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Is Manuela Carmena a politician? Spanish journalists and politicians in the spotlight

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to better understand how the participants involved in a specific radio interview use categorization to (re)produce a dominant discourse in the Spanish political arena. In this discourse, politicians are seen as untrustworthy, and certain journalists are portrayed as serving specific political interests. The interview needs to be analyzed within its sociopolitical context. The wider context is one in which two new political parties claim to represent a new way of doing politics: old politics is described as opaque and untrustworthy, and they want to create a politics of renewal. The more specific context is the reason behind the interview. It occurs right after the publication of a book of interviews by Maruja Torres, the interviewee, with Manuela Carmena. Manuela is the current mayor of Madrid and an important figure in one of the new parties mentioned above. But most importantly, the interview takes place after several Spanish newspapers focused on a specific statement in the book, in which the mayor admits she feels overwhelmed and tired. This article aims to show the categorial and positioning mechanisms employed by the participants in the interview to co-construct a given discourse regarding the various social actors involved in contemporary Spanish politics. Spanish politics is not just made up of big events; it is also the accumulation of small affairs like this one. When people read these newspaper articles or listen to a radio interview, they must position themselves in relation to the small event, and it is the sum of these stances that configures people's political beliefs.

KEYWORDS

Spanish politics, membership categorization analysis, discourse analysis

Introduction

At the centre of this paper is a book of interviews produced by Maruja Torres (2015) entitled *Manuela Carmena: En el diván de Maruja Torres*. The interviewee, Manuela Carmena, was elected mayor of Madrid in the 27 May 2015 elections. Both women, Maruja Torres and Manuela Carmena, belong to the same generation and share a similar left-wing ideology within the Spanish context. In their early seventies, Maruja and Manuela have been and still are very active in the Spanish public sphere: Manuela as a judge and a visible representative of the new Spanish Left, which emerged from the *indignados* protest popularized with the M15 movement; Maruja, as a journalist of national and international affairs. Maruja's book of interviews was published in the third week of November 2015. The reactions from the media came shortly afterwards. Our purpose is to look in-depth at these reactions by analyzing a radio interview that mainly aimed at commenting on different newspaper articles published right after the launch of Maruja's book. The articles focused on a sentence from Manuela included in the very last part of the book. The main aim of our analysis will be to determine the reasons for the negative portrayal of the book in the newspaper articles, and the defence of the book and the figure of Manuela in the radio programme. We will employ membership categorization analysis (MCA) as understood by scholars such as Deppermann (2013), Fitzgerald (2012) and Martin-Rubió and Cots (2016), since we believe this approach to MCA is well equipped to establish the always complicated link between the close analyses of interactional events and the identification of changing social discourses.

Context

On 24 November 2015, the journalist Maruja Torres published a book of interviews with the recently proclaimed mayor of Madrid, Manuela Carmena. Manuela was known as part of the anti-Francoist resistance and, more specifically, as the lawyer who escaped the 1977 Atocha fascist terrorist attack (*la matanza de Atocha*). She was also part of the public sphere, featured frequently

in the Spanish media for her role as a judge, mainly in the 1980s and 1990s, as a representative of various workers' causes. In her early seventies, Manuela was seen as an asset for her experience as a lawyer and, mainly, for her experience as a judge during arduous times in the recent history of Spain. Thus, she ran for mayor within the Ahora Madrid political coalition, but she always highlighted the fact that she was "an independent", that is, not attached to any specific political party. The creation of Ahora Madrid was the result of the confluence of Ganemos Madrid and Podemos – in other words, the municipal project which had started under the name Municipalia in 2014, and which had been influenced by Guanyem Barcelona, led by Ada Colau, and the statewide project of Podemos, led by Pablo Iglesias (García Gallo 2015). Thus, Manuela Carmena became mayor through her support and representation of the municipal platform – a fact which is key for understanding her intention to have a close relationship and constant dialogue with the public and which stands in opposition to the greater distance between citizens and their representatives at the regional or state level. This is indeed one of the main messages in Maruja's book of interviews: she intends to highlight Manuela's humane side through light-hearted and honest conversations on various topics that she recorded, transcribed and then filled out with personal commentary, which includes the journalist's interpretation of the political situation in Spain over the past few decades. The publication of the book led to several headlines in Spanish newspapers that focused on a section of the book in which, addressing a specific moment when she is treated like a celebrity rather than as a public representative, complains and admits that she feels overwhelmed. As a result, Maruja is invited to participate in a radio programme in order to clarify some aspects of her book in relation to their interpretation by the Spanish press.

