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Introduction

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The adoption of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) flagged major changes in the conception of university education. The change to a student-led model implied an extension in the range of available teaching and learning methods and the growing salience of active learning. Active methodologies encompass skills needed in the labor-market and have been regarded as particularly fit to successfully tackle the challenges that tertiary education faces in the beginning of the 21st century. Research provides conflicting evidence as regards the effectivity of active over traditional learning with respect to knowledge retention (Machemer and Crawford, 2007). By contrast, it is less debatable that active pedagogy significantly increases students' motivation and satisfaction with learning (Hancock, 2002; Katt *et al.*, 2009; Ferreiro Prado, 2020a). This explains the popularity of active learning or mixed methodologies¹.

Doubts about the use of active pedagogy are well reported in the literature and include a wide array of individual, student-based and institutional constraints (Lean *et al.*, 2006: 235). So, even when teachers overcome the difficulties and decide to include active learning methods in their courses, there remain challenges they will have to deal with. First, for active pedagogy to properly achieve its goal, precise activity designs are needed along with the measurement of learning outcomes. Since designing a good activity is not an easy task, instructors must have access to pedagogical materials that provide the necessary know-how to do so properly. Then, the activity must be validated by testing what students have learned by doing it. This is time-consuming (Strachan, 2015; Ferreiro Prado, 2020b), and can be perceived as excessively taxing for the

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1. With “mixed methodologies”, we mean a combination of conventional (i.e., teacher-centred) and active (i.e., learner-centred) methodologies. The contributions to this special issue will show that instructors seldom design courses with an exclusive reliance on active methodologies (see also Ferreiro Prado, 2020b). On the contrary, active methodologies tend to be used together with conventional teaching methods. For instance, lecturing on a specific topic is usually employed by instructors before students are asked to get involved in an active learning task such as running a simulation, preparing a debate or doing discourse analysis.

professor in terms of career development if the employing institution has not embraced the Boyer Model of Scholarship (Boyer, 1990), which values the scholarship of teaching and learning in its own right.

This special section on *Active learning in Comparative Politics and (critical) International Relations* pursues two aims. The first one is to investigate the situation concerning the implementation of active learning methods in the Political Science and International Relations (IR) classrooms of Spanish universities. The focus here is on undergraduate pedagogy. Up to now, no research has been conducted on this topic, nor do we have a sense of teacher's motivations when it comes to their instructional choices. Why, for instance, is lecture-centered teaching being replaced by, or used in combination with, other teaching methods (and to what extent is this so)? Is the preference for active or traditional teaching related to career stages? What is the impact of new regulatory frameworks on teaching and learning styles? Do instructors seek better accommodation to the necessities and cognitive styles of 21st century "digital native" students by changing their teaching methods?

The opening article by Ferreiro provides answers to these questions. Based on survey and interview data, the author examines the extension of active methodologies in Political Science and IR classrooms of Spanish universities. The analysis of semi-structured interviews with instructors at different stages in their careers serves the purpose of digging into the reasons why instructors opt for developing an active pedagogy in their courses or prefer to stick to traditional teaching models. Results confirm the increasing adoption of active learning methods by IR and Political Science teachers, and that instructional choices are often made without prior pedagogical expertise. Results also show that instructors do not always conduct proper assessments of students' learning, which is one of the golden rules of active learning.

Second, the special section contributes to the extant literature on active teaching and learning in Political Science and IR. The last decade has witnessed the publication of volumes such as the *Handbook on Teaching and Learning in Political Science and International Relations* by Ishiyama *et al.* (2015) and *Teaching politics beyond the book. Film, Texts and, New Media* by Glover and Tagliarina (2013). These edited books provide the teaching community with a wide-ranging catalogue of works that offer orientation on everything from how to internationalize a curriculum, how to design a course syllabus, how to tackle the teaching of controversial issues, and how to teach politics with non-canonical texts. In Spain, the recent publication of an edited volume entirely devoted to teaching and learning with simulations must be mentioned —*Metodologías activas en las aulas de Ciencia Política y Relaciones Internacionales. Simulaciones de procesos políticos en organizaciones internacionales y nacionales* (Ferreiro, 2020). Top-tier journals such as *Journal of Political Science Education*, *PS: Political Science & Politics*, *International Studies Perspectives* or *Politics* also play an important role in the dissemination of scholarship on teaching and learning Political Science and IR. This monographic section hosted by *Revista Española de Ciencia Política* (RECP), thus, joins in these wider efforts.

