

MEDIA INFLUENCE ON THE PERSONALIZATION OF POLITICS:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ARGENTINA AND SPAIN

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Submitted to Central European University Department of Political Science

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science

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Budapest, Hungary (2019)

Abstract

For the past decades, democratic elections have more and more campaigns that tend to personalize political appeals. This phenomenon arguably expands with the interaction of politics and contemporary mass media.

This study investigates the relationship between the media and the personalization of politics. It aims to understand the relation between the news coverage and the phenomenon of the personalization, in order to understand how personalization as a strategy is built.

The objective is to explore the influence of the media in coverage of campaigns before mayoral elections in Argentina and Spain during 2015. The case studies are the elections of the current Mayor of the province of Buenos Aires, María Eugenia Vidal, and Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau.

The cases of Buenos Aires and Barcelona provide some distinct characteristics. They are two elections that candidates won after decades of political dominance by another party. The winners are two women who engaged in campaign discourses with high levels of personalization. This is a constellation of factors that would sufficient to explain no matter how personalized the media coverage of these campaigns were. If I nonetheless find evidence for an active influence by the media that would provide robust confirmation that personalization in contemporary politics is, indeed, linked to media characteristics. The comparative analysis gives to the study an understanding about the role of the media as a fundamental actor in politics, and contribute to the studies of this specific countries.

The selection of cases is based on the assumption that the role of the media in elections is fundamental place in the configuration of the political arena in different contexts. The

strategy is to use a qualitative methodology to analyse processes. The objective is to categorize grades of personalization, using sources from interviews to specialists in political communication and articles from the coverage in the digital media.

The research reveals original new ways to study the construction of discourses in the digital media and the strategies of the candidates in the news. The investigation brings new empirical evidence about the role of the media as a key actor in the personalization of politics.

Keywords: Media - Elections - Personalization - Politics - Election campaigns

Acknowledgements

This thesis is only a visible part of a year that changed my life in all facets. I want to thank the generosity of the people who lent themselves to interviews, reports and consultations for this research work: Belén Amadeo, professor and specialist in political communication; René Palacios, consultant in political campaigns; David Dusster, editor of *La Vanguardia*; Enric Sierra, associate chief of *La Vanguardia*; Gideon Rahat, professor eminence in the subject of personalization.

Many thanks to argentinean academics: Elsa Llenderrozas, director of Political Science career at the University of Buenos Aires, Dra. María Paula Bertino, Xana Rodriguez, Carolina Pérez Roux, Verónica Carmona Barrenechea and Tamara Colodenco and to my favourite professor Tomás Várnagy, because their help I got the scholarship in Central European University.

I want to thank from my heart to the wonderful people that I met at the Central European University and they accompanied me in this dream of studying in Europe that became true.

Special thanks to the Department of Political Science for the generosity and the scholarship that made it true.

To my dear professor Jean Louis Fabiani for encouraging me to think critically, to follow my ideas and my creativity.

To Professor Gabor Toka, for his supervision and creative ideas and for his human warmth and his greatness that goes beyond the formal limits of the academia.

To Eva Ajkay-Nagy for her careful reading in each of my papers and for the academic and emotional support in our weekly talks. To Ildiko Tropa, for her permanent support that

helped me to continue until the end of the academic year. To Peter Molnar for exposing my artistic face. To my dear Lena Melyukhina for giving me her sincere friendship from the first second. To Chirayu Thakkar, Promise Frank Ejiofor, Muhammad Hyder, Rahuldev Sukhil and Yu Ruichuan, colleagues from Political Science, and others like Antonio Ricci, Agostina Allori and Aidin Bakytbek, who I learned to appreciate both personally and academically, thank you for making me travel to your countries through your eyes.

To my dear Antonio Smith Bravo, and his partner Szóka for their deepest friendship, full of talks, discussions about politics in the middle of academic exercises. To Paula Kantor, for our intimate talks and Argentinean hugs. To Jibek Turgunbekova and Mridul Pareek for their positivism and permanent care of me. To my friends and neighbors on the 8th floor, Tea Klaric, Ivona Vargek, Sam Huckleberry, Iskander Rocha Parker, Gustavo Montagna von Zeschau and María Paula Rey for being my adoptive family during a year in which we share various cooking classes as well as many Argentinean mates and conversations. To Pau and Gusti, simply for being with me whenever I needed it. To Iskander and María Paula, for being the best readers and commentators of my thesis. To Pau especially for helping since the moment we were two strangers until we became great friends.

To my friends from China, Korea and Japan – Ren, Vero, Chine and Acsis - for being my pride. To Rodolfo, Edgardo, and Keren, Guus, great friends who gave me the life.

To Andre for his infinite patience and love.

To aba to help me to be independent. To Babi, Yeye and Mamá for helping me since I have reason, for teaching me the love of education and always working to transform dreams into reality.

Thanks in all languages.

Gracias infinitas.

Dedicated to my mom

“The role of the media in contemporary politics forces us to ask what kind of world and what kind of society we want to live in, and in particular in what sense of democracy do we want this to be a democratic society?” - Noam Chomsky

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Media influence on the personalization of politics: A comparative study of Argentina and Spain

Introduction

This study investigates the link between mass media and the personalization of politics. As Aelst, Sheafer, and Stanyer (2007) explain: “Personalization concerns a focus on individual politicians as central actors in the political arena, including their ideas, capacities, and policies” (p.65).¹ I investigate to what extent the media played a role in the personalization of politics in two election campaigns by María Eugenia Vidal in Argentina and Ada Colau in Spain. For that purpose, I study two categories of political personalization that related to each other because they are fundamental to understanding the relationship between politics and media: *personalization in campaigns* and *personalization of media coverage*.¹ One type of personalization influences the other: personalization of media coverage influences personalization in election campaign, and this one influences media.² It is a cycle of interaction between politics and media related to the concept of personalization.³

The literature reveals no consensus about the concept of personalization of politics, and does not offer much empirical evidence about the causal politics (McAllister, 2007, Rebolledo,

¹ Some scholars make a distinction between other types of personalization: institutional, media and behavioral personalization. Personalization in campaigns is then part of a sub-type of behavioral personalization that is related to the behavior of the politicians. See in Rahat G, Sheafer T. The Personalization(s) of Politics in Israel 1949-2003. Political Communication. 2007, 24 (1): 65-80.

² This study based on the cycle of personalization following the investigation of Rahat and Sheafer (2007), who introduced the “Model (S)PMP”. The scholars explain the cycle as a sequence of social changes, politics, media, and then the restarts of the cycle with politics again. They did not find conclusive evidence. See interview to Gideon Rahat in Appendix.

³ Gideon Rahat expressed in an interview in Appendix: "A more personal electoral system, media would be more personal in the way that it does the coverage of the campaigns, the politicians will have more personalized campaigns and then also the politicians will behave a more personalized way and the voters will think in more personalized terms. The idea is one type of personalization creates others types. Personalization in media coverage and in election campaign influenced each other."

2017). Therefore, the objective of this study is to clarify some elements of personalization with a focus on actors that play a key role in politics during election campaigns and shape the coverage of the media. The selection of the cases is also relevant, because both the mayoral candidate to the Province of Buenos Aires, María Eugenia Vidal, and the mayoral candidate for Barcelona, Ada Colau, built a campaign with a high degree of personalization in which media played a central role.⁴ I study the campaign communication of the candidates in the media and the mass media coverage in those campaigns. The contribution of the research is to study campaigns that have not been studied in-depth and to build a comparative framework that travels well across countries. This way, the study helps to understand the personalization of politics in Argentina and Spain, and the relationship between media and politics in general.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. For the first chapter, I analyze the literature related to personalization to define the main concepts that I use in the thesis. In other words, I consider the origins, characteristics, and different types of personalization, as well as its consequences and causes. In chapter II, I study the Argentinean case. First, I contextualize local elections in the province of Buenos Aires; I detail the characteristics of the campaign and the role of the Argentinean media with an exhaustive investigation of the media coverage of the campaign through a group of articles from different newspapers. Then, in chapter III, I analyze the Spanish case the same way. Here, the analyses focused on a group of articles from *La Vanguardia* and *El Mundo* with Annunziata's typology⁵ and four dimensions: Personal characteristics, Visibility of a candidate, Rules of Election and Policy issues. In the final chapter, I elucidate the differences and similarities between the two cases in a comparative perspective.

⁴ In the case of Vidal she had more space in the media than Ada Colau. But Colau took advantage of every second that she received in the media and built a campaign in the social media.

⁵ The typology of Annunziata is based in these categories: Intimate, Citizen, Political and Institutional.

Abbreviatons

PJ - Partido Justicialista

FPV- Frente para la Victoria

UCR- Union Civica Radical

PRO- Propuesta Republicana

IDEA- Instituto para el Desarrollo Empresarial de Argentina

BS AS-Buenos Aires

Chapter I

1.1 Literature review

It is often said, “there is little doubt that politics has become more personalized over the past half-century” (McAllister, 2007:15). But personalization has long been present in the history of politics. It began, however, to be studied systemically only in the eighties and the nineties and - as the work of Patterson (1993), Kaase (1994), and Hallin (1992) has demonstrated - in relationship with the cultural and the technological changes. For instance, they have studied the relationship between personalization and television, showing how the transmission in the TV shows affects the political processes. The format of the interviews on the media coverage focused on personal stories of the candidates and the tendency is to increase the reports about persons. The media impacted in the politician’s discourse. “Mazzoleni and Schulz observed that the process of adaptation of politics to the media’s rules also involves the communication outlook of political actors and the content of their political discourse” (Campus, 2010:220). Since these studies, personalization turned into a central topic of political communication research, and changing interests in communication and media studies have enhanced its analysis in the last few years.

Academics from political science and more recently from communication studies offered the first definitions of personalization. In most works personalization refers to situations where politicians become the main protagonists of the political process (Hallin, 1992; Patterson, 1993; Kaase, 1994).

In this sense, “personalization concerns a focus on individual politicians as central actors in the political arena, including their ideas, capacities, and policies” (Aelst et.al. 2012:214). The idea of personalization has changed over time (Holtz-Bacha, et.al.2014). As a dynamic concept, it also implies that “a person turns into an interpretative framework for

complex political facts constructing political reality” (Silke et. al. 2010:215). One of the consequences is that personalization implies, ultimately, that the politician is the person who is central in the political scenario (Wattenberg, 1998; Rico, 2009; Garzia, 2014). In the context of elections, this phenomenon becomes more evident: this means that during campaigns, political leaders are more visible to the public (Wattenberg 1998; Rico, 2009; Garzia, 2014). For example, media plays a fundamental role in the situation: mass media's propensity to mention candidates rather than the parties to which they belong during elections campaigns (McAllister, 2007:2).

The analysis of behavior of the media and the significant changes in communication of the last two decades are necessary to understand the tendency towards personalization in politics. The increase of the electronic media has had serious consequences in the way campaigns are designed but also in the way politics are conducted. Politicians adopt the campaigns to the format of the electronic media; messages are shorts, and also become personalized to capture the attention of the voters.

The reasons that supposedly explain personalization are not just the active role of the media and the declining identification between the electorate and the parties (Keeter, 1987; Wattenberg, 1991). For example, Sheafer and Stanyer explain how in democracies “the rise of candidate-centered politics (...) is the result of the weakening of traditional effective ties between voters and parties and the changing of media environment” (Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012:217). Most studies agree that the increase of personalization in general and particularly during campaigns is related to wider changes in politics, journalism and media systems (Rebolledo, 2017; Garzia, 2014; Silke et.al. 2010).

Meanwhile, personalization is also a consequence of the process of *individualization*, which is closely related to globalization and technological modernization within democracies

(Bauman, 2001; Mancini & Swanson, 1996). Other studies, such as the one published by Rahat and Sheafer, associate the process of personalization with the development of democratic institutions. Political organizations adopt “rules, mechanisms, and institutions that put more emphasis on the individual politician and less on political groups and parties.” (Rahat & Sheafer, 2007:66). In this sense, personalization has a strong connection with the quality of democracy. Some works highlight the negative consequences of personalization for democracy because the electorate focuses more on the politician than in political proposals of the party or its political structure (Keeter, 1987; Holtz-Bacha, 1999). As Silke and Maier (2010:215) suggest, candidates are increasingly portrayed and evaluated on the basis of non-political, symbolic criteria that do not refer to any substantial issue positions.

Against these critical perspectives, Rebolledo highlights the relationship between the increasing focus on the individual candidates and their personal characteristics, which can be seen as a new way to understand democracy, not necessarily in a negative way (Rebolledo, 2017). Personalization for Rebolledo is a new form of communication on politics that not condition the quality of democracy. There is a different configuration in the relation between voters and candidates. Here, the personal characteristics of leaders also become a political issue, which is particularly evident in the context of election campaigns.

Other scholars distinguished negative personalization from the positive one. The first characterized by a campaign which the leaders from other parties highlight the lack skills or bad character of his/her opponent (Pedersen & Rahat, 2019:6). The positive accentuated the characteristics, proposals or the figure of the candidate in himself.

As a political phenomenon, personalization can be studied at different levels: personalization in the context of election campaigns, in media, and of voting behavior (Holtz-Bacha, 1999).

Corresponding to the three levels, there are three main actors in personalization: politicians, the media, and the voters. Today, the media and politicians are presented as enemies, creating an image of them as competing horses. This is “a short, simple and people-oriented presentation of politics” (Silke & Maier, 2010:217) which focuses more on the stories of candidates and emotional elements, with the intention to build an attractive narrative rather than to merely communicate political proposals (Holtz-Bacha, 1999). The structure of the media is volatile and fast, therefore the messages need to be direct to have an impact. Consequently, voters choose politicians based on their personal characteristics, while media focuses more on the attributes of the candidate than the party itself (Rebolledo, 2017).

In conclusion, the process of personalization is not linear: media, voters and political actors are part of a “cycle of personalization”. As Rahat and Sheafer have shown in the case of Israel, personalization is a dynamic process that changes over time. Media influences politics and politics influences media doing personalization deeper into the interaction of the elements.⁶

The model called “(S)PMP sequence”: Society, Politics, Media, Politics (Rahat & Sheafer, 2007). The authors base their model on Wolfsfeld’s “Politics -Media -Politics” (PMP) model, but add Society (its changes) as a key element to be taken into consideration. The Wolfsfeld model focuses on political communication and is mainly concerned with the role of media in peace processes. Rahat and Sheafer, however, show more interest in the causes of political changes, whilst society is a necessary element of the equation (Rahat & Sheafer, 2007; Wolfsfeld, 2014). They explain through their model that politics comes before the media, but changes in the media coverage affect the political structure, therefore constituting a cycle of interaction.⁷ This dynamic process has consequences.

⁶ The authors called the model “(S)PMP sequence”: Society, Politics, Media, Politics.

⁷ Gideon Rahat expressed in the interview in Appendix that they did not find conclusive evidence about the cycle.

One of the major consequences of the personalization in politics is the deterioration of parties as mass organizations and their difficulties to mobilize voters (McAllister, 2007). Electoral success, as is often argued, increasingly reliant on the personal appeal of leaders partly because party brands count for less than they used to (Newell, 2010). And another institutional background to personalization is the decline of a stable political alliance between traditional parties and their electorate.

As the scholars have already suggested, another effect of personalization in this case closely related to media coverage – is *individualization*. Individuals become the center of the media coverage, and coverage focuses more on candidates than parties. There is one further consequence, which is *privatization*: the tendency to speak about candidates not only in their role as politicians but as ordinary people, their everyday life and their intimacy (Aelst, et.al. 2012). As explained above, this can be related to a concern about the diminishing quality of democracy resulting from electoral linkages between candidates and their supporters becoming less rooted in substantive political matters.

Privatization and individualization increase in a context of politics mediatization, a concept that is fundamental to comprehend personalization. The term was introduced to explain “the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic” (Hjarvard, 2018:113). The mediatization helps to understand the process of personalization as a product of the media logic that started in a political context.

It is useful to clarify distinctions between the influence of media coverage and that of institutional or political systems. But, personalization is also related to institutions. Since, “variations in institutional arrangements (...) important effects on the nature and style of political leadership, with the major distinction being between presidential and parliamentary systems” (McAllister, 2007:17).

In the context of presidential regimes, the figure of the candidate is more personalized than in parliamentary contexts (D'Alessandro, 2014). Presidentialism consists of an institutional regime in which citizens choose directly the chief of the executive. The president has direct legitimacy from elections and the concentration of power is embodied in the president. The tendency towards personalization is higher in these regimes, especially in the campaign where parties need to exalt the figure of the candidates. Thus, in the literature about personalization there is much talk about “presidentialization of politics”, a phenomenon that consists in the increase in the personalization in the leadership caused by an “executive bias” in modern politics (Poguntke & Webb, 2007). In modern politics, there is a tendency of personalization in the chief of government, the authors use the expression executive bias to explain the focus in the first minister or president that are often in presidential system but actually is also in parliamentarism.