The book and the reaction of the press

The book starts with a prologue in which Maruja explains that her main objective behind the writing and publication of the book is to prove that Manuela Carmena is not really a "politician", a figure that Maruja identifies with someone who gives a false image of him/herself. With the interviews,

Torres (2015, 14) aims to prove that Manuela Carmena is “nada más – y nada menos – una ciudadana situada por elección popular en un cargo que le permite gestionar una ciudad y aplicar a ellos su experiencia impresionante como jurista, como mujer, como persona”. The book is structured around the five places they met, either in Barcelona or Madrid. A few emails that they exchanged during the period when the interviews were taking place complete the picture. Before and after the interviews, Maruja includes comments on significant historical events and cultural references that are mentioned in the interviews. The focus of the book is on specific significant moments of Manuela’s life, which, at the same time, trace the history of Spain from the mid-1940s, when Manuela was born, to the present day. Through Maruja’s questions and lively conversation, Manuela talks about various topics in a natural and straightforward way. She discusses her childhood and family, her reasons for becoming a judge – as a response to an inner need to help people live more comfortably and, thus, more happily – her husband and children, their relationship with new technology, sexuality and relationships and their need to spend time on their own in order to read and reflect on what is going on around them.

Despite the richness of the topics Maruja and Manuela deal with in the course of the interviews, newspaper coverage of the new publication on the day of its release, 24 November 2015, highlighted the fact that Manuela Carmena is tired, “se siente desbordada”, and that if she could go back in time, she would not run for mayor. These ideas only appear in one email from one of the final sections of the book, titled “Interludio electrónico, o dos veteranas *by e-mail*”, in which Maruja includes a few of the most relevant emails that she exchanged with Manuela while she was either busy with her public obligations or travelling to different parts of Spain and South America as representative of Spain’s capital city. This email was written by Manuela from Buenos Aires, and in it, she expressed her disappointment with the fact that she was being treated as a celebrity. She believes that politicians should be treated like regular citizens and, thus, she finds it difficult to understand and to cope with this situation. However, in their coverage, journalists did not focus on this complaint but on her feeling of unhappiness and the idea that if she could go back in time, she

would not run for mayor. As an example, the headline of that day's article in one of the most widely read newspapers in Spain, *El País*, reads as follows "Carmena: 'Si pudiera rebobinar, no me presentaría a la Alcaldía'" ("Carmena: 'Si pudiera'" 2015). This line is actually a shortened version of this line from an email: "Si pudiera rebobinar a febrero pasado, mantendría mi no inicial a presentarme a alcaldesa" (Torres 2015, 151). The article starts with the original line and goes on to explain that she had refused to run for mayor the first time she was asked. The journalist closes the paragraph with the idea that Manuela is no longer happy and feels overwhelmed. In the second part of the article, a number of topics covered in the book are mentioned, together with Manuela's main goal for her current job: improving Madrid. In this sense, the bias comes from the excessive visibility given to what is in fact a very minor aspect in the book.

This is not the case in other newspapers like *ESdiario* or *Lainformacion.com*, which adopt a confrontational style clear from the headlines themselves. For example, the opening line of the article from *Lainformacion.com* reads "168 días al frente de la Alcaldía y ya está cansada" ("Carmena se sincera" 2015). This "ya" indicates that it is not normal to be tired after such a short time; thus, the article tries to undermine Manuela's ability and value as leader of the Spanish capital. In other words, messages related to her biological age and the assumed losses of an ageing body are used by the newspaper in order to diminish her as a public figure, highlighting her inability to cope with the constant stress of being a politician and ignoring her extended professional experience as well as her long life of social activism. Cultural and social gerontologists such as Dolan and Tincknell (2012), King (2013), Whelehan and Gwynne (2014) and Segal (2014) show in their studies the extent to which the experience of women past their fifties in both media and popular culture is marked by the losses that biological age brings with it, rather than the richness of an accumulation of experiences. Although, in general terms, the Spanish media, both written and audiovisual, have been careful in not displaying an openly ageist bias against Manuela Carmena, the assumption that she is too old to be at the forefront of Spanish political life underlies these news items. Still, our focus will be on analyzing the discourse around the radio programme as a response

to the news item mentioned above. In the programme, two main topics dominate the conversation among the participants: the fact that Manuela is not a politician in the traditional sense of the word – understood as someone who tries to project a manufactured public image in order to gain votes – and, related to that, the idea that journalists who sympathize with right-wing ideological positions are trying to discredit Manuela’s authenticity and value as a political leader, painting her as in fact just as unreliable as any other politician.