The pieces collected in this special section have in common a focus on pedagogical and scientific value. By *pedagogical value* we mean that the articles should be of help to those teaching IR and Political Science seeking inspiration for their courses. Accordingly, the articles offer detailed descriptions of real activities conducted in real courses by the different contributors to this section. Authors argue why a particular active learning technique is adopted for a particular teaching end, and the steps taken by students for the fulfilment of intended learning outcomes.

Additionally, this collection of articles has a *scientific value*. By this, we mean that these are research pieces seeking to answer research questions and follow scientific conventions. Rather than being merely descriptive, the contributions to this section conduct different kinds of analyses. Generally, they examine the validity of active pedagogies and elucidate their potential superiority over traditional pedagogies. This concerns student acquisition of knowledge and/or enhancement of competences (objective knowledge acquisition dimension) students' perception about the acquired knowledge and the activities' intended goals (subjective dimension) and satisfaction with the learning process (attitudinal dimension). Offering evidence on the effectiveness of a technique to the fulfilment of certain learning goals requires that data on students' knowledge or level of competence are collected before and after the conduct of the activities —although each contributor to this section does this differently and according to different factors (course content, student population, learning goals, learning method, course assessment, etc.). Authors also gather evidence from metacognition sessions or exercises. Metacognition is related to thinking about the learning process and the particular situations, obstacles or challenges associated with it.

The collection encompasses Ferreiro's state of the art article and five additional research papers, all of them empirically driven. Readers of this special section will notice that only the paper by Cruz-Martínez, Soto and Benito deals with teaching a (typical) Political Science subject, whereas the articles by Díaz, Martini, and Tomé and Alaminos deal with "international issues", thus falling more easily within the International Relations category. Macías' piece stands somewhere in-between these neighboring (and complementary) disciplines. About the IR articles we can say that they have in common a concern for the teaching of critical theories, discourse, and representation. Altogether, the works in this special section offer insights and resources applicable to instructional contexts that are not necessarily identical to the ones described here.

The article by Cruz-Martínez, Soto and Benito tests the effects of game-based learning on knowledge acquisition about political systems. The experiment is run by the authors with Political Science students sitting in the mandatory course Comparative Politics. The article allows conclusions to be drawn about the varying impact on knowledge acquisition of the use of an active teaching-learning strategy (role-play) *versus* a traditional learning strategy (lecture). Each of the authors is a teacher of a group of students. Two groups are experimental, and one is a control group (namely, the group receiving traditional instruction on political systems). Based on statistical analysis of data collected throughout the activity and discourse analysis of debriefing

sessions, the article shows that retention of current and procedural knowledge is higher among the experimental groups than in the control group.

Díaz's article presents an activity that seeks to teach students how to do a postcolonial analysis of an animated drama film about Afghanistan. On a more general level, the activity aims to develop students' analytical and critical thinking skills. The activity builds on the premise that cultural narratives are embedded in all kinds of world-political texts, including films and traditional study texts. Through a thematic and narrative analysis of reflection texts written by the students, the author discusses the effectiveness of the activity for the development of the aforementioned competences and for the theoretical and practical understanding of the postcolonial approach in IR.

Macías' article offers valuable reflections on the use of the Case Method (CM) as a teaching-learning strategy. The piece presents and evaluates a pedagogical work carried out with students in a course on Contemporary Arab Political Thought. The author links a course activity centered on the analysis of the case of the shutdown of the pan-Arab newspaper *al-Hayāt* in March 2020 with learning about ideology, (Arab) nationalism, media, and capitalism. Starting from postcolonial theoretical premises, the activity manages to generate a space for critical reflection on concepts that have informed Arab political thought over the last few decades. Other than developing research skills typical of CM, in the case of students with mixed cultural backgrounds, the activity also triggers reflection on their own transcultural identity.

Martini's article presents a critical geopolitical analysis activity. The activity builds on the concept of "geopolitical code" as a central category and sets the analysis of the U.S. geopolitical code as a learning outcome. Students analyze the construction of the enemy "Saddam Hussein's regime" in the lead-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the legitimization of the War on Terror through the production of Self/Other relations. Martini's article presents a practical experience of pedagogical work based on the OPAR (Orienting, Presenting, Activity, Review) framework. The evaluation of the process sheds light on how active learning facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and the development of higher-order cognitive skills. Martini's piece also helps to underline the importance of assessing learning at different stages of the learning process.

