain / Catalonia	Application 155	Puigdemont's escape/ Imprisoned politicians	Scope of Companies from Catalonia	Elections
<i>El Mundo</i>	12,3%	17,1%	25,3%	26,7%	10,2%	8,4%
<i>El País</i>	13,0%	18,3%	21,6%	22,0%	15,4%	9,8%
<i>La Vanguardia</i>	12,2%	15,0%	22,4%	29,5%	14,2%	6,7%

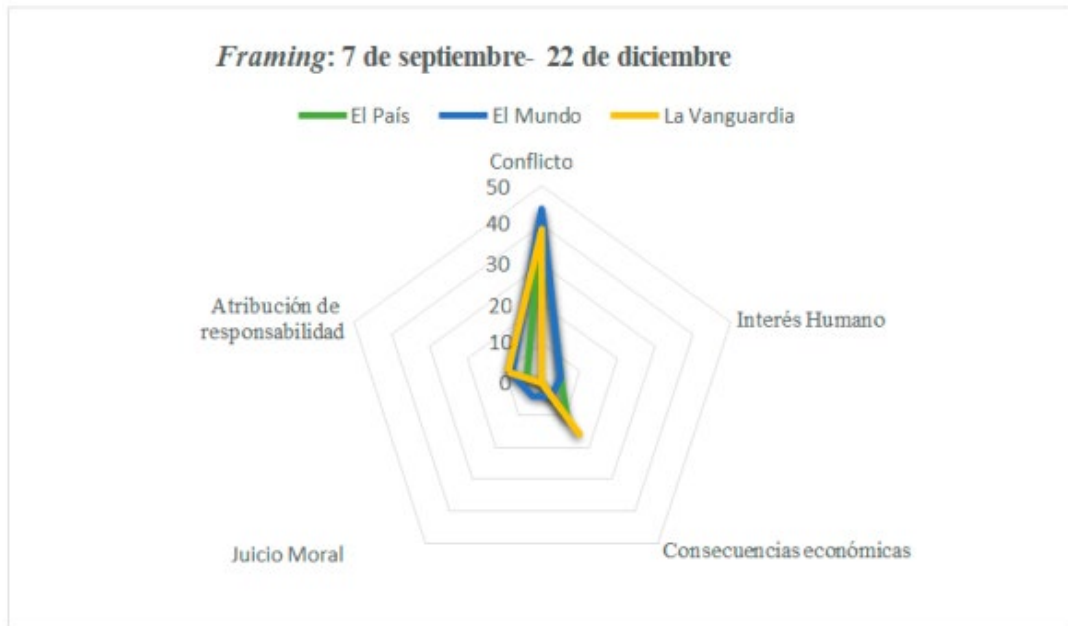
Source: own elaboration.

All the media agree in pointing out the variables *Application of 155* and *Puigdemont's escape / Imprisoned politicians* as the central focuses of their editions. They are considered as lines of confrontation of governments and parties and the press brings to the covers a polarization of the case, depending on its ideological position, with effects on the electors.

La Vanguardia emphasizes the block *Puigdemont's scape / Imprisoned politicians* as the top news (29.5%), followed by *El Mundo* (26.7%) and *El País* (22.5%); in this way, they are considered the two topics that generated the greatest level of division and opinion among politicians, media and people, and a direct consequence of the application of article 155, second topic in covers. This provision reinforces the authority of the Government of Spain and annuls the legitimacy of the Generalitat, the maximum political institution in Catalonia. *La Vanguardia* (22.4%), as an autonomous press, treats it from the perspective of open conflict between independence and constitutionalist forces. The approach of *El Mundo* (25.3%) and *El País* (21.6%) underlines the need for intervention by the Central Government in front of these events.

The block relating to *Companies leaving Catalonia* has more coverage by the three newspapers, especially *El País* (15.4%) and *La Vanguardia* (14.2%) that analyze it as an economic conflict caused by the actions of the pro-independence government. The value attributed to the elections is significant, an issue that tends to concentrate the attention of the media in other contexts but, in the context of the conflict of Catalonia's independence, loses protagonism in favor of the rest of the items. The blocks (*Independence/Constitution* and *Government of Spain/Catalonia*) present a balanced treatment in all the covers and are also a shared brand of the information on the *Procés*.