The book and the radio interview

The radio interview acts as a counterweight to the article published in *El País* the day Maruja’s book was published. In the interview, Maruja Torres mobilizes a series of categories to describe the negative reception the book had received, which she considers to be a political campaign against the New Left (see below), and also to point out that Manuela Carmena is unlike other politicians, even those of the New Left. Manuela agreed to run for mayor after having refused the first time she was asked, and she became the mayor of Madrid against all odds. Maruja and many other journalists believe that all those who are uncomfortable with this state of affairs are doing their best to prove that Manuela is not to be trusted: that she represents a political party that is considered disruptive, even dangerous, in many respects, and that she is unreliable, like so many other politicians. They do this by pointing out that Manuela is already tired (thus suggesting that she may be too old for such public responsibility) and that she would now rather not be mayor (implying that she cannot be trusted when making decisions).

On 24 November 2015, Maruja Torres was invited by the Catalan public radio station Catalunya Ràdio to talk about her book and the reactions of the press following its publication. The afternoon radio programme, called *La tribu*, is hosted by Xavi Rosiñol, who organizes the episodes and leads the conversations, along with Marta Cristià. The two other participants in the interview are collaborators on the program, Núria Ribó and Roger Maiol, who run a section on current political issues. This interview is a significant object of analysis because it takes place shortly after

the press reactions to the publication of the book. Moreover, the oral format implies more improvisation and, thus, it provides valuable information related to the underlying categories that the participants in the interview use. The programme aims at both entertaining and informing the listener: there are elements in which humour and entertainment play a greater role, combined with more serious moments in which political issues become the focus of attention. The conversation with Maruja is the first issue of that day's programme, and the first segment of the section. Although the tone of the interview is relaxed and amiable, this is more due to the sense of understanding among the participants than to the topic being covered. It is, after all, and as we shall demonstrate in our analysis, a highly politicized conversation carried out in a very friendly manner. The whole segment under analysis lasts thirteen minutes, twenty-seven seconds, although the interview proper starts after 17s and lasts until 10m 42s. There are some postinterview comments that occupy the remaining two minutes, forty-five seconds of the segment, before the host introduces a new segment.

Manuela Carmena in the new political discourse (right, left, old and new)

Manuela Carmena has been a renowned judge and a dynamic social activist all her adult life. As she has explained in numerous interviews in various newspapers and in Maruja Torres's recently published book, she comes from a family of shopkeepers who, despite belonging to the lower-middle class, sent their children to a French school and were especially interested in providing them with a broad, inclusive education. Manuela studied law at Universidad Complutense de Madrid and, after working as a lawyer for a few years, decided to become a judge. She participated in various causes in favour of workers' and women's rights. After her retirement, she became an active member of the indignados protest and the M15 movement, and it is due to her involvement in that movement as well as her career-long involvement in legal causes that Podemos proposed that she be their candidate for the mayor of Madrid. Podemos is an emergent party whose leaders were close to the M15 movement; it is a party that defines itself as "a force for renewal" (Iglesias 2015, 15). As

has been stated in interviews and articles on Podemos, this party is strongly influenced by Antonio Gramsci's thesis on and belief in direct democracy, understood as a constant and ongoing relation of political leaders with the population through meetings and organizational methods mirrored by those established amongst the participants in the indignados protests.

In the last few years, mass protests fed by the use of new technologies have sparked the creation of new political platforms and, as an extension, new political parties. The indignados movement that started in 2011 in Spain gave birth to Podemos in early 2014, a political party which, with the help of new media and certain television programmes, became one of several new actors on the political scene. A new discourse emerged in which a dichotomy was established between what was labelled *la nueva y la vieja política*. Elements that were supposed to constitute the backbone of old politics were: bipartisanship, in which only two big parties took turns at running the country, corruption and changing names and faces in order to keep the sociopolitical structure intact. In turn, the discourse of new politics involved: a regeneration in politics not just with new faces but with a more horizontal and collaborative way of doing politics, transparency and putting the focus on social needs and the social emergency caused by the economic crisis. Iñigo Errejón Galván (2013, 73) identifies as one of the reasons for the emergence of the M15 movement the existence of a "breach between average citizens and the leaders of the country's main political parties, which were increasingly perceived as a cast unto themselves that acted against the interests of the public at large". What these ordinary citizens demand is "political change that goes beyond the mere rotation of political parties" and the constitution of "a political framework that offers more than a periodic shuffling of leadership between traditional elites" (78). It is in this sense that those in Podemos and its sympathizers and voters do not regard themselves as merely part of another political party: they are *el pueblo*, and they are facing the corrupt elites who make people believe they are competing when in fact they are just taking turns at holding power.