In addition, personalization increased in electoral systems through primaries because the competition in general, is between candidates from the same party. In primaries, there is an internal competition that is useful to portray in media coverage often as a “horse race” (Banducci, & Hanretty, 2014).

Another effect is the decrease of the turnout in regimes where there is not an obligation to vote and a greater volatility that is a result of the low political influence in the social structure (Wattenberg, 2014; McAllister, 2017).

During electoral campaigns, the strategy of the candidates to obtain positive outcomes is the increase of personalization in discourse. For example, politicians speak as “ordinary” persons and express feelings that add a personal touch and, maybe, authenticity, to the message. The main consequences of this personalization are that politicians and media present personal

images and storytelling at the expense of capture attention of the audience (McAllister, 2007).

As Campus (2010) explains:

The media have a limited capability to transmit a full and complete picture of the political world, so they give priority to those aspects that can be transformed into good media products: that is, products that are spectacular enough to attract large audiences (p.221).

The personalization of the campaign with a focus on images and personal discourses may also provide for a new, different type of political legitimacy. Rosanvallon called *legitimacy based proximity*⁸ a peculiar type of legitimacy that is based on the similarities between governed and government, candidates and voters (Rosanvallon, 2011). The relationship of citizens and politicians is based on identification: the citizen reflects in the politician or candidate his own life. In the campaign, when the candidate builds a discourse of proximity, they use a common vocabulary to build a campaign which acts as an individual person and has characteristics similar to the voter. The politician appears as an ordinary person to capture votes.

The consensus in the democracy for Rosanvallon is based not only on electoral representation, but also this relationship where legitimacy is related to the personal characteristics of the leaders. These characteristics are "those aspects of the candidate that do not have specifically political content and that emanate or are attributable to him" (Rebolledo, 2017:150). There are many forms of approbation intended to shorten the distance between leaders and the people. In the study case of Vidal in Argentina, for example, she conducted interviews in the media that mention her private life, showed her house to demonstrate that she

⁸ In Spanish: *legitimidad de proximidad*.

is an ordinary person with a common life like the voters.⁹ Proximity connects political authorities with society through related to the presence, in Vidal's campaign the strategy was to visit houses of citizens -Vidal called them often neighbors- and enter to their intimacy. Most of the campaigns of politicians in the media showed that they are between citizens in actions of life.¹⁰ The legitimacy of proximity is related to this responsiveness that connects voters with leaders. The intermediary between those actors, candidates or politicians and citizens, is the media. The media showed this intimacy and connection between voters and politicians in the coverage of the campaigns.

In addition, the new form of identification between voters and politicians related to the form that politicians present themselves in media. For Annunziata, *proximity* implies an immersion in the world of the particular, attention to the concrete individuals, their experiences, and stories. The processes of approbation are based on the mode that this candidate appears in the media and communicates his discourse to be approved; it is an identification voter/ politician. The person and his intimacy are opened to the voters who identify with the politician based on the characteristics an ordinary person. The politician portrayed in media as an ordinary person for example, with everyday actions (care about children and cook for example). The legitimacy of the candidate is based in a new form of relationship that related to open to the public personal aspects of their lives and intimacy. The personalization is a key concept as connect the privacy of candidates to the public sphere.

⁹ See additional appendix on interviews with René Palacios.

¹⁰ On the cases examined in this study, in Argentina during the campaign of Vidal in the Province of Buenos Aires, an inundation caused several loss to the population and Vidal promoted images in the media which showed that she helped the population. In the pictures of the articles (La Nación, 12/08/2015), she appeared with conspicuously "normally" dressed and she pronounced messages with the vocabulary of an ordinary person.

In the following chapters, I will analyze personalization in politics and the media related to the concepts and dimensions that I explained above. First, I will analyze the personalization of politics in the campaign and after personalization in the media to understand how the process of personalization develops.

1.2 Methodology

I conduct a comparative analysis between the Argentinean and Spanish cases in order to better understand the roots of personalization in politics, that is, a “process in which the political weight of the individual actor in the political process increases over time, while the centrality of the political group (i.e., political party) declines” (Rahat & Sheafer, 2007:65). I analyze personalization in campaign strategies of the candidates and media. ‘Personalization’ in media refers to a presentation in the media, which focuses on the politicians as an individual and decreases party emphases or political organizations (Aelst, Sheafer & Stanyer, 2012:203-200). Personalization in the strategy of the campaign is related to the concept of institutional personalization. Institutional personalization is defined as an “adoption of rules, mechanisms, and institutions that put more emphasis on the individual politician and less in political groups and parties” (Rahat & Sheafer, 2007:5). For example, the introduction of primaries is part of this type where the competition is centered on candidates from the same parties, and competence becomes more personal. For interpreting the process of personalization, I focus on the electoral campaign of the politicians that is part of the category of institutional personalization. In addition, I will use the categories of which distinguishes between personalization of the information about the campaign in media coverage and personalization in the strategy of the campaigns (Brettschneider, 2008). Brettschneider explains that the electoral context is the scenario in which the personalization increases.

As stated above, this thesis centers on the 2015 campaigns of María Eugenia Vidal, a candidate to Mayor in the Province of Buenos Aires during the election campaign in the Province of Buenos Aires, and Ada Colau, a candidate for mayor of Barcelona. These two women won elections after more than twenty years of another party's dominance and male dominance: María Eugenia Vidal from the *Propuesta Republicana* party, and Ada Colau from *Barcelona en Comú*.¹¹

I have selected these cases because they provide examples of high personalization in politics in different political contexts and under different electoral and media systems. Barcelona and Buenos Aires represent the most important urban areas in their respective countries and are important electoral districts for the national elections.

First, I studied sub-types of personalization. On one hand one related to media coverage and on the other, one to the campaign through the strategy of the candidates to communicate the discourses during the elections and the news articles of the campaign election.

After an exhaustive investigation of the context and the campaign, I analyze personalization in the media through 94 articles (48 articles from Argentinean newspapers and 46 Spanish newspapers) of the main newspapers both in Argentina and in Spain, to evaluate the levels of personalization of the discourse in the media by qualitative frame analysis.¹² The main objective is to understand the sources of personalization through study of the coverage of campaigns elections in Argentina and Spain during 2015. The investigation will analyze the elements of personalization in media to interpret how the process functions.

¹¹ The translation of the parties's name is: *Propuesta Republicana* as Republican Proposal and *Barcelona en Comu* is Barcelona in community.

¹² The newspapers from Argentina are: *La Nación* and *Página/12* and from Spain, *La Vanguardia* and *El Mundo*.

To detect if media play an active role in the personalization I analyse the discourses in the group of articles and I checked if there is a coincidence between the strategy of the candidates and the content of the coverage of the election campaign. If there is a coincidence the strategy and the coverage are similar media and candidates transmit personalization. In the case that there is not a coincidence the personalization of the media and the strategy of the politician are different I evaluate which one is more personalized and that tend to show if media was the source of the personalization.

For that purpose, the media coverage is analyzed with a *typology*¹³ to measure personalization in the main newspapers before the campaign. I analyze the articles published about the candidates in the last twenty days before the election in the main newspapers of Argentina and Spain. This is a period of intense electoral campaign in the media, as the literature review suggests, during this period personalization is higher than no electoral times.¹⁴

I have classified the topics of the campaign in the media discourse. As a model, I use the typology of the study “*Gobernar es estar cerca*”.¹⁵ *Proximity Strategies in the Use of Social Networks* by Mauricio Macri and María Eugenia Vidal. In this study, Annunziata builds an innovative frame to classify topics of discourses by four categories: citizen, institutional, intimate and political. I classify every article as a unit of analysis in terms of these categories.

The first category is the ***citizen***. Its content is a message that places common citizens as protagonists including publications that narrate the politician’s visits to citizens at their homes and those that reproduce telephone calls to ordinary citizens. Citizen category presents those

¹³ Typology is based on the model of Annunziata. See more in Annunziata, Rocío, Andrea F. Ariza and Valeria R. March. (2017). “Gobernar es estar cerca. Proximity Strategies in the Use of Social Networks by Mauricio Macri and María Eugenia Vidal.” *Revista mexicana de opinión pública* 24:71-93.

¹⁴ Ibid. Annunziata.

¹⁵ “Gobernar es estar cerca” mean in Spanish to govern is to be close.

articles that present a government program, or a political position taken through a life story and articles that describe the leaders in social networks.

The second, ***Institutional*** includes notices of programs or policies, public works announcements, messages on commemorative dates, and information on the participation of leaders in diplomatic activities, inaugurations, and events held under the office they hold.

The third, ***Intimate*** has messages about the private family life of the candidates. This category includes publications about members of the families of the politicians, in which they are shown in private areas, when they are not acting as rulers. For example, vacations, walks, breaks, or contexts in which personal tastes are expressed. Also, this category is about contexts in which the unique point of view of the leaders on a public situation is shared.

Finally, ***Political*** content is a message that transmits about values or significant position-takings for the identity of the political space to which the leaders belong. This category includes both the publications of reinforcement of slogans and slogans that retrieve fragments of press conferences or party meetings and those that respond to public controversies, events or conjunctures.

The classification allowed me to understand if there are higher or lower degrees of personalization in the media coverage. The *citizen* and *intimate* categories are related to a higher personalization of politics, and *politics* and *institutional* are categories with a lower degree of personalization.

The division of the 94 articles from the main newspapers in these categories provides the empirical evidence about the personalization of politics in specific contexts that were not

much studied before.¹⁶ For that reason, I conduct interviews with specialists in political communication about the campaigns. This perspective provides data from different sources to analyze a current phenomenon that is recent for academia and did not have many direct sources.¹⁷ On one hand, the discourse in the main articles of the media and the views of the specialists on the other contribute to a multi-angular view. The secondary objective is to have an interdisciplinary interpretation by considering knowledge from the field of communication studies. The goal is to map the origins of personalization and its consequences.

The intention is to connect the two types of personalization in politics -media and candidates's campaign- to understand the relationship. Finally, the comparison of cases in different contexts provides an understanding of the power of the media in the personalization of politics and the construction of discourses from the campaigns.

1.3 Hypothesis and questions

For this research the following questions are asked: Which are the characteristics of the candidates that appear in the coverage? How important are candidates personal attributes in press coverage in Argentina and Spain during an election campaign that offers itself to highly personalized content and where that content is coming from: the candidate's campaign, the press, or some other actors? Which dimensions of the candidates have more attention in the media coverage? What are the differences between the coverage of the campaign in one country and other?

¹⁶ Elections in Barcelona 24/05/2015 Ada Colau was chosen to the Mayor of Barcelona and Election in the Province of Buenos Aires 25/10/2015.

¹⁷ There are researches about Vidal campaign at 2015. See more Ernesto Bohoslavsky y Sergio Morresi, « El partido PRO y el triunfo de la nueva derecha en Argentina », *Amérique Latine Histoire et Mémoire. Les Cahiers ALHIM* , Publicado el 09 diciembre 2016. About Colau Campaign in 2015 see Fernández Riquelme, Pedro (2018): "De la calle a las instituciones: el discurso de Ada Colau", Marco. Márketing y Comunicación Política. Universidad de Santiago de Compostela / Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigadores en Campañas Electorales (ALICE).

I examine the following elements to understand how the process of personalization of politics is built in the media during electoral campaigns. The hypothesis that I work with is that *media coverage contributes significantly to increase the personalization of politics*. My units of analysis are articles from the main newspapers of Spain and Argentina: *La Vanguardia*, *El Mundo*, *La Nación* and *Página/12*. They have different coverage of the campaigns and ideological positions because of their different political outlook and journalistic styles. I chose legacy newspapers because the literature review expects and finds them a central actor in defining media coverage of politics across many outlets, the journalists and editors of which take legacy newspapers as a key professional reference point (Brennen, 2017). This media has a biggest audience in those countries and its coverage of the news during the campaign election connects candidates and citizens.

I conducted qualitative research because the objective is to explore how the process of personalization and the relationship between citizens and candidates is built through the media (Krippendorff, 2014:18). Therefore, I examine the articles as a unit of analyses to answer my research questions.

1.3.1 Variables, categories, and dimensions

I investigated different variables to understand the concept of personalization of politics. The elements already mentioned help to analyze the personalization of politics in media as the literature review suggests (Rahat & Sheafer, 2007:5).

The first variable to study in both countries is the *personalization of politics in the institutions*. Rahat and Sheafer divided this type of personalization at the state and at the party level. My work focuses at the party level, specifically the campaign strategy of the politicians and include an investigation of the contextualization, the strategy of the candidates and design

of the campaign. Contextualization is an exhaustive analysis of the characteristics of the campaign of the candidates and political context of the elections.

The second variable is the *personalization in media coverage*. In this area, different studies used different types of operationalization¹⁸ with categories that are recommended in the study conducted by Aelst, Sheafer, and Stanyer (2012) for the operationalization of the concept of personalization:¹⁹

1. *General visibility of a candidate is a dimension that* explains the relative attention to politicians compared to the total amount of attention to parties in the media. It means how much the media coverage mentions the candidate or the party in the articles. In the case that the media writes more about a candidate than the party, it shows the tendency of personalization; contrary if the media coverage is about parties is less personalized content. On other hand, I looked at *Space in Media which* refers to how much space in titles, interviews, and articles the media coverage mention the candidates. It is different from general visibility because in this dimension the analyses are about the individual candidate. Personalized media gives more space to candidates than parties.

2. *The characteristics of politicians* refers to personal attributes of one or another contestant in the election.²⁰ It relates to aspects of Leadership, Credibility, and Morality. In addition, I interpreted how much the articles focus on the candidate's appearance, and if they write about the *personal life of candidates*, i.e. family, love and leisure

¹⁸ There are different operationalizations depending of research design. See more in Rebolledo, M. (2017), La personalización de la política: una propuesta de definición para su estudio sistematico. Revista de Comunicación 16 (2), en prensa.

¹⁹ General Visibility and Characteristics of the politicians are studied in Aelst, P. V., Sheafer, T., & Stanyer, J. (2012) investigation.

²⁰ In this dimension, I also analyze the Vocabulary in the articles. This aspect refers to the lexicon that is used in media to write about candidates and to the description of the candidates and the adjectives that the articles used.

time.²¹ For example, articles that cover interviews about the family of the candidate, hobbies, or personal opinion are part of this dimension. When the media cover personal lives of politicians the content is obviously personalized than articles that write about the public trajectory of the candidate.

3. ***Rules of Election*** refer to the chances of the candidate, campaign tactic from parties, or parties' opinion polls and aspects that related to election as a competition. For example, articles that cover opinion polls to voters, interviews with consultants about the election, or coverage about alliances between parties belong to this category.

4. ***Policy issues*** relates to topics in the media about public affairs and also institutional contexts. For example, reforms in the constitution, norms, or about a discussion about policies from the government.

The ***general visibility of the candidates*** and ***personal characteristics*** coverage are dimensions related to a higher grade of personalization. The ***rules of election and policy issues*** are related to a lesser grade of personalization.

Graph I

After coding every article according to the above content typologies, I determine in every article if the personalization originated from the candidates, parties or campaign or is responsibility from the media. For that purpose, I analyzed articles from media through qualitative text analysis (Wesley, 2011).

²¹ Aelst, P. V., Sheaffer, T., & Stanyer, J. (2012) studied those dimensions as separated. I added them in the same dimension because in both cases studies there are not a clear distinction between personal aspects and leadership.

I code the articles in terms of the categories, because these elements help to interpret the discourses in media coverage about the campaign of Vidal in Argentina and Colau in Spain, and to classify the grade of personalization in the articles. They will help to answer the research questions about the characteristics of the candidates that appear in the coverage, the importance of the personal attributes in press coverage and from where it came. In addition, if the article has more elements of intimate and citizen, as well as personal characteristics and high visibility of the candidate implicates a high personalization. Contrary if the content is more about politics and institutional as issues like rules of election or policy topics is related to a low personalization. The category helps to code the grade of personalization of the articles and to determine if there is a coincidence or not between the strategy of the campaign and the media.

1.3.2 Contribution to the topic

My goal is to contribute with empirical evidence to the analysis of the relationship between personalization of politics and media. I have studied the process of personalization through the media coverage of campaigns of the elections, and I have analyzed the connection between two types of personalization (institutional and media) and how they related to each other.

This research set out to evidence how the media acts in the campaign before the election. My contribution is to analyze the role of Argentinean media and Spanish media in the process of the configuration of the campaign of the politicians (Rebolledo, 2017). Most of the literature focuses on analysis in terms of national contexts; this thesis contributes to the comparative studies

1.3.3 Limitations

One of the limitations of this research is that the personalization, as a concept, is contested given the insufficient consensus as to what it means. Equally important, most studies in this approach are fixated on quantitative methodologies. In addition, from a geographic perspective,

there has been little research on the elections of Colau and María Eugenia Vidal, both of whom won local elections in 2015. For these reasons, I conducted interviews with specialists in communication and political science: René Palacios, specialist in political communication; Gideon Rahat, scholar specialist in personalization of politics; David Dusster and Enric Sierra, editors and chief associate of *La Vanguardia* newspaper. These interviews had the objective to collect information about personalization, the candidates and the contexts of their emergence.