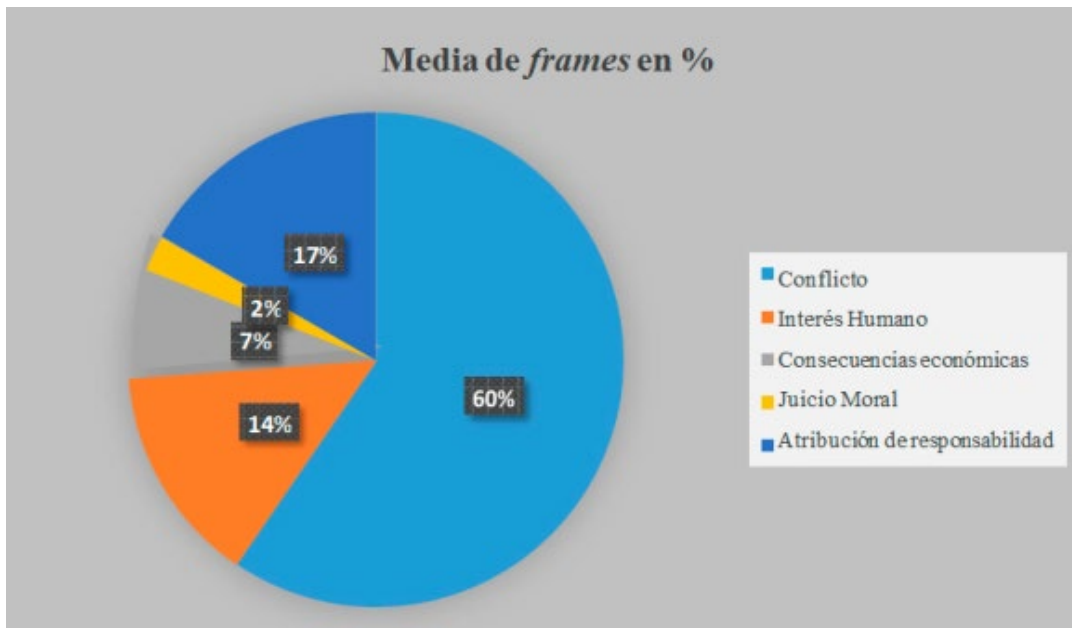
Ideology and *Framing* constitute a pair that determines the way of reporting on each media. The case study of Catalonia reveals the importance of an issue analyzed from the perspective of the conflict. In front of the space and the number of news published by the press is the way in which journalists report the facts. *Which aspects are treated* and *how* (emphasis), *which are ignored* (exclusion), *which sources are selected* and *how the facts are explained and interpreted* in order to the established discourse.



Graphic 2: typology of framing and cover on the front page.
Source: own elaboration.

As the graphic indicates, conflict is the frame most used by the press, ahead of the rest of the frames. The political confrontation between defenders of independence and defenders of the state is a constant source of information. Issues that reach greater emphasis are those related to the 1-O Referendum, the King's appearance, the moving of the offices of numerous companies, the implementation of the judicial process, the application of Article 155 and the convocation of elections. The three newspapers give priority the frame of conflict over the rest, reaching the most significant points, the variables *Application of 155*, *Puigdemont's scape* and *Imprisonment of politicians*. It is important the frame of attribution of responsibility that the first two concentrate on the bloc in favor of independence, while *El País* emphasizes the frame of economic consequences, related to the scape of companies from Catalonia.

The three media consider the frame of human interest in the selection and preparation of cover information. *El Mundo* stands out with news about the division of families by ideology or the indoctrination of students in Catalan schools.