Two other parties had already been campaigning on this discourse of new and old politics: Unión, Progreso y Democracia (henceforth UPyD) was founded in 2007 by Rosa Díez, and

Ciutadans-Partit de la Ciutadania (henceforth C's) was established in July 2006, when Albert Rivera was chosen as the candidate to run for president of the Catalan government in the elections of that same year. Whereas UPyD has had relatively modest results, C's has come to represent the right-wing equivalent of Podemos. In the elections of 20 December of 2015, the combined votes of the PP and PSOE made up 50.73 percent of the votes, when in 2011 their combined votes were 73.39 percent. In 2011, Izquierda Unida came third with 6.92 percent of the votes. In 2015, it was Podemos who, together with their allies in Catalonia and València, collected 19.03 percent of the votes. C's came fourth with 13.93 percent of the votes (El País 2015).

In the local and regional elections of 24 May 2015, Podemos and C's started to be seen as a credible threat/alternative to the old parties. Podemos adopted the strategy of supporting local collectives which had different names and formats. In the specific case of the city of Madrid, they asked Manuela Carmena to lead the candidacy of the Ahora Madrid platform. Although the initial offer in February that year received a negative response, she accepted a month later, and Ahora Madrid obtained 31.85 percent of the votes and twenty seats in the town council. Thanks to a deal with the third-place PSOE, with 15.28 percent of the votes and nine seats, Manuela was elected mayor of the Spanish capital. The right-wing alternative won twenty-eight seats, twenty-one from the PP, who won the elections with 34.55 percent, and seven from Ciudadanos, with 11.41 percent of the votes. The framework had changed from two parties taking most of the votes, to four parties using different discourses and collecting vote percentages that forced them to strike deals in order to hold power.

Manuela Carmena has always maintained that she is an independent. She was backed by Podemos and has thanked them for their support, but she is not simply following party orders (Alcaraz 2015). Similarly, in Maruja's book, Manuela states that her interest has always lain in improving people's living conditions in order to work towards a more progressive society. As she herself states, this is the reason why she became a judge in the first place. Progress, for Manuela, implies working toward a society in which all of the population has their needs met and is satisfied

with their lives. In other words, it goes hand in hand with peace and social equality, in all the senses of the term (Torres 2015, 28–31).

Methodological aspects

We have adopted membership categorization analysis (henceforth MCA), in combination with positioning analysis (Deppermann 2013) to analyze the radio interview mentioned above. MCA is a technique pioneered by Harvey Sacks (1972). The main analytical components are “categories”, “membership category devices” (henceforth MCDs) and what Reynolds and Fitzgerald (2015, 99) call “locally invoked associated features” that can refer to “activities” or “predicates”, which can be category tied (when the link is constructed by the participants), category bound (when the link is felt to be natural and taken for granted) or category predicated (when it is implied). Since it is a technique developed within the ethno-methodological tradition, the analysis uses examples of real contextualized language (as for example our radio interview). It then identifies categories and collections of categories, or “devices” (MCDs). A “device” contains different “categories”, that “members of a society feel ‘go together’” (Sacks 1966, 15–16). Examples of this could be standard pairs like professor and student. There are then activities or predicates that are tied, bound or predicated to these categories. Attending a class at university, for instance, is an activity that is bound to the membership category of university student, and one could think of a device like “members of the university community” that would include professors, but also janitors or administrative staff. What then happens is that people in everyday speech can mobilize categories and tie features to these categories. If someone says, “No wonder he was smoking pot: he is a student”, this person is tying the activity “smoking pot” to the category of university student. Here is where positioning enters the scene. Someone could reply to the above sentence with, “Well, I am a student and I don’t smoke!” There is now a misalignment between the participants, and the link between the activity and the category has been challenged. The ultimate goal of this analytical technique is to identify the discourses that individuals in a specific place and time are jointly

displaying and producing, and how these discourses relate to the dominant discourses in the sociopolitical reality these people inhabit.

This connection between the close analysis of specific interactions and social discourses is one of the most controversial issues within MCA. At least three attitudes can be identified. One holds that this connection cannot be established and that analysts should stick to the here and now of the interaction under analysis. The second is the position adopted by Stokoe (2012, 280), who proposes large data sets be built – even if this means mixing data that come from very different contexts – and locating and analyzing categories in a systematic and orderly fashion. This way of proceeding would guarantee that the claims about social discourses are sound and robust. The third attitude, adopted by scholars like Fitzgerald (2012) or Martin-Rubió and Cots (2016), does not see the need for what Stokoe (2012, 300) calls “corpus-based MCA”. A small data set can suffice, provided enough ethnographic or contextual information is provided. We adopt this third position, aware that, in doing so, context understood in its widest sense becomes essential.