Chapter II: The Argentinean case

2.1 Context

The 28 years of dominance of *Partido Justicialista* (PJ)²², which had previously won every election for governor of the Province of Buenos Aires, ended with the victory of María Eugenia Vidal in 2015. A woman, María Eugenia Vidal, was the first female candidate to govern in the province.²³ It was the first time that another party, *Propuesta Republicana* (PRO)²⁴, took office. Public opinion was surprised by these changes in the political landscape of the country.

The election was part of nationwide elections, in which the opposition alliance PRO won the presidential elections in Fall 2015. The same new coalition won the most important office in the Province of Buenos Aires too.

The provincial election had two stages: primaries in August and the general election in October/November. My analysis will focus on the later, but I will mention the primaries that are fundamental to understand what happened after in the general election, because in contexts of primaries the personalization grows (Vommaro, et.al, 2015). For the primary elections, the parties must nominate two candidates. It is not an obligation to present more than one candidate by party: the electoral coalition *Cambiamos*²⁵ nominated only Vidal, who was until this moment the vice Mayor of the city of Buenos Aires. Trying not to divide the votes, PRO offered a single candidate and it was the party goal. Vidal had had a role in the political arena of the

²² *Partido Justicialista* (PJ) is an historical Argentinean party translated into Spanish as *Justicialist*. It is a main protagonist of Argentinean politics since it was founded in 1947 by Juan Perón. See more in Ricardo Sidicaro, *Los tres peronismos. Estado y poder económico, 1946-55/1973-76/1989-99*, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI Editores, 2002.

²³ There is not academic research about this period only some books from journalists or politicians about it.

²⁴ PRO is a party created in 2005 by Mauricio Macri. He was Mayor of City of Buenos Aires for two electoral periods and his party won also in 2015 again this position.

²⁵ *Cambiamos* is an electoral coalition; Propuesta Republicana and UCR are the main parties. Mauricio Macri represents it.

City of Buenos Aires but it was not until this election that she gained a high profile in the media and became known to the public.

Frente para la Victoria (FPV) supported two candidates: Aníbal Fernández and Julián Domínguez.²⁶ These candidates had a political trajectory: Fernández was the coordinator of the government ministers and Domínguez, the chief of the parliament. Aníbal Fernández had a more high profile in the media than Domínguez. The PJ/FPV competition was internal with two candidates that were antagonists because the party did not agree on one single candidate. Fernández won the internal election and became the main antagonist of Vidal.

The local elections acted as a galvanizing effect. The election of María Eugenia Vidal²⁷ who won against FPV/PJ demonstrates how some elements - strategies of parties, media coverage and personalized campaign - combine to make for a different election outcome. Elections are key components of democracy that provide for legitimacy and delegation in governance. The elections in the province of Buenos Aires are fundamental to the distribution of political power in Argentina. This district has several consequences for the national election for president and it is a key to becoming the chief of the executive.

The result in the province of Buenos Aires impacted in political representation and the party system. The PRO, which used to govern only in the city of Buenos Aires -the capital city-, presented lists in the national arena. They competed with a candidate -Vidal- with a low name recognition in the district.

²⁶ FPV is the party of Cristina Kirchner who in some occasions presented candidates as PJ. In many elections they were united, in this case PJ integrated the list of FPV. I will mention FPV/PJ as a united alliance.

²⁷ María Eugenia Vidal was the vice mayor of the city of Buenos Aires. She represented PRO party, which the leader is Mauricio Macri, the actual President of Argentina. 2015 represented a year of national election also. The local campaign and national campaign of PRO and the FPV party, which was in the government until 2015, were mixed.

The prospects for focusing the campaign on Vidal were further limited by the fact that the national and local campaign of PRO were intertwined. The year 2015 had more than six elections in most of the districts. The presidency was contested, as well as 130 seats of national deputies and 24 seats of senators. At the subnational level, 22 governors, 638 provincial deputies and 107 were elected.²⁸

The election in the Province of Buenos Aires was simultaneous with the national elections, meaning that the president, the governors, and the parliamentarians were elected at the same time on 25 October, with runoffs on 22 November. Thus, national and local campaigns integrated together in the figure of Vidal and Macri as the main PRO candidates. They unified their strategy and made one campaign at national and local levels.

2.2 Candidates and parties

The national and local campaign of PRO was centered in Mauricio Macri and María Eugenia Vidal. They became protagonists of the campaign: individualization and privatization were evident in their strategy. Individualization implies focusing more on the individual candidates than on the political parties they belong to, while privatization is the act of focusing more on the private life of the candidates than their political public role.²⁹

The focus was in the persons than in the PRO as a political organization and the candidates opened their intimacy and personal lives to the media.³⁰ I analysed the profile of the candidates and parties related to the process of individualization and privatization that are part of personalization of politics. The concepts are the key to understand the change of the

²⁸ Data from *Electoral National Tribunal* www.electoral.gob.ar.

²⁹ See Table III and IV in Appendix.

³⁰ This personalization have been driven by the decisión of the PRO to focus on individual candidates. The recommendation was leaded by their consultan Duran Barba. See interview to René Palacios in Appendix.

results in the primaries and the general election in Argentina in 2015 and to explain personalization in the news.

Palacios explains the profile of the members of the PRO party:

*PRO and Cambiemos emerged as personalized parties, focusing on the image of Mauricio Macri. He was a political outsider in Argentine politics, as he did not have a long career in politics. His party was just created in 2005. They claimed to do politics without coming from the mainstream political elites. This is paradoxical. PRO was never a national party.*³¹

The parties in the election of 2015 presented electoral coalitions. The coalitions were FPV and Cambiemos whose parties were *Union Civica Radical* (UCR) and *Propuesta Republicana* (PRO)³².

FPV and PRO were the main protagonists in the national and local elections. The competition in the province was between María Eugenia Vidal and Aníbal Fernández. FPV manifested less individualization and privatization in the campaign and acted as an organization in which the party was important to the campaign. The party had a clear profile on the national scene. In contrast, the PRO party, manifested more individualization and privatization in the campaign. The causes were related to the fact that the party was new in the Province of Buenos Aires.³³ The literature explains that when a party or candidate is new in a

³¹ Interview to René Palacios see more in Appendix.

³² The leader of this coalition and PRO's party was Mauricio Macri. Macri started his political career in sports as the president of Boca Juniors Club, one of the most popular in Argentina. From the beginning of his political career in 1995, Macri had high presence in the media. That is one of the reasons he became the Chief of the Capital City and in 2015 the president.

³³ The PRO party had presence in the capital city of Buenos Aires.

district, needs a more personalized campaign to attract the audience in the media (D'Alessandro, 2004; Rahat & Sheaffer, 2007:14).

In opposition, FPV was a party with less personalization in the campaign. For example, they focused their campaign on the politics and initiatives of the government of Cristina Kirchner rather than on the personal characteristics of Fernández. The FPV was integrated with PJ and an assemblage of small parties under the leadership of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, president of the Republic from 2007 until 2015.³⁴ Aníbal Fernández was very popular in the mass media and most of the citizens knew him because he had different roles during Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's government. The characteristics of the campaign were characteristic of mass parties.³⁵ The candidate Fernández chose the discourse of a professional politician: centered on discourses more than images, and defended the politics of the government of Kirchner and criticized Macri's and Vidal's policies in the capital city of Buenos Aires.³⁶

The PRO was represented by various local coalitions in different districts. It only had executive representation in the capital city of Buenos Aires, but did not have majoritarian representation in most of the provinces.³⁷ During the 2015 local elections PRO gained power

³⁴ Frente para la Victoria is an electoral coalition between Partido Justicialista and local parties represented by the ex-president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

³⁵ In the typology of parties by Mair there is a distinction between cartel parties and mass parties. This last type characterized by discourses and mobilization and a party structure that connect with voters by issues and proposals and militancy in the party. See more in Mair, Peter; Katz, Richard. "Partisan, party democracy and the emergence of cartel party". Chapter 5 of the book by Peter Mair (1997) *Party System Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³⁶ Interview to René Palacios about Vidal coverage of campaign.

³⁷ PRO had seats in the Chamber of Deputies and Senators Chamber but were the third of fourth party depend the districts. Only in the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires had majority until 2015. After PRO won the presidential and others local elections.

in the political representation in several districts. PRO party won a different local election to become one of the main actors in Argentine politics.³⁸

The PRO party lacked structure in the province of Buenos Aires and bet on a little-known personal figure to make the party grow. It was a weakness that ended up becoming strength. The PRO sought to compete in the election as the epitome of a "pure" party. Trying not to divide the opposition vote, the PRO presented a single candidate - because it did not compete with other candidates of the same political environment in Primary elections - fully aligned with the party's goals. The PRO built itself up inwardly and outwardly using a similar campaign in CABA, a candidate model and a collective subject. It exalted and strengthened the figure and personality proposed by his notoriety, of his virtues.

The PRO operated similarly to a game of "cartel". Katz and Mair argue that with the emergence of cartel parties "comes a period where the policy goals - at least for now - become more limited, and politics happens to represent a profession in which the limited inter-party competition is developed based on self-proclaimed ability to make a more effective and efficient administration." (Mair & Katz, 1997:13) This type of organization hires professionals and experts in media for their campaigns, which are both intensive and professionalized.

"There is a political construction of PRO around the figure of Macri that is paradoxical. Macri is the central figure of the party, whose leader almost nobody discusses, but at the same time is not a leader concentrated on the individual but power, a device called 'the team' in the new government discursive construction. That is a relative novelty: Macri is

³⁸ Cambiemos won the majority in deputy chamber, Senator chamber, Mayor of the Province of Buenos Aires, Chief of Capital city of Buenos Aires and some governors from other provinces see more in <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/interior/dine/resultadosyestadisticas/2015>

the team leader who does not 'do', is always used as a reference but who is not directly involved in the decision.” (Vommaro et. al. 2015:50)

Macri chose María Eugenia Vidal to be the candidate. She came from the world of the non-profit organizations and started her political career under the protection of Horacio Rodríguez Larreta, actual chief of the city of Buenos Aires. She studied Political Science in the Catholic University and occupied different positions in the public administration always with Macri's administration until she became the vice mayor of the capital during the last period of Macri's government in the capital.

Until this moment, most of the population did not know who Vidal was. She had a low profile and did not appear so much in the mass media. The communication plan was the key to surprising results. Vidal exalted her profile as a common woman who “enters to politics” – in Spanish an informal phrase *meterse en política*- with the emphasis that politics has a negative meaning and this meaning is connected to FPV party (Vommaro et. al, 2015). In the design of the campaign, Vidal's strength was her emotional links to the voters. The words that she used often were hope, representative of change, and happiness. Most of the presentations of her in society are with colorful yellow balloons and modern music; it is more similar as a festive party than a political organization. PRO wanted to involve citizens and attract them with a new vocabulary, more informal and close to how “ordinary people” speak.

The results demonstrated that Vidal raised her visibility. In the primaries of August 2015, the alliance *Cambiamos* won the highest percentage of votes with 30.07%. Aníbal Fernández and Julián Domínguez obtained together 40.22% for the FPV. The system is a simple majoritarian one: who wins the most quantity of votes is the Mayor of the province.

In the general election, in October 25, María Eugenia Vidal achieved what was believed impossible: she won the election for the governorship of the province of Buenos Aires. In the first round of the presidential elections PRO presidential candidate only got 32.8 while the FPV candidate got 37.3% of the vote in the province.³⁹ I.e. PRO-FPV difference was 8.7% more favorable for Vidal than for Macri. Vidal obtained more votes than her own party, that demonstrated her campaign and personality determine the election and she helped to track votes to her party.

According to official data, Vidal won by a difference of almost 5%, ahead of the candidate of the *Frente para la Victoria*, Aníbal Fernández. Vidal got 39.49% of the votes, Fernández obtained 35.18%.⁴⁰

2.2.1 Personalization in Vidal's campaign

Vidal used her personal characteristics as a mother and unique female candidate against the traditional male candidates to attract votes. The strategy of the campaign was carefully designed by political marketing specialists to exalt a storytelling with high presence in the media. The main person in the campaign after the candidate is the specialist in communication that coaches the candidate. Jaime Durán Barba guided Macri and Vidal, recommending that the campaign needed to convince apolitical and undecided people (Duran Barba, et.al, 2010). The method to convince ordinary citizens was to create an attractive storytelling to the media. "Duran Barba thinks that leadership of the "alpha male" represented by Aníbal Fernández is over."⁴¹ The campaign design based in the power of the female candidate against the old and male candidate.⁴²

³⁹ See results of the first round of presidential election in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Argentine_general_election#Results_by_province,_first_round

⁴⁰ See official results in <https://datos.gob.ar/dataset/otros-resultados-electorales-2015>

⁴¹ In Argentina this expression appears very regularly in the field of politics. The Spanish "macho alfa" is used to denote the still dominant position of men within the political sphere. See interview to Rene Palacios in Appendix.

⁴² See more in Appendix, p. 108 section Personalization in Vidal's campaign and strategy of the candidates.

The strategy was a show of images of actions more than discourses. For example, Vidal walked in the streets to hear the problems of the neighbours and entered to the house of the citizens to have an informal conversation with them in the company of the presidential candidate. These actions were many times also during the online campaign. In the online campaign there is the necessity to increase personalization through visual campaign that included the centrality of the candidate to be personal. Political communication recommended candidates to get personal and express feelings and emotions to engage with votes.⁴³ Vidal used in her campaign simple vocabulary and the word “people” to refer to the voters. The strategy was to convince citizens that did not know her through direct contact with neighbours and after to show this meeting between Vidal and the “people” in the media (Fidanza, 2015).

2.3 The influence of the Argentinean media: La Nación and Página 12 source

The media has importance as a source of information for citizens, a channel of communication of policymakers and citizens, and the political system. The media is fundamental to understand the public opinion formation (Strömbäck, 2014). “Media is a most powerful stem of politics in creating its audience attitude, opinion and behavior for the betterment and most prospective nation” (HussainMdBajlun, 2018:1). Media structure the public opinion and the agenda setting of the campaign. The mass media influences politics, and politics influence media (Sanyaolu, 2017). Many actors build the personalization in politics and it involves multiple elements of the political process: the system, the citizen and the media system (Rebolledo, 2017).

In this part, I will explore how personalization emerged through the media coverage in specific Argentinean newspapers. The group of articles will be divided into categories, because

⁴³ Interview to René Palacios about Vidal coverage of campaign.

that will help me to understand the degree of personalization, who is responsible of this process and which candidates benefits.

I analyzed two main Argentinean newspapers *La Nación* and *Página/12*. They have different views -opposite to government and pro-government Kirchner - and coverage about the campaign before the election. In this part, I explain the coverage of the Argentinean media of the campaign for the Mayor of the province of Buenos Aires, twenty days before the general election. For this purpose, I selected articles that mention topics in relationship with the campaign with a focus in the ones that mention Vidal. On the other hand, I selected *La Nación* and *Página/12* Newspaper because they are ideological opposites and this fact provides an interesting approach for the analysis of personalization of politics. *La Nación* and *Página/12* are part of the main mainstream of Argentina. *La Nación* was close to PRO and *Página/12* was close to Aníbal Fernández.

La Nación is one of the important newspapers from Argentina, has a daily print edition and online edition. The editorial line of the newspaper is right or center-right. Bartolomé Mitre, former president of Argentina between 1862-1868, founded the newspaper in 1870. The circulation of the printed newspaper is around 160.000 units/copies. The online website has 10.089 million visitors per month. It is the second online newspaper with readers after *Clarín*. *La Nación* is the biggest multimedia and leader in news. In opposition, *Página/12* was a newspaper founded by journalist Jorge Lanata in 1987. During Kirchner's government, *Página/12* was a newspaper that wrote editorials in favor of FPV party and against PRO.

I studied the coverage of the campaign of the newspapers with Annunziata's typology (Annunziata, 2017). The author used these categories to test the hypothesis that Macri and Vidal used a discourse of proximity (intimate and citizen). *Citizen* means messages that involve the citizens as protagonists. Institutional means all the messages about political programs, or

participation on events. Intimate means messages that explain aspects about the personal life of the candidates. *Politics* means values related to the political spaces where that candidate participated.

I worked with a total of 48 articles (24 each media), from two Argentinean newspapers: *Página 12* and *La Nación*. One is oriented to center right and the other center left. After, I classified the articles by taking into consideration different topics: intimate, citizen, political and institutional. After I coded the articles by other categories that help to understand the degree of personalization. The categories are ***personal characteristics, visibility, and rules of election and policy topics***. The dimension of personal characteristics and high visibility of the candidate are personalized categories, in opposition, ***rules of election and policy politics*** are less or low personalized.⁴⁴ In many articles, I found a combination of categories. For example, in the interview for *La Nación* Vidal told her opinion about insecurity but also spoke with the journalist about her private life (*La Nación*, 11/01/2014).