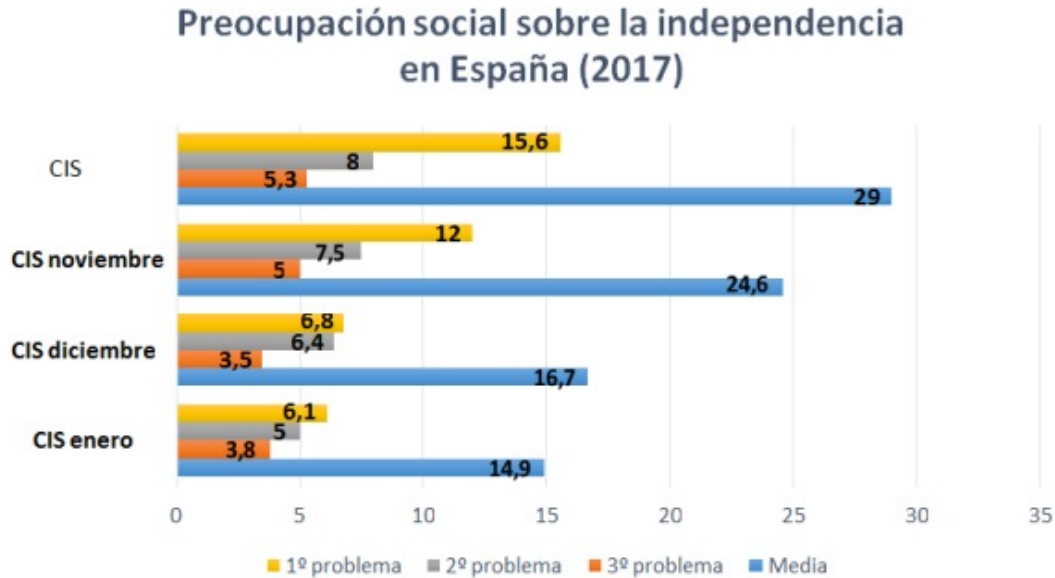
Graphic 3: average and frames in cover %.
Source: own elaboration.

A summary of the average number of frames during the period under investigation reflects the dominance of the conflict frame (60%) with respect to the rest. In order of importance is followed by the attribution of responsibility (15%), a variable focused on the actions of the government, parties and citizens' associations with a pro-independence profile, the human interest framework (12%), equivalent to the social fragmentation that the political confrontation has provoked in the population and the economic consequences (11%) derived from the decision of the companies to abandon Catalonia, due to the situation of instability derived from the conflict. The frame of moral judgment, based on the deontological position of the media before the attitude of the parties involved, reaches a minimum percentage (2%) that could converge with the variable of attribution of responsibility.

3.2. Second stage

3.2.1. Equivalences and effects of the media agenda on the public agenda

In order to know the influence of the frame and the issues published by the media on public opinion, the reports of the Scientific Research Centre corresponding to the studied months (September-December 2017) are analysed. The results of the survey define what is of greatest interest in first, second and third place, as well as the resulting average.



Graphic 4: levels of social concern about independence in Spain.

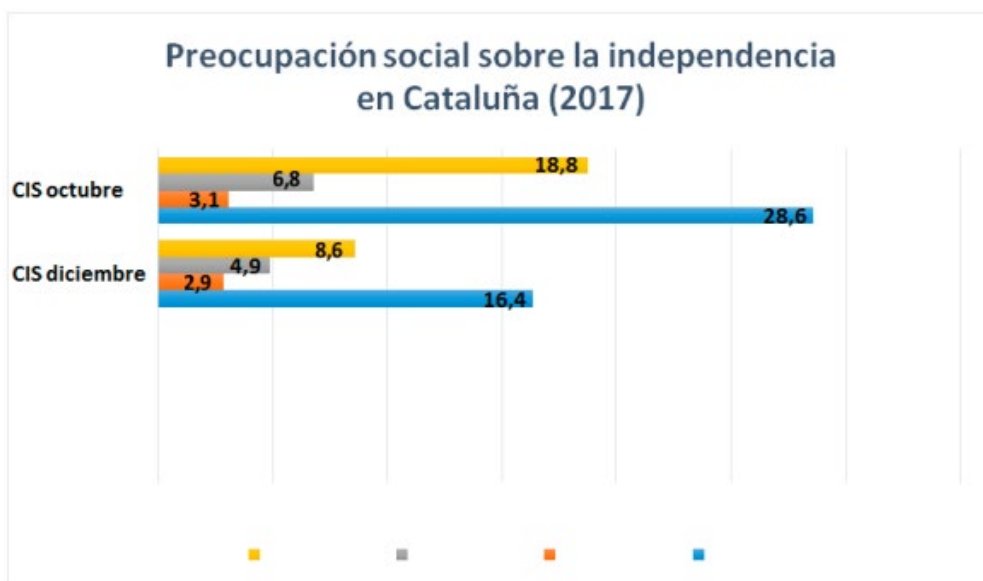
Source: own elaboration.