Deppermann (2013, 77) argues that “we need to bring ethnographic background knowledge into the analysis”, and this is precisely what knowledge of the context does. The author claims that “this additional ethnographic knowledge is necessary in order to grasp the participants’ full evaluative, stylistic, socio-structural meaning of the identity-categories they invoke” (77). The structure of the interview, for instance, is something those of us who frequently listen to this programme, and to the radio station in general, are already acquainted with. The interview proper is preceded by an introductory part in which the radio host welcomes Núria Ribó, one of his collaborators, and jokes with her, and is followed by a postinterview part after they say farewell, in which the collaborators (Núria and Roger) comment on what Maruja has said. After this, the host announces that after a few ads the section will continue with a different segment on how people choose passwords for their computers and electronic devices. Knowledge about the participants, direct and indirect, is also different depending on where you live. For those in Catalonia, or Spain, Maruja Torres is well known. She appears with relative frequency in the Catalan and Spanish

media, and her views on political issues have been consistent and publicly known for many years. We have preferred not to collect a large number of interviews in order to see how categories are mobilized in all of them, but to conduct an in-depth study of one interview, equipped with contextual knowledge, in order to analyze how certain categories are mobilized and how they connect to the discourses being (re)produced in that context.

Findings

As will be developed in the following sections, two main categories have been identified, both of them related to the two professions that become the object of discussion in the interview: politicians and journalists. These two categories relate to notions of authenticity and reliability. At the core of the interview, as well as in Maruja's book, there is the objective of presenting a comprehensive image of Manuela, on a personal and professional level. Since her announcement as candidate for Madrid's mayoralty, her image has been defined either by her age, and the limiting stereotypes associated with old age, or her defence of causes that have been attacked as being close to communist ideals. In Maruja's book, through her own voice, Manuela is presented as a woman whose life choices have always been made according to her conviction that a more egalitarian society would translate into widespread well-being which, at the same time, would result in increased individual happiness. She defines herself as someone who has always had a creative mind, which she attributes to the fact that her parents did not reprimand her for showing her creativity. On the contrary, they promoted that creativity at a time when individual freedom was limited in Spain. Manuela married young and had two children and, despite belonging to a generation and time in which women were expected to be housewives, her family supported her in developing her professional career to the point that she spent some time in the Canary Islands as a judge in order to learn from that different context, while her husband and one of her children stayed in Madrid. All in all, Maruja presents Manuela as a brave and enterprising woman whose experience, both in the personal and professional spheres, as well as her interest in reading, thinking

and debating, make her an interesting and enriching public figure.

Politicians versus authentic people

The categories of politician and *folclórica* are mobilized in the radio interview. The latter might require some contextualization. *Folclórica* is derived from the term *folklore*, and it refers to singers of folk songs (normally *coplas*) in Spain. During Franco's regime, they gained great popularity and changed the Spanish star system (Gallego 2013). Their popularity continued in the democratic period, although with ever-declining fame and influence. Politician and *folclórica* can be considered categories in the MCD “occupations”. They are linked by the different participants in the radio interview to a series of features that members of this collective are said to possess. The participants contribute to creating a picture in which members of these categories: 1) show a fake version of themselves when they appear in public, acting as if they were wearing a mask; 2) exert great control over what they say or do, so one hardly can grasp what they really think on a given topic; 3) stop acting like normal people when they obtain an important position and contribute to escalating tensions and confrontation and 4) are ambitious.

At 5m 37s, the radio host asks Maruja to clarify something she has said on previous occasions, namely that, as a journalist, she has always thought that “politicians” are just like *folclòriques* (Torres 2010). The first characteristic of the list above emerges right after the question. Maruja explains that when politicians go on TV shows, they show a fake version of themselves. Maruja is referring here to the appearance of Pedro Sánchez, leader of the opposition party PSOE, in *En la tuya o en la mía*, a show in which public figures are interviewed in an apparently friendly and informal atmosphere. Sánchez appeared on the show on 25 November 2015, i.e., the day after the radio interview, but the show had already been advertised, and Maruja is thus predicting that little truth and authenticity will emerge from that interview. It needs to be borne in mind that, in theory, the show had made a point of not inviting politicians (“TVE prohíbe” 2015). However, Pedro Sánchez, on 25 November, and Mariano Rajoy, one week later, were interviewed only weeks

before the general elections of 20 December 2015. Pablo Iglesias and Albert Rivera, leaders of Podemos and C's respectively, were not invited on the show.