2.3.1 Media coverage *La Nación* newspaper

For my analyses I selected articles from *La Nación* mentioning María Eugenia Vidal, Aníbal Fernández, FPV or PRO parties. In order to gather a corpus of material that would allow me to develop my research, I searched for articles between 07/09/2015 to 27/10/2015, which dealt directly with the campaign.⁴⁵ After selecting a number of twenty four, which are sufficient to provide a general overview of the coverage of the campaigns, I categorized the articles using Annunziata's typology: citizen, institutional, intimate and political.

⁴⁴ Rebolledo used Visibility and Personal characteristics categories to explain that this dimensions are correlated to high personalization in media coverage.

⁴⁵ I also add three articles more that are not part of this dates and did not enter in the classification of categories but are visible of the strategy. Vidal gave exclusive interview to the media and she declared about the campaign of 2015 (*La Nación*, 11/01/2014, 29/11/2015, 26/07/2019)

In a general picture from the collection of twenty articles, only one covers *citizen*, six are about *politics* and thirteen are about *intimate* aspects. However, no article says anything about *institutional* factors (o elements) related to the campaign.

Most of the articles I analyzed in *La Nación* speak of Vidal and Macri highlighting their personal characteristics, and they insist on portraying them as “new leaders” (La Nación, 08/10/2015).⁴⁶ The articles focus on the personal life of the candidates, mentioning personal characteristics such as their charisma, leadership, moral character and sympathy. Only very few articles (six to be exact) mention anything about the configuration of the parties their structure and proposals and their alliances. I find information regarding the general electoral process in the Province of Buenos Aires in only one article.

In addition, the vocabulary used to refer to Fernández and Kirchner is different than the one used to refer to Vidal and Macri. From the begging of Cristina Kirchner’s government it became the voice of the opposition. In another hand, they spread the figure of Mauricio Macri, first as the Chief of the Government of Buenos Aires and after as a presidential candidate.

Another main element which can be found as a general features of all the articles is the opposition between Macri and Vidal as “good new leaders” (and good essentially because they are new) and “bad old” ones, Cristina Kirchner and Fernández. In the general narrative of *La Nación*, Fernández and Cristina, as old leaders, appear connected to cases of corruption, often associated with the “old Peronist” politics in the Province. And, finally, in most of the articles, Macri and Vidal are in titles and Fernández and Kirchner in the body of the articles.

⁴⁶ “Although it is said that the PRO leader is an amateur with no capacity for political struggle, her 30% of the PASO suggests that the electorate valued her work and confronts him with the historical poverty and corruption of the province”. PASO (Primarias, Abiertas, Simultaneas y Obligatorias) mean primaries, open, simultaneous and mandatories.

It seems clear, from this first general approach to the articles that *La Nación* chose present the candidates (particularly Mara Eugenia Vidal) from a "personal" perspective, enhancing their personal characteristics and stories rather than their political proposals. The personalization of politics manifests in the coverage of the campaign through the elements that I will study in the next paragraphs.

I will analyze from the selected group of articles the following categories: General visibility of the candidate (vocabulary and space in media), characteristics of politicians (personal life, female aspects, space), and rules of election and policy issues.

General visibility of the candidate

In the category *general visibility of the candidate*, *La Nación* describes Vidal and Macri more than PRO party. It happens also the same with Fernández or Kirchner more than FPV. The focus is more on politicians than on politics. In the Argentinean case, during the Mayoral of the Province of Buenos Aires campaign, the media concentrated on personal stories of the candidates (case of *La Nación*). This coverage related to key concepts of individualization and privatization. First, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, the campaign was about Vidal's person, and, second, the topics of the campaign in the media coverage were about her private life more than public aspects.

In the sample of articles before elections most of the time when Fernández – the candidate of the government party - is mentioned, the media links him with the following topics: drugs, fraud, old politics, malpractice, crimes, drug dealer, buying votes. The media coverage of the election coincides with Vidal's strategy.

The image of Vidal and Fernández has a confrontational position, it shown as a career between enemies in the media. *La Nación* shows a clear preference for Vidal and portraits a

negative image of Fernández. The issues for Vidal were completely opposite, they compare her with Eva Perón ⁴⁷, and this has a positive connotation in the province because the citizens support her legend. Other words for her is transparent, a new representative in politics, mother, and the media point out her charismatic characteristics.

This campaign in the media - *La Nación* -helped to build this picture of Vidal as the good, women, and the heroine, the representative of the new politics and Fernández as the bad, the men, the loser and the representative of the old politics.

As I mentioned previously, the **vocabulary** used to describe those politicians is positive in relation to Vidal and Macri and negative and degrading in relation to Fernández and Kirchner. This is clear if I take a look at the vocabulary used when referring to Vidal and to Fernández. In the case of Vidal, for example, the articles mention her as a professional woman, a good wife and mother and young woman. In opposition to Fernández mentioned as the boss of the Mafia in the province of Buenos Aires and a very disgusting man. For example, the title of one article is: “Elisa Carrió, about Aníbal Fernández: "I do not have anything against him but he is a murderer.” (La Nación, 07/09/2015). A representative of Cambiemos expressed that she knew that he is part of a circle of assassins. The media emphasized this aspect several times as I shown.

Other aspect that includes the **general visibility** is the *subcategory space* in media. From the twenty articles, no article refers to Vidal in a negative way. However, when it comes to Fernández, journalists and editorials show the tendency to describe him in a very negative way: by calling him corrupt, chauvinist, representative of the old politics. Vidal received nouns as the new woman, fresh, hard worker, with political proposals to improve public transport.

⁴⁷ Eva Peron was a protagonist of Argentinean politics. She was the wife of the president Peron, during his government she participated active in social and political areas and with Peron they build the myths and a party that called Partido Justicialista, in English party of justice.

Another aspect of *La Nación*'s coverage is that the interviews with Vidal are quite gentle. Most of the articles that mention also the presidential campaign insist on Vidal's contribution to Macri's campaign.

On other hand, in the newspaper *La Nación* give more spaces in the titles and the body of the articles to Vidal than Fernández. FPV has fewer spaces than PRO. Vidal has more articles than Fernández. Finally, the *spaces* that they give are more than to intimate aspects of the candidate than the platform of the party.

Characteristics of politicians

The subcategory: female aspects. The articles *La Nación* focuses on María Eugenia Vidal and on the exaltation of her female aspects. For example, *La Nación* writes "Frustrated debates, male preoccupation and polarization is the characteristic of the days before the Province's elections, when candidates fight each other to convince voters" (*La Nación*, 12/10/2015). The media coverage focus in the attention that male candidates are preoccupied because a strong woman came to win their place in political spaces. In *La Nación*, Vidal expressed about the other candidates: "A lot of Alfa male believe that with prepotency the things have a solution" (*La Nación*, 12/10/2015). This is an exemplification of the Female/ Male confrontation in the coverage of the campaign. As I mention previously, the media exalted the female aspects of Vidal, who came to renew politics in the province. Other example is an article (*La Nación*, 26/07/2019) for the campaign election to the province of Buenos Aires where Vidal declared about the campaign of 2015. *La Nación* title is: "María Eugenia Vidal questioned the "males who underestimated us".⁴⁸ They mention again her as female leader and good woman and a mother who cares about the family, in opposition to the male Aníbal Fernández, as a chauvinist.

⁴⁸The declarations against Vidal continue during 2019 in the campaign election to the Mayor of the Province where Fernández postulated to councilor at the municipality of Pinamar. *La Nación*, 26/07/2019.

Other example of female aspects is an article that expressed that Macri's wife joined Vidal's campaign (La Nación, 22/09/15). Juliana Awada is Macri's wife; she is a public person with high presence in media who participated in the campaign in collaboration with the candidates. The media coverage expressed Awada and Vidal as a representative of a new generation of female icons.

The subcategory: personal life of candidates. "Electors but also media conceived leaders in personal terms because is the form to understand the success. The reference to the personalities of the leaders constitutes a simple way to spread political information" (Rebolledo, 2017:151). The personalization is in most of the articles where the narration is about personal characteristics. For example, Vidal as a mother speaks about her family and the story of her life (La Nación, 25/09/2015). In the body of the article with title "Vidal promised to win 70 intendancies'", the newspaper expressed: *"The relax of the muscles of her face is short. She has the hope to do a good election tomorrow. She did not lose the time she concentrated and evaded silent. "Mariu" (nick name of Vidal) moved with precision" (...) She has confidence"* (La Nación, 25/09/2015). In another part, it highlights that she expresses her opinion against the mafia and how it is difficult to a woman to do it. This coverage helped to highlight the personal characteristics of Vidal as a female heroine who needs the help of the voters.

La Nación emphasized how Vidal belongs to PRO, but it usually does not mention UCR or the Alliance between PRO and UCR. PRO made an alliance with UCR because it did not have a national presence in the country. The articles about the presidential election not say too much about the UCR party and they focus all in PRO. It happens the same in the articles about the Province of Buenos Aires. This could be a demonstration of how the presidential system countries coalitions are only electoral and do not have too much relevance in the public opinion. In this group of articles from La Nación, there is a tendency to focus on personal candidates more than parties.

Vocabulary

In the discourses, the newspaper builds the story of Vidal as a heroine that came to rescue the citizens in a war against Fernández, representative of old politics. For example, *La Nación* expressed “*The IDEA auditorium broke out in applause with Macri: "Throwing drug trafficking means Vidal governor and not Aníbal"* (La Nación, 16/10/2015).⁴⁹ The vocabulary is positive to Vidal and Macri in opposition to how they mention Fernández.

On the other hand, *La Nación* puts emphasis on her as an ordinary person that is not a traditional politician it is a common woman. They repeated this aspect many times, for example, the newspaper published: “Vidal expressed: “People looks at me as a common woman” (La Nación, 12/10/2015). It is the same strategy of the candidate to show that she is a normal woman as the voters. Other tactic is to mention politics as negative and dirty and to be an ordinary person is better because it is “pure”. The vocabulary shows the way that the newspaper coverage help to build a profile of a candidate closer (Vidal) to the citizens than the politicians (Fernández).

La Nación uses different vocabulary to refer to Vidal and Fernández. For example, they mention Vidal as her name María Eugenia but for Fernández they always use his surname. When *La Nación* refers to Vidal it usually uses verbs that reflect positive qualities and in opposition negative qualities with Fernández. For example, in the coverage of the election campaign they wrote “in every stop (...) of every little press conference, where she repeats the slogans of her campaign, between hugs and supporters, in the car she speaks about the policies that plan to do, education reform, her proposals for security and her expectations for the elections” (La Nación , 23/10/2015). In the same coverage the newspaper expresses: “Now,

⁴⁹IDEA -*Instituto para el Desarrollo Empresarial de la Argentina*– means Institute for Business Development of Argentina.

now, Vidal mayor! (...) the songs of the militants with chests that call the revolution” (La Nación, 23/10/2015).

Rules of Election

Finally, *La Nación* writes about **rules of Election** only in a few articles of the selection. For example, the coverage highlights that in the Province of Buenos Aires there is a simple majoritarian system (La Nación, 15/10/2015). This also was a strategy of the campaign of Vidal; she mentioned several times that the votes have only one opportunity to choose.

Policy issues

The category **policy issues** only have an article explaining “Vidal is accused of not assisting to the Legislature.”(La Nación, 28/09/2015). The article gives all the justification of why she did not come and exalts her personal characteristics as a good woman and leader. This is an exemplification of both categories in the article, **policy** and **personal characteristics**. **Rules of election** category is present also in the article entitled “the candidate Vidal expressed that her party is the only one with chances to win in the local and national elections”(La Nación, 08/10/2015). They expressed that the election in the province of Buenos Aires was simple majoritarian system and there was no other second round of election.

The media coverage of *La Nación* in the selected articles is about **personal characteristics** and the **visibility** of the candidate is more than the party, the tendency a **high personalization** coverage that coincides with the campaign of Vidal. For example, one of the articles focuses in what Internet searches suggest with the names of the candidates (La Nación, 22/10/2015). They highlight in the search of *Google*, Fernández’s link to Mafia and Vidal as a married and a good woman.

Finally, the big media presented the election as a competition in a “horse race” *La Nación* titled “Fernández: “Vidal needs a GPS to know the Province. She does not know the Province. I know this because of a friend in common that she does not want to govern the province”. This is also a demonstration about the personal characteristics, when they express Fernández knows something about Vidal because a friend told him. This emphasis about intimate aspects of the candidates and also as a fight between children at school.

The identification with personal characteristics of the candidates and “horse race” in media is shown in many articles. *La Nación* polarized the campaign between goods (PRO) and bads (FPV) as a fictional story. Vidal, the good one, the woman who is an example for the people, while Fernández the bad one who represents the corruption. An article of *La Nación* (26/07/2019) Vidal declared about the election in 2015: “The personal aggressions from Fernández to my person during the campaign election speaks more about him than about me.” Again, the media focuses on competition as a personal problem between candidates.

As I mentioned previously, also the *personal characteristics* are shown in the “horse race” between candidates: they build an image of Vidal as a heroine and Fernández as corrupt and evil (La Nación, 08/10/2015). In the body they published: “Aníbal worked with the ex-president Menem when Vidal was in high school. She is an educated girl that travels every day to the city to study Political Science at the Catholic University”. In the same way they put emphasis in the fact that she did not know about the conflict between *peronistas* and no *peronistas*⁵⁰ because she is from another generation. The author highlights that she is not as the politicians and showed her as a new fresh face in politics. Finally, the articles show tendency in which personal characteristics and policy issues mix because the transversal character of the personality. The personal characteristics translate from the private sphere to the public one

⁵⁰ Peronista is a person who votes PJ party, an historical party created by Peron.

(Rebolledo, 2017:151). They have political consequences and help to understand the context of the campaign. “The personalities converted in the center of the politics during the campaigns.”(Wattenberg, 2014:152). The personalization depends on the image and the visibility in the media. As I explained previously, the visibility and the image of María Eugenia Vidal are higher in *La Nación* than in *Página/12*.

2.3.2 Media coverage *Página/12* newspaper

Página/12 is part of Group October, a holding from a syndicate whose owner is Victor Santa María, who was a supporter of the FPV party. The circulation online is of four million (*Google Analytics*), and it is one of the most read newspapers in Latin America, occupying the third position after *Clarín* and *La Nación*.

On the coverage from 17/09/2015 to 24/10/2015, most of the 24 articles discuss about policy issues: 16 writes about politics, only 3 about citizen aspects and 5 about written intimate aspects and however no one about institutional category.

In most of the articles, they write about parties – PRO and FPV/PJ - more than candidates. But also the media mention Fernández and they describe him as a good leader, strong man, transparent, with capacity to govern. In opposition, the newspaper gives less space for María Eugenia Vidal (In fact, she does not even appear in most of the articles). The media name Macri, PRO or Vidal as a similar category. All the articles about them are about cases of corruption of PRO member or the government of the city of Bs As when Macri was the chief of the city (*Página/12*, 29/09/2015). It is evident their opposition to Vidal and PRO and sympathy to Fernández and FPV.

Related to the topics of the articles, most of the media coverage is about Macri's foreign accounts in "tax havens", about him ruling as a businessman and his plans if he is the elected president. There is no space to Vidal as protagonist of the coverage.⁵¹

On the category *general visibility to a candidate* *Página/12* writes more often about parties than candidates, more of FPV than PRO party. In addition, when the newspaper mentions PRO, writes about Macri and not about Vidal. As I explained previously the local and national campaign were together in this electoral year.

In relation to *space in media*, the media publish more articles about Fernández and Kirchner and less to Macri/Vidal and they refer them negative. Vidal did not have space in the articles or titles, in opposition to Fernández who has more articles written about him and also titles and subtitles. *Página/12* gives to him more spaces and personal interviews but do not have any personal interview with Macri or Vidal.

On the other hand, Vidal and Macri are not in main spaces as titles except the claims about corruption of Macri. Fernández and Kirchner are always in the main spaces. When media give space to Fernández also write about Kirchner as his proposal is a continuation of Kirchner and he is a delegate of her because Kirchner chose him.

In reference to *personal characteristics of politicians*, *Página/12* write less coverage of the personal life of the candidates and more about political aspects. The group of articles discuss personal life is because is related to the public sphere. For example *Página/12* (12/10/2015) personalized the candidates when published "Aníbal presented his future ministers". In this article Fernández declares the names if the politicians that he will chose to

⁵¹ Only one article speak about her direct (*Página/12*, 12/10/2015).

work with him. It is a personal characteristics example of how the candidate tried to establish connection to voters showing names of the ministers that he chose.

In relationship to leadership the media represent Vidal/ Macri as a bad leaders, corrupts, representants of the right. Fernández / Kirchner are the goods, the leaders, the experts, representing the left. The vocabulary is more informal in connection to Fernández and formal to Vidal. The strategy in the media is similar to Fernández's campaign. Fernández planned his campaign based on a negative campaign. He mentions Vidal as *Heidi*⁵² and the newspaper reproduce that. Fernández used this aspect to show that Vidal did not have any experience in the province to interact with politicians. The objective is to demonstrate that Vidal is inexperienced and a childish.