As can be seen in the October survey, 29% of the Spanish refer to the independence of Catalonia as one of the first three worries of the people. The analysis classifies it as the first problem (15.6%), as the second (8%) and as the third (5.3%). The data collected (2-11 October) coincides with the approval of the Referendum Law, the impressions of the day of 1 October, or the appearance of the King. In order to offer a greater perspective, in the CIS of the previous month (September), the independence of Catalonia occupies the eighth problem in the ranking (7.8%), so there is a notable increase in the level of preoccupation.

In the CIS in November, 24.5% of Spanish consider the independence of Catalonia as a problem of interest, placing it as the first problem (12%), second (7.5%) and third (5%), respectively. In spite of the approval of 155, the convocation of elections, or the renunciation of the companies to stay in Catalonia there is a reduction (from second to fourth place) as a focus of interest with respect to the previous month.

During the months of December (16.7%) and January (14.9%) there was a significant decrease in public interest in the issue of independence; in both cases, the holding of elections is considered an inflection moment that relativizes the attitude of the people towards the issue. The percentages for both months indicate it as the first problem (6.8%/6.1%), as the second (6.4%/5%) and as the third (3.5%/3.8%), occupying fifth place in the ranking of priority problems for Spanish people.

In line with the study, it is proposed to analyze the opinion of the Catalan people. The CIS data relating to autonomous communities are retrieved and a table of cross-referenced variables (citizen concern/independence of Catalonia) is designed.



Graphic 5: levels of social concern about independence in Catalonia.
Source: own elaboration.

The data by autonomous communities, within the analysis period, were only offered in the October and December barometers, so that the results show the falling trend more clearly.

En el CIS de diciembre se observa una evolución descendente importante, ya que la preocupación por la independencia se coloca como el quinto problema de los catalanes (16,4%), con una valoración similar a la media estatal.

In the October CIS, the issue of independence was placed as the third problem (28.6%). In other words, social worries are marginally less than the state average. However, the percentage of Catalans who indicated it as the first social problem was 18.8%, three points higher than the national average. The percentage drops in the designation as second (6.8%) and third problem (3.1%) around two points below the national average. In the CIS in December, there was a significant decrease, due to the preoccupation on the independence question took fifth place among Catalan population (16.4%), with a rating similar to the national average.

3.3. Third stage

Previous investigations highlight the influence of politicians' discourse on Twitter users (Pérez-Curiel & García-Gordillo, 2018), as well as the effects on the media (Pérez-Curiel & Limón-Naharro, 2019). The media agenda can also be previously determined by the political agenda.

In order to know if the press reproduces on the cover the issues published by the politicians, a total of 526 tweets linked to the brand *Independencia de Cataluña* have been selected, published on *Twitter* by candidates with a constitutionalist profile (@InesArrimadas, @miqueliceta and @Albiol_XG) and an independentist profile (@KRLS, @martarovira and @XavierDomenech), of the most voted parties during the Catalan elections and with a higher index of followers on the network.

Table 5. Number of tweets, trackers, and metrics (at sampling date).

Candidates	Puigdemont JuntsxCat	Arrimadas C's	Rovira ERC	Iceta PSC	Albiol PP	Domènech En Comú- Podem
Followers	670.056	401.319	164.232	81.210	63.160	62.345
Tweets	88	66	52	174	75	71
I like it	68.800	7.300	6.139	227	2914	3416
Retweets	34.000	3.282	2405	216	1988	2117
Comments	4.317	1.549	1235	79	2855	1865

Source: own elaboration.

Data shows the great contrast of tweets published by the candidate Miquel Iceta of the PSC (174) compared to the rest of the leaders. In this line, it is worth mentioning that the majority correspond to tweets that are not their own, supported by links, videos, images, and other resources, which Iceta diffuses from its personal account.