Returning to the analysis, the point raised by Maruja is that, in these shows, politicians pretend to be simple and modest (“van de senzills”) and to care a lot about the citizens they govern, but in fact, she argues, it is all false. This is why she has always hated interviewing politicians. She did not particularly enjoy interviewing *folclòriques*, but, in the long run, those interviews were more touching. She recalls an anecdote from the 1970s about a member of the *folclòrica* category who complained towards the end of the interview that she had not been asked about the Vietnam War yet. Thus, Maruja's words imply that *folclòriques* used to perform on and off the stage, but, at least, some of them had a more humane side than can be sensed or found in some politicians.

The host then asks Maruja why she agreed to write this book about a person who the host has introduced at 1m 8s as the mayor of Madrid, i.e., a politician. Maruja's answer at 6m 55s is that Manuela Carmena is not a “politician”, but a woman who has been very active in taking on social responsibility (see Excerpt 1, the first exchange below). It is obvious that Manuela is now a politician, since she is being paid to be the mayor of Madrid, but Maruja is referring here to the category of “politician”, understood as members of a political party who are fake and impenetrable.

Excerpt 1: “Manuela no és política, és una dona...”

1 Xavi: *i aquest lli:bre Maruja (.) per què vas decidir acceptar l'encàrrec que et va fer l'editorial per fer-lo/*

and this book Maruja (.) why did you choose to accept the commission from the publishing company to do it/

2 Maruja: *perquè: bé a: ella no és una política ella és una dona (.) e:h que socialment diguem-ne des del punt de vista de la responsabilitat ha fet moltes coses/ (.) que jo la cone:c (.) de oïdes (.) de de de les manifestacions dels manifestos que hem firmat de tots_ des dels anys seta:nta/ a Madrid no/ i no havíem coincidit ma:i (.) i aleshores jo tenia ganes de*

saber com és ...

because, well, a: she is not a politician she is a woman (.) e:m who socially let's say from a responsibility point of view has done a lot of things/ (.) someone I know (.) from hearsay (.) from the demonstrations the manifestoes we have signed from all the_ since the seventies/ in Madrid right/ and we had never ran into each other (.) and well I just wanted to know how she...

(Transcribed from the original programme in Catalan, with our English translation)

At 8m 26s, Maruja explains that during the interview for the book Manuela spoke about different aspects of her life with total trust and great generosity, so that she as a journalist could really get to know the person beyond the job. In that sense, Manuela is a world away from the fake performances of politicians. At 8m 46s, Roger asks Maruja whether she thinks Manuela will maintain her authenticity, or instead start wearing “aquesta màscara que tenen tots i aquest absolut autocontrol sobre el que diuen” (this mask they all have, this total self-control over what they are saying). Maruja replies that Manuela cannot change because she does not do things just because they are what is expected from politicians. On the contrary, she enjoys organizing things and if she thinks she can improve how people organize their lives, then she acts. Maruja then uses an example that can be considered another category-bound activity **belonging to of** the politician category: talking at political rallies. Whereas members of the politician category hold political rallies, she just gets a chair and sits next to people and tells them: “Mireu feu-vos el compte de que m'esteu contractant pel col·legi dels vostres fills, i expliqueu-me què voleu” (Imagine you are hiring me to run your children's school, and tell me what you want me to do). Maruja closes by stating, twice more, that she does not think Manuela can change (“no pot canviar, no pot canviar”). With this argument, Maruja reinforces the idea she stated at the beginning of the interview that Manuela is not a politician because, among other things, she avoids performing and speaks her mind in any context.

At 11m 42s, in the comments after the interview proper, Núria Ribó, one of the collaborators on the programme, refers to Manuela's tone. She mentions tense episodes with the previous mayor of Madrid, the PP's Esperanza Aguirre. Someone else might have opted for a confrontational tone with her, typical of politicians, but Manuela simply told Aguirre that since they were just two old women, there was no point in escalating the tension. Núria then argues that we are used to seeing people change once they obtain an important position in a town hall or office. It seems that when people are given power, as is the case with politicians, they start wearing a mask, controlling their words and promoting controversy. However, Manuela has not done that. This is indeed an example of what new politics could really be about. Following this argumentation, an alternative MCD category might be identified as "jobs and power/fame". This alternative category would be inserted within the notion of powerful jobs that grant jobholders fame. All the features described above from politicians and *folclóricas* might be, in fact, a direct consequence of their exposure to public scrutiny. This is something taxi drivers, schoolteachers or judges, for example, do not have to deal with, at least not automatically and as a direct consequence of having that job. Within this new device, one category could be "powerful jobs that have fame associated with them" and another category would be "anonymous jobs that grant no fame". Manuela had a certain visibility due to her many years of social activism, as already mentioned, but becoming the mayor of Madrid entailed a higher level of exposure that tends to make ordinary people lose their authenticity and adopt a more opaque and controversial tone.