Página/12 has very few articles of the personal life of the candidates, the issues are less personalized in this case. Most of the articles focuses on describing the mischievous marketing of the campaign of Macri and Vidal.⁵³

The category Rules of election and Policy issues represents the majority of the media coverage. On *policy issue*, for example, *Página/12* explains how “the consultants showed the tendency of votes was in favor to FPV and against Cambiemos” (25/09/2015). Other article expressed “PRO represents corporations that benefited during the time of the dictatorship” (25/09/2015). In both cases the tendency is in favor to FPV and against PRO. The coverage claims that: “Macri has the protection of the media corporation that did not publish any article regarding his business and corruption with the state”.

⁵² Fernández used the name “Heidi” in a negative way to refer that Vidal is an innocent child that did not have any experience in politics and she appears in the media as a sweet lady, as “Heidi” a childhood film. Heidi is the protagonist of a film that is innocent and a child.

⁵³ For example, *Página/12* writes, “(...) explain how the spots of PRO are promises without facts and how they have an empty campaign based in political marketing”. See in *Página/12*, 20/10/2015.

The orientation of this group of articles is to denounce PRO's corruption. For example, one title publishes: "A company that received money from PRO did not exist (Página/12, 13/10/2015). Also *Página/12* several times claim the no transparency in Macri's campaign, for example, a title describes: "Denunciation of corruption in publicity of the campaign of Macri and Vidal". They cover many times "The scandal *Niembro*", a PRO's candidate (Niembro) for first national deputy was forced to resign in the middle of a corruption case, where his company had billed 21 million pesos to the City government. These cases are exemplification of the media coverage orientated to policy issues (Página/12, 26/09/2015).

In the category ***Rules of election*** the media coverage is about the transparency during the campaign, for example, *Página/12* did an investigation about the corruption in the publicity of the campaign. Also, the media publish an investigation about corruption of Niembro, PRO's candidate to the legislature (*Página/12*, 23/09/2015). On other hand, *Página/12* write about polarization between parties and topics related to the competition. For example in the title: "Candidate Vidal expressed there is polarization between Fernández and her in the Province [of Buenos Aires]" (*Página/12*, 12/10/2015).

2.4 Findings and conclusions about personalization of politics (Argentina)

First, in relationship to the media coverage, it is clear how *La Nación* and *Página/12* had a different perspective of the campaign. To begin with, *La Nación* showed a more personalized coverage of the campaign because the topics of the articles are related to intimate aspects, personal characteristics of the candidate and high visibility of the candidate Vidal more than her party.

Meanwhile *Página/12*'s articles are less personalized because the topics of the coverage are about ***policy issues*** and ***rules of elections***. Most of the issues of the coverage were about denunciation, special investigation about corruption or policy issues related to political proposals of the parties.

The coincidence is that both media are in favor of one of the two candidates: *Página/12* to Fernández from FPV and *La Nación* to Vidal from PRO. The focus in the province of Buenos Aires campaign is deeper in *La Nación* than in *Página/12*. *Página /12* concentrate in the politics of the city of Buenos Aires because Macri and Vidal were chief and vice chief of the Capital at that moment. The coverage is about the problems in the district; also most of the articles concentrate in cases of corruption of PRO government in the city of Buenos Aires or the presidential campaign more than the province.

In relationship to **General visibility**, *La Nación* writes more about candidates and *Página/12* about parties. The focus of *La Nación* is in the candidates and in their personal life. In contrast, *Página/12* coverage is more about the political proposals of PRO and FPV. The newspaper focuses in politics more than private lives of these politicians. Following Rebolledo I can check that the personalization of politics depends of the visibility of the candidates and the space in the media.

On the category **personal characteristics** of politicians both media have different orientation. For, *La Nación* the positive leadership is for Macri and Vidal and the negative leaders are Fernández and Kirchner. In contrast, *Página/12 coverage's* is positive to Kirchner and Fernández and negative to Vidal and Macri. The omission of Vidal in the coverage is also a political position to favor Fernández. Each coverage has a political consequence.

Rebolledo (2017) expresses that “the importance of the personal characteristics is that they have political consequences and help to understand the campaign”. *Página/12* writes more about the **characteristics of politicians** in the public sphere than the private. *La Nación* explains more about the private sphere than the public. As I explained previously, *La Nación* write more articles about personal life as family, love and intimate aspects or the candidate and their intimacy more than *Página/12*.

The *space* for the election campaign is different in every media. *Página/12* gives more space to Fernández and Kirchner and *La Nación* to Vidal and Macri. Also, differences in vocabulary are significant; *La Nación* is courteous to Vidal in opposition to Fernández. Contrary, *Página/12* is polite to Fernández and Kirchner and ungentle to Macri and Vidal. In conclusion, personalization of politics appears more evident in *La Nación* than in *Página/12*, because “personalization of politics is the decline of the political groups mainly political parties and the influence of individual politicians specially the leaders.”⁵⁴

La Nación coverage of the campaign had coincidences with the strategy of the campaign of Vidal. The specialist René Palacios explained that Vidal strategy was to polarize the campaign and to personalize the campaign to establish contacts with voters.⁵⁵ For that she accentuated her profile as a mother, woman, young, new in politics and fresh against Fernández that represented the old politics, Alfa men, corruption, and old politics. There is a coincidence between the campaign of Vidal and *La Nación* coverage of the campaign in opposition to *Página/12* coverage. The media covers the campaign based in aspects of Vidal’s personality.

In the same way, in relation to Vidal campaign, as we checked previously the strategy was to personalized the discourses in her figure. The element to get personal and use legitimacy based proximity in this way. On other hand, it was a similar Vidal’s strategy and *La Nación* coverage, which influence in the personalization of the election. The media and the politics interacted in the personalization to influence each other.

In conclusion, I analyzed in this chapter the empirical evidence about the connection between media and politics in the personalization of politics in the case of Vidal. The categories helped to classify the news coverage and to understand how the process of personalization

⁵⁴ See interview to Gideon Rahat in Appendix.

⁵⁵ See interview to René Palacios in Appendix.

emerged in the Argentinean media in a 2015 election campaign and also as choice of the media personnel.

Chapter III: The Spanish case

3.0 Context

An original movement started in Spain with 15-M. “15th of May 2011” was a group of the *Indignados* anti-austerity movement. The crowd went out to the streets to protest against the economic crisis and to demand solutions from the government of PSOE, the Socialist party. A part of the population turned against the banks and finances to fight for their rights, demanding a redistribution of income, rights to housing and universal health insurance among other demands.

At that time, Ada Colau had already participated in other activities in the 15-M movement. She was an unknown woman who participated and a lead activist against forced evictions, in the “Platform PAH” - *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*. (Colau & Alemany, 2013) This movement defended people living on the street after the banks handed out evictions.⁵⁶ In Spain, if citizens do not pay their mortgage, it is not enough to surrender, the security to the bank, people still need to pay. This injustice worried Ada Colau with other activists who founded the platform to defend people in this situation.⁵⁷

The activists found different forms of fight: activists occupied banks and protested with millions of people for this cause. Also, the organization presented an initiative of 1.4 million signatures to change the law in the parliament, went to houses that banks wanted to take over, and created human chains to block the police at the entrance. A new form of politics emerged around this time, and Ada Colau was a protagonist of this generation. This forty years old woman with a new discourse and an activist background and charismatic personality decided to run for Mayor of Barcelona.

⁵⁶ Desahucios in Spanish is a word that not have literal translation to English.

⁵⁷ Plataforma de Afectados por las Hipotecas is the original name in Spanish.

During 2015, politics shifted completely in Barcelona. After four years of government by the Catalan nationalist *Convergència i Unió* (Ciu)⁵⁸, Ada Colau was elected Mayor. She was the first woman to become Mayor of Barcelona. She has been involved largely in political activism, but this was the first time that she runs for elected office.

At the beginning of the election campaign, the media did not give Colau the same coverage as other candidates. As a result, Colau used social media - Facebook and Twitter - to communicate directly with citizens.⁵⁹ Her approach was simple: she promoted a new form to communicate politics, direct and without a traditional organization as a party and based on a direct relationship with citizens, which made the link personalized. For example, she opened her personal life to the electorate to demonstrate she is a common woman; her vocabulary was simple and a new style of discourse (La Vanguardia, 10/05/2015). Colau chose an original campaign to impact citizens. For example, she sang a rumba about the “revolution of the common people” to attract different profiles of voters (La Vanguardia, 10/05/2015). She communicated with the voters directly with a horizontal discourse that denounce the corporations and banks and vindicate the power of the people from middle and lower class. “It was a change in the political era, manifested by the fall of the traditional parties and new leadership based on new forms of campaign.”⁶⁰

The strength of her was authenticity and an informal vocabulary that everyone could understand. Colau differentiated herself from traditional politicians and the language that they use stressing a distinction between the people and the elite. For example, Colau said: “If we mobilize and we implicate, the politics and the destiny of our institution could be in our hands.” (El Mundo, 24/05/2015).

⁵⁸ The name of the party in English is Convergence and Union.

⁵⁹ See appendix interview to Enric Sierra Associate editor of La Vanguardia newspaper.

⁶⁰ See appendix interview to David Dusster, editor of La Vanguardia newspaper.

On other hand, the proposals of the movement related to historical revindications as right to have a house and to access to public health insurance. Colau said: “I am proud to be the visible face of the movement which want to put the citizens in the center of the political life.”(El Mundo, 16/05/2015).

In the end, on the Election Day (24 May 2015), Colau won. She obtained 22.72% of the votes in the elections of the city council. Nobody expected that an activist without a formal position in politics could win such a major position. After 32 years of (PSC) socialist party dominance and one term of CiU government the political game radically changed.

Sierra, editor of *La Vanguardia*- in a personal interview- affirms:

The 15-M created a division between those who were politically mobilized and those who were not. Colau won with a margin of only 17.000 votes. It was a surprise because the surveys indicated Trias was the favorite to win. She won with one councilor 11 to 10: that was a small difference. I think she did not believe in her victory and thought she would be part of the opposition.

Colau became the Mayor of the city without really having expected it.

One of the reasons of Colau’s victory was that Trias, who was mayor for four years, was weakened after several years of government. Trias had an old-fashioned campaign, and did not have credible solutions in Barcelona to problems with salaries, employment and transportation. Trias ran an overconfident campaign suggesting that he would win. In addition, when he spoke in the news about Ada Colau, this just made her more famous because the media did not pay much attention to her previously.⁶¹ Yet, when Trias decided to make her his principal

⁶¹ See appendix interview to Enric Sierra.

antagonist, he gave her a platform in the media. Trias' negative campaign helped to diffuse her ideas.

3.1 Personalization in Colau's campaign

Colau's strategy was to communicate to the electorate by social media through a personalized campaign. Traditional media did not have much space for her in articles and interviews compared to her opponents. She built a discourse of mobilization. She also focused on being a strong woman to highlight positive qualities for a leader. Her style was completely different from the old form of politics in Spain.⁶² First, she reaffirmed the importance of the assembly that she was to become a part of. Her discourse incorporated references to collective action, her innovative political strategies and the demands that came from 15-M. Colau expressed her radical opinions in social media about banks and traditional parties to confirm she was an activist from the street.⁶³

Sierra gave an important definition of La Vanguardia coverage of Colau's campaign:

Almost as a rule, when there is a new candidate, the media coverage tends to increase. Colau was new and from the media's point of view, this meant there was more interest in her as an individual: people wanted to know Colau not only because she represented the voices of 15-M: they wanted to know who she was, her way of thinking and acting. These are the type of things citizens seem to be more interested in. (...) we are interested in her political declarations. But still, given the fact that she is a "new face", someone new for the public, we did focus more on her personal life.⁶⁴

⁶² See appendix interview to David Dusster.

⁶³ Manuela Carmena was elected Mayor of Madrid Council and Ada Colau designed a campaign with gender equality issues. Both women were connected to the gender-equality movement and they followed feminist ideas in their campaign in the media.

⁶⁴ See interview with Enric Sierra in Appendix.

Ada Colau has a record as an activist. The decision to make herself a candidate was based on a coalition of parties on the left who represented the 15-M protest. Enric Sierra expressed:

There are several simultaneous factors that explain her victory. First, there was the 15-M movement, which represented groups of people identified with the political left side who had previously remained slightly silent. They felt betrayed by the traditional left-wing parties in Spain, i.e. PSOE and the United Left. Therefore, they had no political representation. This discomfort came from the economic crisis of 2008 after many families lost their homes due to foreclosures by the banks. This led to an increase in poverty among the middle class. An important sector of society demanded a strong government response.⁶⁵

The newspapers *La Vanguardia* and *El Mundo* described Colau as part of the populist spectrum (Laclau, 2015). In a study of Colau's discourse, Fernández Riquelme explained that her coalition built a discourse with an image of us vs. them, justice vs. injustice, and the crowd vs. the banks. (Fernandez Riquelme, 2018). This strategy helped to construct a discourse that mobilized persons without hope and who were not a part of politics because they did not believe in the political process.

Colau designed a strategy in the election campaign based on the demands of 15-M. Colau represented the rather small *Barcelona en Comú* movement, but made a coalition with the rather bigger *Podemos* party, and constructed the platform *En Comú Podem* in Catalonia.⁶⁶ Their objective was related to the objective to break the hegemony of the traditional parties and to create an organization that represents the popular spectrum that came from the collective movement *Indignados*.

⁶⁵ See interview to Enric Sierra in Appendix.

⁶⁶ *En Comú Podem* is a coalition between *Unidos Podemos*, *Barcelona en Comú*, and *Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds*.

3.2 Colau's campaign

In 2014, Colau founded the platform *Guanyem Barcelona* to win the upcoming municipal elections in 2015.⁶⁷ After an assembly process of debate and decision-making, the election was to create a party coalition with *Iniciativa per Catalunya, Esquerra Unida I Alternativa, Procés Constituent, Podemos y Equo*.

Colau's campaign was based on the strategy of showing her as different from other politicians. But the policy platform of her campaign was not radical because she wanted to win the votes of the center. The campaign planned to show her as a real woman: Colau was not a politician, but rather an ordinary woman with a baby and a husband who worked all her life in different jobs and get the minimum salary. As *La Vanguardia* expressed: "In a few months, Colau has gone from the visible side of the Platform of People Affected by the Mortgage (PAH) to the main political leader of the Catalan capital thanks to a warrior style, concerned with the most basic social needs." (*La Vanguardia*, 25/05/2015).

The focus of Colau's discourse was the new style to do politics: the assembly as a way of transparency, as a referendum in which citizens can participate in politics and control the government. The candidacy of her came also from a collective decision in an assembly. A group of activists who integrated the organizations voted to decide who would represent them. Every decision was horizontal in Colau's organization. They acted different than a traditional party where decisions are more centralized. The strategy was to show the functionality of the movement: the ordinary people had more power together in contrast to the caste of politicians - championing the objective that they defended the common good. (*La Vanguardia*, 25/05/2015).

⁶⁷ Guanyem in Catalan means we will win.

The objective was to demonstrate that she was a part of a horizontal movement - *Iniciativa por Catalunya* – that works as an organization of a movement that came from ordinary people. Ada Colau represented a transformation the change against the old form of doing politics. She denounced that the public opinion tried to show them as antisystem: “Before they said that we are terrorist, antisystem (...) now they said that we are people who bring uncertainty.” (El Mundo, 06/05/2015).

Colau built the discourse around her credibility and confidence with *personal characteristics*.⁶⁸ Colau built a message of emotions that are fundamental to attract an audience. She opened her life and her past and spoke direct to the voters that know her and does not. She came from a different form to express politics, she humanized the candidature. As the literature review explained (see Chapter I), candidates often get personal to attract the voters and to communicate politics. “Politicians may try to present themselves as ordinary people to giving citizens a glance into their private lives.”(Pedersen & Rahar, 2019). Personalization of politics is a new form of relationship between representants and citizens that connect policies and candidates. Media needs to explore those personal aspects from the candidate to increase audience and politicians to be in the media. This forms a self-reinforcing cycle of personalization.

3.3 Analysis of Spanish newspapers: *La Vanguardia* and *El Mundo*

The Spanish media system has specific characteristics. The most important aspect is the guarantee of plurality based on article 66 of the Constitution that establishes “the respect to the

⁶⁸ Individualization and privatization concepts related to personalization were in the strategy of the campaign. See Table III and IV in Appendix.

political and social pluralism, and the equality, proportionality and informative impartiality during the electoral period”.⁶⁹

During the electoral process, *Electoral Tribunal* controlled media. The media performs very carefully because this law is very strict with regards to coverage. Media needs to represent parties with electoral representation in the parliament. Colau came from party *Iniciativa por Catalunya*, which only had very limited coverage.

“The media of right or center right were opposed to Colau because she represented a new generation of the left, the heirs of communism. Ada Colau occupied the left position in the political spectrum with claims against the interest of the banks”⁷⁰

3.3.1 *La Vanguardia* newspaper

La Vanguardia is the main newspaper of Barcelona and has the largest circulation nationally, with 23.4 million readers and first position in Catalonia with 3.8 million⁷¹. The newspaper is part of a group of multimedia from *Group Godo*, one of the biggest media holdings in Spain. The media covers daily news about the election and local news.