Carl Puigdemont, independence leader of Junts per Cat and president of the Generalitat until the convocation of elections, is the exception, as he is the candidate who publishes a larger number of tweets related to the brand *Independència de Catalunya* (88) and reaches a greater number of followers and metrics (I like, RT and Comments). Puigdemont is also considered to be the leader who makes the best use of the tools provided by *Twitter* (*hashtags*, mentions, links, memes, audiovisual resources...) to enhance the message.



Figure 1: Tweet imprisoned politicians.
Source: Twitter.



Figure 2: Tweet Puigdemont's scape.
Source: Twitter.



Figure 3: Tweet Artículo 155.
Source: Twitter.



Figure 4: Tweet companies' scape.
Source: Twitter.

In general, tweets published by the selected profiles focus on contents equivalent to those are later published by the newspapers, which in turn are reflected in the CIS surveys, where the subject of Catalonia is one of the main citizen concerns in the months of the survey.

The table reflects the total of the selected sample, the percentage destined to the most common topics from the personal accounts of the candidates and the percentage of presence in the press covers. The estimate is based on 100% of the specific items related to independence.

Table 6. Average in % of topics dealt with on Twitter and in the press.

Temática	Twitter	Press	Average values
Independence/State	10,9	12,1	11,5
Government of Spain	12,3	14,0	13,1
Government of Catalonia	9,4	8,2	8,8
Article 155	19,1	17,2	18,1
Puigdemont's scape	17,3	15,7	16,5
Imprisonment politicians	13,0	10,4	11,7
Companies exit	6,1	8,5	7,3
Elections	8,0	10,0	9
Others	3,7	4,2	3,9

Source: own elaboration.

Article 155 (18.1%) and the Puigdemont's escape (16.5%) achieve the upper average. It is followed by issues such as the Government of Spain (13.1%), Independence/State (11.5%) and Imprisonment politicians (11.7%). Elections (9%), Companies's leaving (7.3%) and Others (3.9%) occupy the third block in terms of interest of politicians and media.

The percentages indicate a double equivalence. On the one hand, the similarity of the issues published is observed, and on the other hand, the coincidence in the priority given to issues related to independence in Catalonia is also seen. This is a common characteristic of all the content published on *Twitter* and in the press, which is subsequently reflected in the CIS barometers.

Tabla 7. Average in % social problems collected by CIS.

Catalonia Independence	First Problem	Second Problem	Third Problem	Total	Average Values
October	15,6	8	5,3	28,9	9,6
November	12	7,5	5	24,5	8,1
December	6,8	6,4	3,5	16,7	5,5
January	6,1	5	3,8	14,9	4,9

Source: own elaboration.

Although the topic unemployment appears as the first problem indicated by citizens in all the months of sampling, the Catalan conflict occupies the second issue of interest during the month of October (28.9%), the fourth place in the CIS of November (24.5%) and suffers a decrease with respect to the months of December (16.7%) and January (14.9%), placing it in fifth place among the issues of common interest. In all cases it is higher than in September when it appears as the eighth problem (7.8%).

The calculation of the average refers to the percentage combination of the data offered by the barometers corresponding to the period October-January 2017 and the consideration of the topic as the first, second or third problem. It can be seen that the issue of *Independencia de Cataluña*, taken up by the CIS during the September-October period, registers an increase as a population problem, with higher points in the months of greatest confrontation between Catalonia and the State, which decreases as the process advances. Publications on *Twitter* and in the press on issues related to Catalonia's independence follow the same variation in time as those published by the CIS. A directly proportional equivalence that can justify the influence and transfer of agendas.

4. Discussion and conclusions

In the context of the conflict that envelops *Procés de Catalunya* (September-December 2017) and from a global perspective, results confirm the influence and correlation of agendas (political/media/public). The public, through the Sociological Research Centre's survey, presents as priority issues those previously published by media. In the same way, the press selected for this study (*El Mundo*, *El País* and *La Vanguardia*) brings to the cover the main topics that politicians have spread on *Twitter* during the established sample period.