There is a fourth element that Roger Maiol, one of the programme's collaborators, raises towards the end of the interview. He does so when he establishes a comparison with another important figure of the *nueva política*: namely, Ada Colau. Ada Colau also received the support of Podemos in her Barcelona En Comú candidacy, and she also became the mayor of a major city, in this case Barcelona. Roger, at 12m 39s, argues that, unlike Ada, Manuela had no political ambition. In Manuela's case, Ahora Madrid asked her to take on the candidacy, whereas Ada already had political ambition after leading a movement to protect the many people who had been evicted from

their homes during the economic crisis. The participants in the interview have co-constructed a discourse in which politicians are compared to *folclóricas* and described as ambitious people who are not truthful in public and who exert great control over what they say. Moreover, if these politicians were anonymous before reaching a position of power, they stopped behaving like ordinary people when they did. This is why Manuela is described as “not a politician” even if she is the mayor of Spain’s capital city.

What is the aim of journalists?

The other MCD mobilized in the interview has to do with ideological positions within the journalistic profession and, by extension, within other professions. It would include a category described by Maruja in the first exchange of Excerpt 2 below as: “bestiar” (fauna) and “la gent aquesta” (these people) and by Núria Ribó as “tarats” (morons) (at 1m 41s of the interview). In other words, journalists who do not follow any ethical guidelines and have a tendency to produce headlines that are limited both in meaning and in providing reliable information. In this respect, Maruja believes that the journalists responsible for the headlines that summarize an entire book with one specific sentence have written about the book without actually checking all the sources. They have, for instance, failed to contact her, the author of the book (“*tenen el meu telefon i ni tan sols per veure si és aixís*” in the first exchange of Excerpt 2). Conversely, Maruja refers to the radio programme as an example of the other kind of journalists, those who phone the author of the book to ask for clarification and to understand what the aim of the book was. The objective of the former journalists was to “destroy” Manuela (they use the Catalan verb *enfonsar-la*, which means “to sink her”) because of what she represents, and this is why they took a specific line from the book and turned it into a headline. Maruja argues that they went through the book quickly to find something to bring her down, looking for betrayals and contradictions, i.e., evidence that would prove she too was fake (see turn 11 of Excerpt 2). Politicians lie, whereas authentic people do not; thus, they wanted to show that she was just like most other politicians – someone who runs for a position of

responsibility with money and/or power in mind.

In fact, Maruja points out (turn 9 of Excerpt 2) that if they had looked deeper, they would have found other passages in which they talked about sex, and she laughs at the idea of what they must have thought about “dues velles parlant d’aquestes coses” (two old women talking these things). This simple line requires the kind of ethnographic information we have referred to in the methodological section in order to be completely decoded. Maruja is referring here to the ideological positions of these journalists, most of them “right-wing” and Catholic, who have a strong decorum in relation to appropriate sexual behaviour according to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Talking about sex is not appropriate but even less so if those doing it are two women in their seventies. In the Western tradition, old women should spend their time with their families, or among other older people, resting and enjoying their retirement (Woodward 1999; Chivers 2003). This is something that neither Manuela nor Maruja are doing and will probably not prioritize in the near future.

Excerpt 2: Two old ladies talking about sex?

1 Maruja: *però fixeu-vos vosaltres que jo que em conec una mica el bestiar (.) així com vosaltres em truqueu per veure que_ com va la cosa i tal (.) a tota aquesta gent han publicat coses i tenen el meu telefon i ni tan sols per veure si és aixís =eh/=*

but remember I know the fauna we’re dealing with here (.) just like you phoned me to see_ how things are (.) all those people have published things and they have my phone and they haven’t even tried to check =eh/=

2 Xavi: =ja=

=I see=

3 Núria: =@ clar=

=@ sure=

4 Maruja: *però jo pensava aquests s’enganxaran i ens posaran a parir perquè hi ha un moment*

molt divertit que ens posem a parlar de sexe/

but I was thinking those people will be taken aback and badmouth us because there is a very funny moment when we start talking about sex/

5 Xavi: *mm*

6 Núria: *=@@=*

7 Maruja: *=i aleshores= que ella diu ai se pueden hacer tantas cosas sin necesidad de penetración i jo em quedo una mica així si_ bueno la verdad es que yo a la penetración le tengo cariño i @@@ entens/*