I studied the coverage of the newspapers in the typology that Annunziata developed (see chapter II). I classified the 23 articles that cover the campaign related to the following topics: *intimate, citizen, political or institutional*.⁷² From 23 articles before the election, there were 17 describing *politics/institutional* and 6 about *intimate* aspects of the candidates.

⁶⁹ See more in article 66 of the spanish constitution <http://www.congreso.es/consti/constitucion>

⁷⁰ See interview with David Dusster.

⁷¹ Official data of Comstore about number of readers and users.

⁷² I added one article more that is not part of the classification and it is helpful to understand Colau's proposals (*La Vanguardia*, 25/05/2015).

The articles that wrote about *politics* focus on candidates for Mayor of the city: Trias, Colau, and Fernández. The media coverage was about proposals of the candidates related to transport, poverty, economy, immigration and social development of the population. The *intimate* factors had relationships to the capacity of leadership, the story of the life of the candidates and their hobbies and family. The coverage gave place also to the trajectory and work experience of the candidates. As Sierra explained:

In the case of Colau the coverage was more focused on personal aspects of her life because she was new in the political arena. The rest of the candidates were already well known. However, as I remember, in general terms the coverage of the campaign was more focused on the proposals than the character of the candidates.⁷³

General visibility of a candidate

There is a balance in *La Vanguardia* about appearance of candidates and parties. It demonstrates an effort to cover the proposals of candidates and political organizations. Sierra, editor of *La Vanguardia*, explained in relation to the space of Colau in the media:

“For instance, when media covered the elections there was the intention to be impartial by addressing those parties with institutional representation in a way that reflects that representation. Colau was a candidate for *Iniciativa por Catalunya*, which had a very small institutional representation and therefore the media overlooked her by giving her party only a small quota of coverage.⁷⁴

⁷³ See interview to Enric Sierra in Appendix.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

La Vanguardia coverage did not have space for Colau at the beginning of the campaign (La Vanguardia, 04/05/2015). During the last week, *La Vanguardia* gave her more space but still, Trias had more articles about him.

Respect to the **vocabulary** that used the media to describe Colau, it is said that the woman is as an activist rather than a candidate for Mayor of the City. Contrary, the vocabulary used for Trias, the Mayor of the City, described him as a professional politician. They reproduced these in many articles, Colau as an activist and Trias as an experienced politician. For example, in one article, the coverage reproduces the discourse of Trias that denounced Colau as an opportunist because she used the social movement to do political campaign (La Vanguardia, 01/05/2015).

Personal characteristics of politicians

At the beginning of the campaign, there was more relevance to Trias who was in that moment the Mayor of the city. The coverage was about him in most of the articles. At the final of the campaign, a group of articles described the life of Colau, the new candidate of left, emphasized the characteristic of Colau as a new person without political experience in comparison of Trias. Also, they show her as a representing of a new portion of the population who protests in the streets again banks. Other characteristic of the media articles was to show Colau as an activist more than a politician.

There was very little coverage about personal characteristics. For example, the only one article from a total of 23 in the category was about the diet of the candidates and routine alimentation (La Vanguardia, 17/05/2015). The other example, that is related to personalized news show the competition between politicians as the “horse race”, which was already

mentioned.⁷⁵ For example, on the article title: “The aggressiveness and the critiques that characterized the campaign”. In this coverage, the opponents of Colau reproached their accusations and way to do campaign (Suñe, Ramon, 11/05/2015, La Vanguardia).

Rules of Elections and Policy issues

La Vanguardia coverage focused more in topics related to **rules of elections and policy issues**. Some articles are part of both categories. For example, “Pablo Iglesias will open the electoral campaign with Ada Colau” (La Vanguardia, 26/05/2015) describes about the coalitions in the election and about political aspects of the alliance between Iglesias and Colau. Other examples include: “Colau asked to Trias to debate face to face in TV”, or “Trias refused face to face debate”. These articles speak about the public debates before the election (rules of election) and policy issues. Other coverage of both categories is an article that gives place to the postulation of Fernández, a third candidate to Mayor: “Fernández offer his integrated alternative between Trias and Colau”.

In the same way, the coverage of **policy issues** continues in the next title: “Without majorities to govern” (La Vanguardia, 04/05/2015). The article explains the institutional context of the election and the necessity to do coalitions to have absolute majority.

Finally, other example is the article that explains Trias have fifteen days to convince the undecided voters and mention the proposals of Trias. (Angulo, 08/05/2015, La Vanguardia). Or also one that mentioned Colau’s proposal to create a unique currency for Barcelona (La Vanguardia, 12/05/2015). Most of the coverage of La Vanguardia is about policy issues and rules of election.

⁷⁵ See more about the concept in page 14.

3.3.2 *El Mundo* newspaper

El Mundo is the second newspaper of Spain in terms of circulation with a 19.6 million online audience, which cover national news. The coverage focuses on the negatives of Colau, shows her as an activist that has too many idealisms and less experience to govern. The media refer mostly about her inexperience as a professional politician. For example, the title affirmed: “Colau could win in an no governable Barcelona” (*El Mundo*, 07/05/2015).

In a general overview of twenty articles before the campaign, most of the articles were about intimate aspects, and very little about citizen, institutional and political.

General visibility of a candidate

El Mundo mentions more candidates than parties. The visibility to Colau in the media is high. They mention 16 times the name of Colau in titles and all of them are with negative meaning (from 23 selected articles). The coverage demonstrates that Trias is the paper’s favorite candidate. For example, these titles expressed it: “Trias overcomes the second debate and Colau disappears” (*El Mundo*, 12/05/2015); “When Ada Colau was “Superhome” and disturbed events of the Central Institute of Homes” (*El Mundo*, 11/05/2015)⁷⁶; “Ada Colau: “The palace of the Urdagarin also must be occupied” (*El Mundo*, 09/05/2019).⁷⁷

Personal characteristics of politicians

⁷⁶ The article refers to Colau as a woman that claim against the banks. She weared clothes as a “superheroe” and claim in public.

⁷⁷ The Urdangarin’s palace is the home of Infanta Cristina and her husband Urdangarin.

The coverage of the media is about Colau's life, her marriage, activism and or preferences of food. For example, El Mundo coverage published: "Ada Colau (41 years) said that she eats everything except bowels and hot food. (...). (El Mundo, 09/05/2015).

The articles that covers personal characteristics of Colau – as her appearance - emphasizes on her inexperience, that she is not a credible person, an idealist, fake and a dangerous leader for Barcelona. They show Colau as a socialist/communist, an activist who protests and disturbs. As an example, one article describes her as ugly and unpresentable:

"You do not know who is Colau ... She recorded a video Run Run of for the common benefit (...) She is doing a Photoshop of her voice. The song said: *The Run Run is in the streets and in the plazas. The simple people, the normal people have the power.* She is doing an idolatry to herself. The vanity, a part of her ugly look, is a partial explanation of the reality (...). Her demagogy is unsupportable and immoral."(El Mundo, 08/05/2015).

The media laugh about her life as an actress and her participation in protests against evictions (El Mundo, 09/05/2015). The coverage put much attention to the fact that she did not finish her studies at the university in Philosophy.

Related to the **space**, Colau had a high number of titles in the coverage 16 articles mentioning her of a total of 22. The space is in titles and bodies of the articles that critique her proposals and the party that she is part as infantile movement of lefties. For example, *El Mundo* highlighted the Colau's song that she was singing as a spot full of vanity and egocentric position (El Mundo, 08/05/2015). They mentioned several times their personality based on her past life or her discourse.

Finally, the **vocabulary** to refer to Colau was derogatory and negative in comparison to Trias. They published: "The activist knows that her model of city is totally contrary to CIU."(El Mundo, 22/05/2015). It describes her inexperience, ridicules proposals to Barcelona

or her past as an activism that they describe as terrorism. For example, one article (El Mundo, 11/05/2015) wrote:

“Colau and her couple, with other activists dressed up like a Superhero to protest against speculation of sell houses in the municipal election of 2007 and they destroyed events of all the parties (...) they bothered a lot of politicians in that time. “Superhouse” was a disguise with the number 47, law of the Constitution that express the right to a have decent home.”

As I checked, most of the articles were negative, and most of them are about personal characteristics of the candidate. There is minimum place to discussion in the coverage about the election and *policy issues*, those articles mainly write that “the denounces of corruption are the pillar of the campaign of the candidate Ada Colau” (El Mundo, 18/05/2015).

3.4 Conclusions about Spanish Media

El Mundo give less place to the campaign in terms of political issues than *La Vanguardia*. Maybe the reason for this is that *La Vanguardia* is ostensibly a local newspaper. As a consequence, *La Vanguardia* and *El Mundo* had different coverage of the campaign. *La Vanguardia* had more plurality in its coverage because it represented most of the candidates. The first days of the campaign had fewer articles about Colau, but one week before the election the number of articles increased. By contrast, *El Mundo* had more “sensationalist” coverage that tended to speak about Trias positive aspects and mostly negative of Colau. From a total of 23 articles, she is mentioned in 16. The newspaper labeled her as an extremist, leftist, a young woman without experience, a protest activist, a ridiculous woman (El Mundo, 4/1/2015).

El Mundo’s focus of the campaign was more intimate in aspects of the candidates. *El Mundo* wrote about Colau and Trias as enemies and focused more on personal histories about

the life of Colau as an actress. This coverage was more personalized than *La Vanguardia* because the articles that write about politics also tendency to speak about the candidates in terms of personal issues.

On the other hand, the coverage about Colau denigrated her in titles as well as in the bodies of articles. The ideological position against her candidature was more evident. In *La Vanguardia*, the coverage was more neutral in terms of position to favor one candidate or other. They write positive about Trias but had more respect from the other candidates.

Chapter IV: Findings and Conclusions of the Research

The objective of this final chapter is to analyze the results and the findings of the study. It is clear that the Argentinean and Spanish cases have differences and similarities related to the personalization of politics.

The main sources of personalization in the case of Argentina are the media but in the Spanish one is the candidate. But the personalization depends of the coverage of the election campaign, for example, *La Nacion* is more personalized than *Pagina 12* newspaper and in the same way, *El Mundo* more than *La Vanguardia*.

Meanwhile, other differences are that Argentina has a presidential system while Spain has a parliamentary one. As was suggested and then confirmed by the data, presidential regimes are more highly personalized than parliamentary systems. “Presidential regimes are by definition more personalized than parliamentary regimes.”⁷⁸ The political system is one of the factors that influenced the media and coverage, which should be considered in future researches.

The concepts of individualization and privatization are fundamental to personalization. Both elements work differently in Argentina and Spain. The mayoral campaigns studied here highlighted more the candidates than the party in both cases. Yet the Argentinean campaign was more personalized than the Spanish one. Consequently, personalization was more evident in the Argentinean media – especially in *La Nacion* - because the media focuses on particular aspects of the life of candidates. In the Spanish case, the media - especially *La Vanguardia* - reported more about the institutional and political elements and less about privacy.

⁷⁸ See interview to Gideon Rahat in Appendix.

The strategies of the candidates in the election campaign demonstrated significant similarities independently from the difference in the contexts. Colau and Vidal are candidates who used the female aspect strongly in the campaign. They affirmed that they were the face of the change against Alfa men (Trias and Fernández). Both styled themselves as the representatives of the “change”. Finally, Colau and Vidal built a campaign with complaints against the government, and both of their opponents chose a negative campaign, which helps the audience to know more about Vidal and Colau.

Other similar strategy in both campaigns was to show the candidates as “common persons”, in order to engage with the voters in more personal ways and in consequence they had to “open” their lives to the media without restrictions. The form to connect with citizens was related to the use of an informal vocabulary and direct appeals to the voters to establish intimacy with them. Vidal called to them “neighbors” and Colau “citizens”. They used their charisma as a main element of the campaign, which confirms Rahat assertion that “personalization may lead to leadership politics concentrated on charismatic leaders.”⁷⁹

These politicians - Colau and Vidal – chose a positive personalized campaign where the strategy was to polarize with the opponents but to amplify the charisma to engage with voters. Contrary, Trias and Fernández, their opponents, represented the negative personalization, which focused on the lack of skills or personality of the antagonist.

There are differences between Colau and Vidal related to the organization that they came and the female leadership. Colau expressed the face of a horizontal movement, while Vidal was the representative of a political organization that competed in the local and presidential election. Vidal represents traditional values (Catholic, conservative family, woman as a mother) and Colau modern values (atheist, in couple without marriage, woman as

⁷⁹ See interview with Gideon Rahat in Appendix.

independent). Also, these differences were expressed in the vocabulary: Colau was usually shown as an activist while Vidal was seen as the face of a party.

Related to personalization in the media coverage, the differences are deep. Argentinean media had different ideological positions, and they showed more their preferences to one or the other candidate. *La Nación* was in favor of Vidal and *Página/12* of Aníbal Fernández. The coverage in general was less orientated to political issues or topics of the specific campaign in the Province of Buenos Aires. The media mixed the presidential and local coverage, but did not cover particular proposals to the districts. The intimate aspects of the candidates were relevant for the coverage more than political discussions.

Spanish media showed a balance between the articles dedicated to Colau and others. *La Vanguardia* has a more impartial position and respect for the profession when they reflect what happens in politics. They also did a survey tracking the rise of Colau. At the beginning, they did not give space but at the end of the campaign, Colau's presence in the articles grew as her perceived chances improved. The female characteristics appear in those articles more than in *El Mundo*. This also happened in Argentinean media where the female leadership is something enhanced both in *La Nación* more than *Página/12*.

The topics of the group of articles were more about intimate aspects of the candidates than political aspects. *Página/12* had more political coverage but was still less orientated to cover news about the Province of Buenos Aires. In reference to the mentions of parties or candidates - individualization - *Página/12* mentioned Macri more than Vidal and there are days that they did not include Vidal's name in any articles. *La Nación* mentioned more both candidates Vidal and Fernández and privilege Vidal/ Macri than PRO and Cambiemos political organization.

Contrary, Spanish media, *La Vanguardia* and *El Mundo* had coverage that was more general and with less orientation visible for any candidate. In some articles they favored more one of the candidates (*La Vanguardia* to Trias, *El Mundo* to Fernández Díaz⁸⁰) but the coverage is more equal, especially in the final days of the campaign when the polls gave chances to Colau. In connection with the categories, *La Vanguardia* coverage was more about political proposals and initiatives than intimate aspects. *El Mundo* was more personalized and their coverage focused too many times on personal characteristics of Colau as her family, appearance, career or intimacy.⁸¹

In comparison with Argentinean media, the Spanish one gave more places to the candidates and political organizations. The electoral law for the media is stricter in Spain than in Argentina. In Spain, there is a stricter electoral law that forces the media to give equal space to the different candidates in proportion to their representation. But, even the more personalized news -*El Mundo*- covers proposals and issues of the politicians with some space. The topics of the articles in general are about policy issues or rules of election. In this case, the study confirmed Rahat explanation: "Personalization is not the decline of issues, is the decline of parties."⁸²

However, Vidal had a media - *La Nación* – that - gave her headlines and helped her party PRO. *Página/12* omitted her, but the impact was less because the audience of the newspaper is made essentially from voters of FPV. *La Nación* had more personalized coverage with interviews and focus on intimate aspects and *Página/12* explained more about parties. Finally, the content of the articles tended to show that there is more interest from the audience

⁸⁰ Fernández Díaz was a third main candidate to Mayor of the city from *Partido Popular* (Popular Party).

⁸¹ The topics of the media coverage were about politics but focussed in descriptions of personal characteristics of Colau in general.

⁸² See interview with Gideon Rahat in Appendix.

in the candidates than the parties. Argentinean media had less impartial coverage because they had a favorite candidate more evident in the coverage.

Spanish media was more impartial: *La Vanguardia* expressed the proposals of different candidates more than parties, reflected in interviews and articles more political aspects than intimate. *El Mundo* focused more on intimate factors as personal life. *La Vanguardia* expressed with impartiality, *El Mundo* showed more his negative view of Colau but gave to her space to express herself in the final part of the campaign election. Media represented more the structure of politics and cover topics as political initiatives and discourses more than Argentinean media. Spanish media was less orientated to one candidate as Argentinean media with Vidal or Fernández. But intimate aspects were less apparent and more political and institutional.

One of the answers of the research questions ask about the process of personalization is in the media, related to if the candidate is new or not in the district. An important finding is that the media is more personalized with new than old candidates: Vidal and Colau more than Fernández and Trias. The news explains more personal details about these new candidates as family details, hobbies or childhood. Another fundamental point is related to the strategy of the campaign, the party who already governs present candidates in the district, but omits the intimate aspects of the campaign, the new party that wants to win a position shows more personalization. New parties or coalitions tend to be more personalized. Media also is more personalized in case of new candidates. For the reasons that I explained previously, Spain has a lower personalization and Argentina higher one.