As a response to the general objective, the study confirms the thematic and *framing* alignment that begins on the network, which sets the agenda-setting and causes effects on the public. The increased worries of the Spanish and Catalan population reflected by the CIS may be due, among other factors, to a situation of political conflict (*Procés*) and electoral conflict (21D) added to the selection criteria of political candidates on *Twitter* and to the agenda-setting marked by media.

So, the conclusions are structured according to the specific and defined objectives:

1. The study confirms the influence that the analyzed media make on the issues of maximum social preoccupation registered by the CIS.

As it is shown by the results of the quantitative analyses on the covers and editorials of *El País*, *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia* between September and December 2017, media coverage has been constant. During those months, the Catalan issue monopolized practically all the covers and editorials of the selected media, which illustrates that the *agenda-setting* was highly conditioned by the issue of *Independencia de Cataluña*.

In addition, the influence and correlation between agendas (media and public) is confirmed, with the general issue (independence) and the specific issues (*Independence/State, Government of Spain, Government of Catalonia, Article 155, Puigdemont's Escape, Imprisonment politicians, Companies Leaving and Elections*) as priority social worries in the CIS barometers, with unprecedented results during the months of survey.

2. The qualitative analysis of framing, derived from the monitoring and measurement of the 107 selected front pages, concludes that the predominant frame is the conflict and this framework is the one that stands out in the three newspapers.

Conflict, compared with other contexts (human interest, economic consequences, moral judgement, attribution of responsibility) is the vehicle that has linked the information related to the *Procés*, standing out fundamentally in the first stage of research (September-October). This period reflects the highest level of social worry (CIS) and consolidates the hypothesis (H1) on the influence of the media on the concern of citizens in times of political and electoral convulsions.

There is a directly proportional relationship between the level of conflict and the level of social problems considered by people. If, in addition, the context of autonomous elections in Catalonia (21D) convoked by the Government of Spain in the context of the crisis is added, the interest of media in selecting these issues and deciding on a frame increases in arithmetic proportion, with verified effects on citizens.

3. The area of the messages published on Twitter by the candidates of the most voted political parties during the Catalan elections (21D) coincides with the main issues of the press covers and with the issues of greatest public interest, pointed out by the citizens.

The principle of causality, initially linked to networks, explains a process of influence that follows a circular pattern. What is reported and broadcast on Twitter, is transferred to the media, provokes a reaction and an opinion in the public and in turn can also have repercussions on the network.

The analysis of the personal accounts of politicians reflects a selection of issues directly related to framing of conflict, which given the tools provided by Twitter, become viral and produce effects in media and audiences.

Finally, the process of hybridization and transfer of agendas is confirmed (Aruguete, 2017; Chadwick, 2013); there is a triangulated correlation: the topics most used by the leaders are those most frequently published by newspapers and which are of greatest public interest. The press covers, in line with *Twitter*, focus their attention on events directly linked to the *Independencia de Cataluña* (*155, Puigdemont's escape, imprisoned politicians, companies leaving Catalonia*), in front of issues inherent to the electoral processes (program, results or political agenda, among others).

In line with future research, it is proposed to investigate the theory of the inverse agenda promoted by social media, which activates a down-and-up mechanism, involving citizens and civil society, which can determine the media agenda thanks to the impact and reach of the message on the networks. In this way, opportunities for social and political change emerge (Aruguete, 2017; Casero, 2015; Wallsten, 2007; Meraz, 2011; Sung-Tae & Young-hwan, 2007).

To study citizen activism on and off (Soengas & Assif, 2017) and its influence on politicians and the media (Howard & Hussain, 2013) by altering the schemes defined until now, to investigate the role

of users as prosumers in networks, or of citizen associations (Corominas, 2017) as active entities in front of centers of power, can also be the object of analysis.

Finally, progress in the definition of influence and influencers (Pérez-Curiel & García-Gordillo, 2018), in the localization of new strategies on *Twitter* (López-Meri, Marcos-García & Casero-Ripollés, 2017) and in the impact of fact-checking on the agenda (Mazaira-Castro, Rúas-Araujo & Puentes-Rivera, 2019; Wintersieck, 2017), make up possible open lines and continuity in the framework of political communication.

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