=and then= she says oh you can do so many things that do not imply penetration and I am a bit like yes_ well the truth is that I am fond of penetration and @@@ you know what I mean/

8 Núria: *@@*

9 Maruja: *dues velles parlant d'aquestes coses que està molt bé no/*

two old women talking about these things which is great right/

10 Núria: *=clar que si=*

=of course it is=

11 Maruja: *=trobo que està molt bé= però això se'ls ha passat perquè han nat ràpidament a veure si l'agafaven amb una contradicció amb una traïció amb una cosa que pugui defraudar als seus seguidors perquè hi ha odi cap a les persones senzilles i honrades*

=I think it's great= but they didn't even register it because they went straight on to try and catch her out with a contradiction or a betrayal with something that might disappoint her followers because they hate humble, honest people

(Transcribed from the original programme in Catalan, with our English translation)

According to Maruja, then, these journalists rushed through the book looking for contradictions, did not check with her, the author of the book, and just published the article to hurt Manuela's political

career. In contrast, the comments by the collaborators on the radio programme are full of praise for Manuela and her Catalan equivalent, Ada Colau. The participants in the programme highlight the fact that Manuela and Ada represent a new approach and a new way of doing politics and, thus, are perceived as brave people who could have taken it easy but have decided to fight for social justice. In fact, they close the interview by telling Maruja she will sell many copies of the book, and she closes by thanking the radio interviewers for giving her this free advertisement.

From Maruja's point of view, there are journalists who simply want to hurt Manuela because she is left-wing and threatens the system. They might also have found two old women talking about sex offensive, and in a different context, they might have decided to focus on that instead, but since the priority was to find a passage in which Manuela could be described as dishonest, they opted to focus on those two lines. And then there are good journalists who check all the sources, the book's author included, and who are thus less biased.

Discussion

The political scene in Spain is undergoing particularly intense moments. What has traditionally been a two-party system has witnessed how two new political parties, both structured around a discourse of renewal, have destabilized the system. The municipal elections of May 2015 saw the threat become reality for the first time, and as a result of those elections, two representatives of the New Left became the mayors of the two biggest cities in Spain. Rather than approaching such a big topic from above, we have chosen a small event (a radio interview) to uncover, through categorial and positioning analysis, how a given discourse is reproduced and adapted. We have done so by including the broad and the specific context in which this interview took place. The wider context is precisely the apparent end of the two-party system in Spanish politics. The specific context is the publication of the book of interviews and the reaction from certain newspapers.

We believe this bottom-up approach can be enriching, and it can easily be applied to other contexts. Parkinson (2016) recently chose the following headline for an article: "A Muslim Bus

Driver's Son Has Just Beaten a Millionaire Banking Heir to Become the Mayor of London". In paragraph six of the article, Saiq is called "former Transport Minister Khan", but this is secondary to the fact that his Muslim father drove a bus, whereas his opponent was the son of a millionaire in the banking industry. How the media, old and new, portrays politicians is a fundamental element in the (re)production of discourses, and we are seeing extreme examples across the globe. From Donald Trump in the US to Erdoğan in Turkey, we see how politics and communication intertwine in increasingly complex ways, and we believe the sort of micro-to-macro analysis we have carried out in this article can contribute to clarifying the mechanisms employed in the generation and reproduction of discourses.

We believe that politics is not just about big events, or about casting one's vote come election time. Politics is also about how one reacts to small affairs like the one examined in this article. There is a particular participant in the radio interview that one might be tempted to ignore: the listener. And such participants can be counted in the hundreds of thousands. They are the participants who do not appear in the transcript, but who are there, listening to what is going on, adopting positionings, experiencing feelings and reacting in a myriad different ways.

Conclusions

Through the analysis and discussion of three media sources that create a polemic around the figure of Manuela Carmena, the categories of politician and journalist have been singled out and examined as used and understood within the context of the book, newspaper headings and the radio programme. Maruja conceives of politicians as people who hide behind masks to deal with fame and who lose their honesty and humbleness when they attain power, and argues that Manuela is not a politician in that sense, since she will always preserve her honesty and proximity to the people. Thus, when certain newspapers focused on the same line of her book, in which Manuela admitted she was tired, these journalists were simply being partisan and desperately looking for ways to hurt this new and atypical political figure. By analyzing how certain categories are mobilized and

specific features are linked to these categories, we have aimed at identifying the current discourses surrounding Spanish politics, very much engaged at the moment with notions of regeneration. This article shows the extent to which the communications media are influential in building and shaping the image of public representatives.

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