The media coverage helps to understand what the concept of personalization is. The study showed that personalization presented in media coverage and electoral campaigns as Rahat suggested, "in most of the countries we found signs of personalization." At the same

time, demonstrates that “the personalization in the media and the campaign influence each other”.⁸³

The objective of this research was to do an interdisciplinary study - with the interviews to editors and specialists - that contributed with primary sources to the topic. The importance of the dialogue between political science and communication disciplines could be a key to study the personalization of politics.

Finally, this research opens the discussion to future investigations about the personalization of politics in media coverage in comparative cases. In modern democracies, media power has a fundamental role to influence politics. Politics and media are more interconnected than ever.

⁸³ See interview to Gideon Rahat in Appendix.

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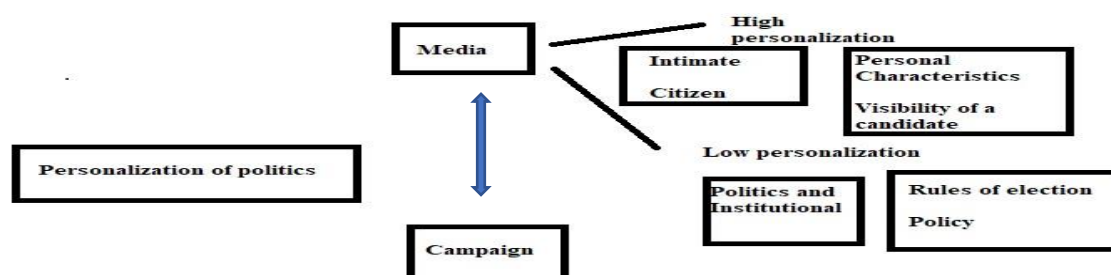
www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2015/05/13/555326de22601da6178b458e.html

14. Mondelo, V. (07/05/2015) Ada Colau ganaría las elecciones en Barcelona, según el

CIS. www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2015/05/07/554b4525268e3ee9028b4581.html

Appendix

Graph I



Typology of Annunziata in application to Argentinean and Spanish Newspapers

Table I

| Total | Institutional | Citizen | Politics | Intimate | Newspaper |
|-------|---------------|---------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 24 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 17 | La Nación |
| 24 | 0 | 3 | 16 | 5 | Página/12 |
| 48 | 0 | 4 | 23 | 21 | Total |

Table II

| Total | Institutional | Citizen | Politics | Intimate | Newspaper |
|-------|---------------|---------|----------|----------|---------------|
| 23 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 5 | La Vanguardia |
| 23 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 9 | El Mundo |
| 46 | 0 | - | 32 | 14 | Total |

Table III

| Category | Vidal | Fernandez | Colau | Trias | |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--|
| Individualization | | | | | |
| Candidate | + | - | + | - | |
| Party | - | + | + | + | |

Table IV

| Category | Vidal | Fernandez | Colau | Trias | |
|----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--|
| Privatization | | | | | |
| Individual | + | - | + | - | |
| Candidate | - | + | + | + | |

Interviews

Interview to René Palacios, specialist in Political Communication from Argentina.

Why did Vidal win the elections in the Province of Buenos Aires?

The Peronist Party had ruled the Province of Buenos Aires for the last thirty years. This resulted in an increasing erosion of the Peronist influence in the Province, and in a favorable situation to María Eugenia Vidal. She ran for office as a female candidate endorsed by Mauricio Macri, as he refused to support Sergio Massa. Marcos Peña⁴¹ and Duran Barba also opted to support this female candidate. She was vice Mayor of the City of Buenos Aires but had not held any position in the Province of Buenos Aires. On the other side, the former President Cristina Kirchner endorsed Aníbal Fernández as her candidate. Mr. Fernández had held different positions during the Kirchner's administration and was accused by the media of being corrupt. This had a negative impact on the public opinion and it worked against Aníbal Fernández. His political party could not mitigate this negative effect.

In sum, residents of the Province of Buenos Aires had to choose between a candidate with a terrible public image (I.e. Aníbal Fernández), and a young woman with a positive image (I.e. María Eugenia Vidal). In addition, the primaries within the Frente Para la Victoria party between Aníbal Fernández and Julian Dominguez, contributed to the negative image of Fernández, as defamation and insults were prevalent in the primaries. In fact, the turnout of the general elections was much greater (by more than 1 million votes) than the primaries.

The people of the province of Buenos Aires opted for a change. The victory of María Eugenia Vidal contributed to the election of Mauricio Macri as President of Argentina in the ballotage which took place in December 2015.

How did Vidal build the campaign?

Vidal focused the campaign on “paroxysm”, a style that Duran Barba brought to the PRO. Duran Barba was the main electoral advisor of Macri. Barba is a strong advocate for female leadership. María Eugenia Vidal was the first female candidate for the Province of Buenos Aires. The world changes, the power relations are more democratic, and women have won more spaces in politics. Duran Barba thinks that leadership of the “alpha male” represented by Aníbal Fernández is over.⁴² Duran Barba paid more attention to images than words. Before, life was boring, and politics were mainly about discourse. The technological revolution has changed everything. People have many options for entertainment, which has led to a lack of interest in politics.

Words and discourses have become less important than images. Images transmit feelings. Vidal put a lot of effort in this area during her election campaign. On another hand, PRO thinks about a revolution led by “average people”. In this philosophy, the center is the people and not the politics. Vidal led an ultra-personalized campaign, as she did not have any previous political experience in the Province of Buenos Aires. They built up a story of a powerful woman against the mafia of traditional politics: an opportunity to recover the Province for its residents. The victims were the residents of the Province and the evil was Fernández, while their savior was Vidal.

Why does Media personalize politics?

The media is a business and as such, it needs to sell and to have profits. The emergence of alternative media outlets and channels led to the fragmentation of the audience, and politics became a “show business”. This is the vision held by Dick Morris, an advisor of former President Bill Clinton. Politics is a spectacle, and, in this area, there are no party structures. It is very difficult for the media to convey political messages from party structures. It is much

easier and more profitable to focus on persons. This contributes to eroding the institutions and parties, and to a higher personalization of politics. The combination of media, technological, and party structure changes lead to a personalization of politics.

In the case of *Cambiemos* or PRO, this is more evident. PRO and *Cambiemos* emerged as personalist parties, focusing on the image of Mauricio Macri. He was seen as a political outsider in Argentine politics, as he did not have a long career in politics. His party was just created in 2005. They claimed to do politics without coming from the mainstream political elites. This is paradoxical. PRO was never a national party because they were outsiders, and this forced them to establish a political alliance with UCR for presidential elections since the UCR party had a historical tradition in the Politics of Argentina.

Interview to Enric Sierra, the chief of La Vanguardia

Enric Sierra is chief and editor associate of La Vanguardia, responsible for the general line of political edition in the newspaper.

Why did Colau win elections in 2015?

There are several simultaneous factors that explain her victory. First, there was the 15-M movement, which represented groups of people identified with the political left side which had previously remained slightly silent. They felt betrayed by the traditional left-wing parties in Spain: PSOE and the United Left. Therefore, they had no political representation. This discomfort came from the economic crisis of 2008 after many families lost their homes due to foreclosures by the banks. This led to an increase in poverty among the middle class. An important sector of society demanded a strong government response. In this context, a popular movement emerged: the 15-M. They held demonstrations led by many young people. They demanded a radical change in the system, with other political values, independent from the

economic elites. Among the 15-M leaders was Ada Colau, who focused on the situation of households. She came from the movement *“Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca”*. She became the icon of people without a home. She had the opportunity to speak in the media only for a few minutes, speaking in a direct way and addressing many important topics. A lot of people who felt that they were not represented by the political parties, identified with her and her message. What is more, this happened in a context where the Socialist Party deteriorated because of its ineffective response to the economic crisis.

The government in Barcelona during this time was *Convergència i Unió* with Trias. They were symbols of the status quo. Trias did not manage to convince the people of Barcelona with his speech and ran with a conservative campaign message. He was overconfident in his eventual victory. On the other hand, Colau came from a new party without representation in the media and she became the main opponent of Trias.

The political arena forced people to be either more active in political terms or to stay away from politics. The 15-M created a division between those who were politically mobilized and those who weren't. Colau won only with a difference of only 17.000 votes. It was a surprise because the surveys indicated Trias as the favorite candidate to win. She won with one councilor 11 to 10: it was a small difference. I think she did not believe in her victory and she thought she would be part of the opposition. She became the Mayor of the city without really having expected it.

How did the mass media cover Colau's postulation?

In Spain, we have a law that constrains the media in an electoral context. For example, in Spain it is not possible to publish surveys five days before the elections: if you do it you can go to jail. And the day before the elections it is forbidden for media to speak, write or

discuss politics. In this sense, the liberty of expression of the media is restricted. The Electoral Tribunal is the state organ that controls the diffusion of information of the parties in the media during the days before the elections. This is very strict in Spain: it is forbidden to name the parties. It should be noted that this electoral law is old but there is still no consensus on how to change it. Because of this law, the media needs to be very careful with the information they give. For instance, when covering elections, the media must try to be impartial by addressing those parties with institutional representation in a way that reflects that representation. Colau was a candidate for *Iniciativa por Catalunya*, which had a very small institutional representation and therefore the media overlooked her by giving her Party only a small quota of coverage.

Did La Vanguardia have influence in the personalization of the campaign? What is your opinion?

Almost as a rule, when there is a new candidate the media coverage tends to increase. Colau was new and from the media point of view, this meant there was more interest in her as an individual: people wanted to know Colau not only because she represented the voices of 15-M: they wanted to know who she was, her way of thinking and acting. These are the type of things citizens seem to be more interested in. However, in Catalonia we are different. We establish a differentiation between the person and the public space: the private sphere and the public sphere. If she has a lover or what she did during her holidays is not important for people in Catalonia. We are interested in her political declarations. But still, given the fact that she is a “new face”, someone new for the public, we did focus more on her personal life.

Which are the differences between the media in Spain and Argentina?

If I analyze what happened to Cristina Kirchner and before her Juan Domingo Peron, I think in Argentina the media is more personalized than in Spain.

Which are the characteristics of the Media system in Catalonia?

The relationship between the politician and the press in Spain is more respectful, at least regarding the politicians. My impression is that in Argentina the politicians think they are the owners of the Media. In Spain, they know that they need to try other ways to engage with the media. I think before it was more like in Argentina, but now the relation between journalism and politics in Spain seems to be more formal, less imbricated.

Was there an editorial line about how to cover the elections?

La Vanguardia wanted to line up with the winning candidate. It is a newspaper which always tries to keep a discourse acceptable for most of the people: in this sense, we are politically in the “center”, or even center-right. The majority was with the Socialist Party, so we would not go against Trias. At this moment, Colau was not our candidate: she was not the favorite to win. We insisted on our “centrality” by inclining ourselves towards the favorite candidate. Colau at that moment was an unknown politician; nobody actually thought she could win.

Why do you think the media personalizes the discourse? Why do you think the coverage focuses more on personal aspects of the candidates than in the Parties and political proposals?

In the case of Colau, the coverage was more focused on the personal aspects of her life because she was new in the political arena. The rest of the candidates were already well known. However, as I remember, in general terms the coverage of the campaign was more focused on

the proposals than the figures of the candidates. There is malpractice from politicians, which is to try to destroy their opponents by attacking them on a personal level: they try to find scandalous stories, mistakes, and misbehavior. The media often reflects this: for example, El Mundo is more oriented to personalization. El País, however, oriented the coverage in a similar way than us: in a less personalized way, trying to acknowledge the political discourse and not the personal life of the candidates.

Interview to David Dusster, general editor of La Vanguardia

Why do you think Colau win the elections in 2015?

Colau knew how to canalize the citizen movement of 15th of May in 2012. It was a strong movement, which originated Podemos. Colau knew how to understand the feelings of the people; it was a citizen movement and not a party movement that represented a discomfort against evictions – in spanish *desahucios*. Spain is the only one country that has this policy called - *dación en pago* - the real state issue is an injustice. Colau is the leader of the movement- *Plataforma de Afectados por la vivienda*-, a person with a great discourse who knows how to create a platform- that is different from a party. It was a coincidence with a time of economic crisis – when she won the crisis finished- but a crisis of traditional political parties – socialist party and popular party. In Catalonia, the *Partido Socialista Catalan*, which govern always the Mayoral of Barcelona, except the last years before Colau with Trias. The deterioration of the socialist party in Barcelona because austerity policies in the fiscal crisis and also because the party tendency to go to center that to left. 15 M originated in this context.

The fact that she is a woman influenced the campaign?

I think was an important factor because women incorporated to the public and private administration. In Spain we are in a middle level, the incorporation to the woman to the world of job is full, but is more difficult on politics. It was the first time that a woman won to be the mayor. It is not a fundamental factor to win. She won because she knew how to connect with the necessities of the people. She was brilliant with the organization of the citizenship from the base, with social media and crowdfunding different from strategies of traditional parties.

How was the media coverage of Colau?

She had most of the media against her, in a country that most of the media tendency is right. Barcelona was most of the time in favor to socialist party, tendency to left. We can compare the way to promote with Obama, because they used the social media and media was against them. She generated a singular consensus of left. It was a consensus of Podemos. The triumph of Colau is related to triumph of Carmena in Madrid. Their proposals was chosen in simultaneous. It was a change in the political era, manifested by the fall of the traditional parties and new leadership based on new forms of campaign.

On other hand, the system in Spain is rigid. Media is obligated to give space to parties in function of parliamentary representation. Colau did not have representation, as a campaign of a party. It was difficult for her from the begging and the private television had liberty in coverage. The private media did not want to give space to parties that did not have representation. This was a debate with Podemos, Carmena and Colau.

Which was the discourse of the media about her as a new candidate?

The media of right or center right were opposite to Colau because she represented a new generation of left, heirs of communism. Partido Popular called them “*comunistas*”. Colau occupied the left position in the political spectrum with claims against the interest of the banks.

She represented a collective movement which was an assembly 15-M. But in other hand, when there is a new phenomenon media must to coverage about it, Colau represented all of that.

Interview to Gideon Rahat, Professor of Political Science, specialist in personalization of politics

What is personalization of politics?

Personalization of politics is the decline of the political groups mainly political parties and the influence of individual politicians specially the leaders.

Some academics suggest that personalization is not a new phenomenon, and others believe that personalization is a phenomenon related to new technologies, what do you think?

It is a problem of measurement. The correct question is: What is the power of the party vis-a-vis individual politicians? We can see is over time - we did different measurements of political personalization, with changes of political institutions, changes in the media and changes in the behavior of West politicians and voters. And all these measurements outcomes has shown in all the democracies the process of personalization is not in the same level, in some democracies there is a very strong process of personalization like in Israel and in Italy in others we did not find any signs of personalization like Switzerland. But in most of the countries we found signs of personalization.

What is the role of the media in these cases? What is the difference between the traditional media and online media?

If we talk about the internet and the social media, we studied it and we found a big difference between countries. In some of them, the political parties are visible in the social media and produce some content and they are also consumed more than individual politicians by the voters. In other countries, for example, Israel is really a unique case where political leaders are consumed and political parties are less. When they try to produce content to social media they are only consume. For example, Likud party has 50 thousand likes in Facebook but Netanyahu has more than 2 million. That's one example of how Netanyahu is more prominent in the social media than his party.

Does this happen also in Europe?

We studied cases in Europe mainly European democracies; we did not check democracies in Latin America. This pattern is prominent around democracies.

How did you conduct the research between these different contexts and countries?

We had the same measurements between the countries, for example when we look at candidate selection methods of these countries or electoral reforms, or other aspects. That is how we work in comparative politics.

How was the process of collecting data for the research? Which types of countries did you select?

First we studied western democracies, after which we added the analysis of third-wave democracies like Greece, Portugal and Spain. After we studied the Czech Republic, Poland

and Hungary, because they are “young democracies”. In total, we developed our research by analyzing 25 parliamentary democracies and 6 democracies.

We also used the data that other people collected before us. For example, the data of leadership, we only needed to codify it. Or data of the power of the prime minister we used also information provided by other researches.

Which is the difference in terms of personalization in presidential and parliamentary regimes?

Presidential regimes are by definition more personalized than parliamentary regimes. In presidentialism there is a direct election of the head of the executive and not in parliamentary systems. We did not include these countries in our study, we have a new study about personalized politics and state of affairs and we intent to include presidential democracies there.

Can we say that political parties are empty structures in modern democracies?

No, it depends where. They are not empty; in some countries they are very well like in north Europe where the parties are strong. But they became empty in places like Israel and Italy.

How is in the cases of Spain and Italy?

Italy is extremely personalized. Spain I must say that we checked until 2015 and we did not find a lot of personalization. But in 2015 Spain started to change. I believe that if we look at

Spain today we will find more signs of the party's declines and the rise of political personalization.

Why there is not consensus about personalization in academia?

There is no consensus in academia on anything. It is a question of who is making the case and for what. I am trying to make the case together with my colleges about a specific definition of personalization. Personalization does not the decline of issues, it is the decline of parties. The definition that we offer with Tamir Sheafer became the standard one. We made the case again in 2019 with Pedersen. I think that our definition is not the only one but is the standard. I believe in this definition.

Is there a conflict between political science and communication studies about personalization of politics? There is no interdisciplinary research about the concept.

I do not think so, some people are doing some specific research about specific forms of personalization and other study things such as personalized electoral behaviours, personalized parliamentary behaviour, media, institutions. We suggest in our book an outlook that is just a different focuses.

You wrote about the cycle of personalization, what is that cycle?

In 2017 we studied the cycle but we did not find evidence. The idea is the next: when you have a more personal electoral system, media would be more personal in the way that it does the coverage of the campaigns, the politicians will have more personalized campaigns and then also the politicians will behave a more personalized way and the voters will think in more personalized terms. The idea is one type of personalization creates others types.

When the personalization in the media and personalization in the campaign are similar is it possible to say that the strategy of the candidate impacts or dominates the media?

I think the personalization in the media and the campaign influence each other, but we did not find a lot of evidence in other countries. The stronger evidence was in Israel. In other places we did not find evidence about the links. Sometimes, we think is like that but we did not find very strong evidence. It is still a good hypothesis in many cases and makes sense, if the media is more about personalities than parties, the voters will be influenced more by personalities than political parties.

There are elections in a few days in Israel, do you think personalization will increase in this political context?

It seems to increasing in Israel. We speak about political leaders and we have very personalized parties, the election's main topic is the yes or no to Netanyahu, so there is a lot or personalization in these elections. Specially, the personalized party of Gantz and Yair Lapid and the others.

Which are the characteristics of Netanyahu's campaign?

On the one hand, he said that he is a super leader, a successful leader. On the other hand, is all about a negative campaign: creating enemies everywhere, like the left, the media, the academia, the Arabs. He is the great leader of the people. It is a populist leader like Trump and Johnson.

Why does this kind of leadership appear?

First this type of populist leadership fits the age of personalization and second because they make many people feel safe in the era of globalization, especially with the propaganda of immigration. People like to buy cheap stuff from China but they do not want the Chinese to come.

The personalization in Vidal's campaign

In this section I analyze some elements about the personalization of Vidal campaign, her strategy and the media context. “The media scene is related also to the deterioration of institutions in general and parties help politics offer will be more personalized. This combination of media change, technological change, and changes in the party structure generate that focus on persons in politics”.⁸⁴ D'Alessandro states that this has a negative effect on democracy as it is approved or rejected under single government premises that are not essentially based on reality (D'Alessandro, 2004).

We can indeed observe the plausible impact of these theoretically postulated causes of personalization in the Argentinian case. There was a change in the 1980s in terms of representation; the focus of politics became the exaltation of the personal characteristics of the politicians. Personal traits came to the foreground when dealing with proposals and public policy.

Civil society is linked to politicians in different forms; it demands an approach that rejects traditional politics in favour of a more pragmatic and effective figure. As we checked in the Section 2.2, public sphere puts in the agenda of the media aspects of the private life of the politicians. This is one of the aspects of personalization. According to Bjerling there are three fundamental dimensions of personalization: *personification, oriented towards persona and intimization*. We can see how different levels exist in the context of mediatization. Where mediatization is high, the political system gets transformed into a format of personal mandates. In these cases, the personalization implicates that candidates have a high presence with their personal stories. Personification is the focus on the candidate as a person more than a public figure: media coverage and campaigns follow the candidates more than the party as an

⁸⁴ See interview with René Palacios in the Appendix.

organization. “Intimization” is the attention to the intimacy of these candidates more than their public performance and issues.

Electoral campaigns are planned to be online to win elections. Personalization applied to online campaign strategies is understood as an electoral communication strategy adopted by the political actors which prioritize, even more than in the traditional media, the centrality of the candidate in the political message (Gil-Torres, et.al, 2008:2). The candidate gains centrality and the parties deteriorate. As Bjerling (2011) explains about the weakness of traditional parties:

Political parties have lost of their previous function as mediators between the citizenry and their rulers; both trends (the increased accommodation power of the news media and the tendency of the news media to focus on individual actors) are thus to some extent being enabled by the weakened standing of political parties.

In recent years, politicians have tried to establish a direct relationship with the electorate without the intermediation of the party structure. The “knocking on doors” strategy that Vidal used to win votes is the clearest example, a method of “face-to-face” contact with citizens to gain their trust. The strategy was essentially mediatization, the candidate knocked on the doors to visit citizens, and they filmed it and published it in the media coverage. The newspaper *La Nación* showed that Vidal entered to the intimacy of the voters.⁸⁵ She is a common woman - mother, sister, and worker - that can speak with the neighbours. During the Argentinean campaign in the Province of Buenos Aires, PRO designed a campaign with high degree of mediatization.

⁸⁵ See appendix on media coverage of *La Nación* newspaper in category intimate.

Other point of the strategy of being personal for example is to communicate the names of the candidates: Macri is Mauricio and Vidal is María Eugenia. Every public communication of the PRO candidates -often in *La Nación* - is in a personal form. “While the logic of the news media system is important, it should also be acknowledged that political actors are strategic actors who – to some extent – can be assumed to “*go personal*” in order to acquire more personal leeway.”(Bjerling, 2011:1) PRO events are incredible visual; the political events and meeting look as a celebration or a party, full of colours and attractive to the audience. The design of the campaign is oriented to appear as much as possible in the media (Vommaro, et al, 2015).

“A politician can expose the citizens to his or her family life – traditional or non traditional – to simplify on her values.”(Pedersen & Rahat, 2019:6). Candidates are shown using extra-political descriptions, such a "good parents", honest", "austere", etc. Vidal extols these features in an interview with journalist Jorge Lanata, referring to topics of her private life, her children, her hobbies and her education. The scenery of the interview is her own house, giving one an intimate view into Vidal’s private life.

Other example to link the connection with voters and emphasis emotions is the next: Valenzuela, candidate to Mayor at Tres de Febrero district for PRO, asked the neighbours in a typical meeting between PRO and people: - If you had to go on a trip for a job or an emergency, who would you leave in charge of your children: María Eugenia or Aníbal Fernández?

In that sense, also Fernández “recalled a sentence from the 2015 campaign, in which he lost to Vidal: "He remembers that he made an advertisement that said: Who would you trust

your children with? Vidal or (Aníbal) Fernández; I know who I don't trust: her. Then I see with the rest that I know, I leave it to Barreda, but not her, forget it?"⁸⁶

Vidal used her personal characteristics as a mother and unique female candidate against the traditional male candidates to attract votes. The strategy of the campaign was carefully designed by political marketing specialists to exalt a storytelling with high presence in the media. The main person in the campaign after the candidate is the specialist in communication that coaches the candidate. Jaime Durán Barba guided Macri and Vidal, recommending that the campaign needed to convince apolitical and undecided people (Duran Barba, et.al, 2010). The method to convince ordinary citizens was to create an attractive storytelling to the media. "Duran Barba thinks that leadership of the "alpha male" represented by Aníbal Fernández is over."⁸⁷ The campaign design based in the power of the female candidate against the old and male candidate.

The strategy was a show of images of actions more than discourses. For example, Vidal walked in the streets to hear the problems of the neighbours and entered to the house of the citizens to have an informal conversation with them in the company of the presidential candidate. These actions were many times also during the online campaign. In the online campaign there is the necessity to increase personalization through visual campaign that included the centrality of the candidate to be personal. Political communication recommended candidates to get personal and express feelings and emotions to engage with votes.⁸⁸ Vidal used in her campaign simple vocabulary and the word "people" to refer to the voters. The

⁸⁶ Barreda is a murderer that killed his children in 1992. Fernández used his name with irony to explain that Vidal is more danger than Barreda. See more in *La Nacion*, 26/07/19.

⁸⁷ In Argentina this expression appears very regularly in the field of politics. The Spanish "macho alfa" is used to denote the still dominant position of men within the political sphere. See interview to Rene Palacios in Appendix.

⁸⁸ Interview to René Palacios about Vidal coverage of campaign.

strategy was to convince citizens that did not know her through direct contact with neighbours' and after to show this meeting between Vidal and the "people" in the media (Fidanza, 2015).

Bjerling explains that orientation towards person implies a tendency of the news media to focus on the personal attributes of politicians (Bjerling, 2011). Political actors are portrayed in a more personal form and the coverage is focusing politicians in personal characteristics. And, finally, the intimization refers to an increased orientation towards attributes within a private sphere of action. For example, Vidal interview's in La Nación tell stories about her privacy, family, different stories about the time when she was a student (La Nación 08/10/2015). PRO created an attractive spectacle for the media.

The coverage in the Argentinean media increases the personalization in politics. The media attracts audience with personalized discourses. Palacios ⁸⁹ defines the relationship between the media and politics in Argentina:

Politics is a spectacle, and, in this area, there are no party structures. It is very difficult for the media to convey political messages from party structures. It is much easier and more profitable to focus on persons. This contributes to eroding the institutions and parties, and to a higher personalization of politics. The combination of media, technological, and party structure changes lead to a personalization of politics.

René Palacios focusses on the characteristics of the campaign. The strategy was to showing images because "images transmit feelings and Vidal put a lot of effort in this area during her election campaign. On the other hand, PRO thinks about a revolution led by "average people".⁹⁰ In this philosophy, the centre is the *people* and not the politics. Vidal led

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Op. Cit.

an ultra-personalized campaign, as she did not have any previous political experience in the Province of Buenos Aires. “They built up a story of a powerful woman against the mafia of traditional politics: an opportunity to recover the Province for its residents. The victims were the residents of the Province and the evil was Fernández, while their savior was Vidal”.⁹¹

In conclusion, in this section I showed how the strategy of Vidal is connected to personalization of politics and the main elements of the election campaign through a personalized discourse of the candidate.

⁹¹ Op. Cit.

Getting personal and proximity-based legitimacy

In this section I study briefly the concept of proximity based legitimacy that is an important tendency in the personalization that is presented in Vidal's campaign.

The tendency to personalization is in the logic of the media and the tendency should have increased (Bjerling, 2011). Politics became more personal in the last decade and politicians adapted their campaign to be covered by the media coverage as much as possible (Campus, 2010).

The candidates are portrayed in the media as ordinary people. In many speeches of the campaign, she spoke about her life: "Hi, I'm María Eugenia Vidal, I'm a girl from the Flores neighbourhood (...) I'm married, I have three children."⁹² Vidal slogan carried the message that she is an ordinary citizen or neighbour, PRO party mention the citizens as the neighbours. It is a good example to understand the concept of proximity based legitimacy.

The proximity based legitimacy transforms political leaders into citizens, with a message that is simple and intimate. The identification between politicians and citizens is based on the campaign in the media, place where they opened their life.

Vidal constructed her image in the media as an "outsider", as a common woman different from the political class. She showed an image as a woman who had errors and acts as ordinary people. She constructed a sensitive profile as a mother also. The discourse based in the elimination of the conflicts. Vidal expressed that her party wanted benefits for everyone.

Cambiamos constructed the discourse with the dynamic of the elimination of the opposition between classes (left/right) and parties. For example, Joaquín Molla, one of those

⁹² Vidal spot of Campaign, 2015 <https://youtu.be/iBUmCMzYgC8>.

responsible for the communication of the PRO points out “there is an old logic from the right or from the left and this is an overcoming logic, less construction of a hero that save us all and more a team that solves problems.” (La Nacion., 29/11/2015). Vidal also showed this in the media. She emphasized that she is a candidate that represented a new vision of politics. Politics are similar to marketing of a product than a person. The speeches to express in the media were created events to be part of the agenda of the news. Finally, the story was very attractive to the coverage of the news.

The personalization is presented in this strategy where personalize politics implicates to be closer to the image of the voters and no ideological speeches. The strategy of the campaign was an exemplification about the presence of this legitimacy based proximity which creates a personal approach of the candidates to show them similar as the voters.

Strategy of the candidates

In this section I will achieve if the personalization was a strategy of the candidates or the party. For that reason, I study the context of the election campaign where the strategies of Vidal/PRO and her opponennts Fernandez/ FPV emerged.

During Kirchner's presidential period the *Frente para la Victoria* party also governed and won every election for the Mayor of the province of Buenos Aires, with the exception of 2009 in the list for the Congress.⁹³ The province was the historical territory of the “barones del conurbano”, an expression used in Argentinean politics to name the leaders of the traditional PJ party who were usually in charge of conducting the politics of the Province. PJ

The PJ was part of FPV party coalition and was responsible in the province for mobilizing the voting. The outcome of the election depended on the performance in most of the municipalities. Vidal won also most of these territories that had been dominated historically by the PJ.

One of the main problems in the general election was that most of the mayors of the municipalities disagreed with Fernández, and after he won the primary the party did not have a uniform strategy like *Propuesta Republicana*. In the polls, voters chose *the FPV* candidate for President but Vidal for the province. Aníbal Fernández was one of the key politicians from Kirchner government with more media exposure, with appearances repeated in political programs of television, but this had no correlation with the traction of votes. His campaign focused on negativity and attack: first on his opponent in FPV party Julián Domínguez, and then Vidal. Scholars define negative campaign as one based in a critique to the opponent about

⁹³ The exception was in 2009, the list of Alianza PRO won 13 chairs in the deputy of the Province of Buenos Aires in comparison to Alianza *Frente Justicialista para la Victoria* who won 12 chairs. See more in <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/interior/dine/resultadosyestadisticas/2009#2>

personal characteristics, policies, principles or opinion between other (Travis.et.al., 2017). The effects of this electoral strategy in some cases could be problematic for the candidate, because it can help his opponent to be more named in the public opinion. The reasons of the negative campaign have relationship of the structure of the media “because the journalistic coverage of politics is mostly negative (...) politicians who are more prone to negative information are more responsive to the media.”(Zoizner, et. al.2017). This context happened when Fernández explained in the media his critiques to Vidal.

Most of the politicians that participated in PRO came from a trajectory in the private circle of multinational companies, but they did not have any political experience until the incorporation to this party. *Frente para la Victoria*, on the other hand, was composed mostly of politicians who had a trajectory of active political participation.

However, this main difference between PRO and FPV was also a strategy for their organizations. The campaign was a constructive campaign centralized in Vidal in opposition to Fernández’s negative campaign criticizing Vidal. PRO expressed proposals of “change” that concentrated in the figure of Vidal as a person that did not come from traditional politics -PRO refers to politics with negative meaning. For them to be part of the political elite was a negative thing. The depoliticization of political campaigns is related to the negation of the politics. Himmelstrand characterized the concept of depoliticization as a decreasing significance of ideology, where ideology has little influence in modern politics (Himmelstrand, 1962). The author explains that there is dissociation between ideology and practical politics. There is a decreasing of ideological statements: for example, symbols and values of traditional parties appear less in political campaigns. Durán Barba and Nieto, who managed the PRO’s campaign affirmed: “The voters are individualists, more autonomous than in the past, when they vote

they do not depend much on moral authorities or intermediate leaders and they do not want to subordinate to parties” (Duran Barba, et. al. 2010:3).

Vidal emphasized a personality basically different to the opposition candidates - belonging to the FPV - a ruling party at the national level and in the jurisdiction in dispute -, the symbolic and political space for María was reinforced on the need for a “change”. Macri expressed his choice of Vidal:

We believe that we must change, we always say so, and that is not an empty definition, rather it is something that we think should be manifested in our ideas, projects and the people who will carry out the change. Choosing a young woman, mother, professional, with the sensitivity and passion that María Eugenia showed, is part of this idea of change (Akuka, et.al 2015:27).

Vidal argued that she represented the new politics and Fernández the old politics. She expressed that she was part of “the new politics”, which went beyond the traditional division of “left” and “right”. Vidal tried to create the idea that she was different from the FPV members, who were allegedly “corrupt”. Vidal expressed in *La Nación* newspaper: “They are going to want to make it difficult for those who lost, but they will not have the support of the people. I’m not going to shrink because a mafia comes to face me”(*La Nacion*, 23/01/2015). Vidal’s strategy is to use those attacks from Fernández as personal and reinforce a story for the media in which she is a female strong woman fighting against the representatives of the “old politics”.

A lot of votes went from FPV to PRO. “Not only for the surprise victory of Vidal to the government but by the high degree of cut of the ticket and blank vote that produced different results for President, Governor, and Intendant”(Murillo, et. al. 2016:4). This tendency shows

that citizens that supported the presidential candidate of FPV, disagreed with Fernández and chose Vidal instead.

The context was a political opportunity. These results in the provinces produced an advantage for Macri at the national level. The great performance of Vidal helped Macri to win the presidential election. “The people of the province of Buenos Aires opted for a change. The victory of Vidal contributed to the election of Mauricio Macri as President of Argentina in the ballottage which took place in December 2015”.⁹⁴

The strategy of Vidal campaign was personalized compare her opponents from the other party FPV. She also won more votes than her own party in the first round of presidential election. This demonstrated that her success was more important than her party. That outcome visualized the personalization which is the focus on the candidates and the declines of the parties.

⁹⁴ Read interview to René Palacios in appendix.