Finally, Tomé and Alaminos' article investigates the advantages of using popular cultural texts—in this case, graphic novels—to learn about the so-called "Arab Spring". The article starts from the premise that graphic novels situate the analysis of politics at the level of individual narratives, thereby assigning value to lay people's experience of political change. The article presents an activity aimed at analysing short comic strips by Egyptian authors narrating events during the Arab Spring. The activity's learning outcomes include understanding of social movement concepts such as "window of opportunity" or "alliances", and their application to the analysis of Arab Spring graphic representations. Following a collaborative learning strategy, Tomé and Alaminos show that the critical reading of comic strips fosters the emotional connection between students "here" and young protestors from countries like Egypt.

All in all, the scholarship of teaching and learning in Political Science and International Relations is a relevant and increasingly important area in our discipline. It

seems, therefore, appropriate that the *Revista Española de Ciencia Política* provides the scholarship of teaching and learning its share within their journal. As guest editors, we hope that this selection of works will serve as an inspiration to our colleagues and as an invitation to continue to support this line of research.

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Using active methodologies in the Political Science and International Relations classrooms in Spain: Views from instructors

El uso de metodologías activas en las aulas de Ciencia Política y Relaciones Internacionales en España: las opiniones de los profesores

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Abstract

This paper highlights the classroom use of active methodologies in Political Science and International Relations in a Spanish setting. Using both surveys and in-depth interviews, it examines how extensively active methodologies are used in Spanish universities, what professors understand active methodologies to be, and how are they implemented in the classrooms. Most importantly, it seeks to understand the instructional transition made by professors that started off their professional careers as lecturers and, subsequently, decided they wanted to include active methodologies as a meaningful part of their courses. Results show an extensive use of active methodologies, although instructional choices are often made without prior pedagogical expertise, nor a proper evaluation of the student's learning experience. We conclude with some suggestions on policy recommendations that would increase the quality of teaching and improve the learning outcomes in the classrooms.

Keywords: active methodologies, teaching and learning, instructional choices.

Resumen

El artículo explora el uso de las metodologías activas en las aulas de Ciencia Política y Relaciones Internacionales en España. La investigación se sirve tanto de encuestas como de entrevistas en profundidad con el fin de averiguar cuán extendido está su uso, qué entienden los docentes por el concepto de metodologías activas y cómo se implementan en las aulas. Asimismo, se pretende entender qué factores determinaron la transición llevada a cabo por profesores que comenzaron su andadura profesional impartiendo clases magistrales y, en un momento determinado, decidieron

incluir las metodologías activas como una sustantiva de sus cursos. Los resultados muestran un uso extensivo de las metodologías activas, aunque las elecciones se suelen tomar sin un conocimiento pedagógico previo ni tampoco con una adecuada evaluación del proceso de aprendizaje por parte del alumno. Se concluye con una serie de recomendaciones encaminadas a mejorar la calidad del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje en las aulas.

Palabras clave: metodologías activas, enseñanza y aprendizaje, elecciones pedagógicas.

INTRODUCTION: A NEW EDUCATION FOR CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

The 1990s brought about a feeling of dissatisfaction with the mission of higher education in the United States. According to the Kellogg Commission, higher education was increasingly perceived as “unresponsive [...], out of touch and out of date” (Kellogg Commission, 1999: 9). Boyer determined universities were suffering from a “crisis of purpose” (Boyer, 1990: 55) and called for the concept of scholarship to be broadened to include other knowledge creation functions besides research/discovery-, namely-, integration, application, and teaching. Boyer argued that the University’s mission should cater to all these dimensions. Thus, by including teaching as a form of scholarship, Boyer highlighted its importance within higher education. While the causes of this crisis in higher education fall beyond the scope of this paper, it was in general, a response to the societal changes propelled by technology and employability and a perception that universities were not properly adapting to change.

This paper will focus on one of the consequences this identity crisis has had for higher education: the paradigm shift from a teacher-to a student-centered approach (Hansen and Stephens, 2000). This transformation has in general brought increased attention to the scholarship of teaching and learning, and this has also influenced the disciplines of Political Science and International Relations, as evidenced by the relatively recent emergence of journals and conferences devoted to teaching. Moore (2011) notes that from 2002, *PS: Political Science and Politics* started to include a section entitled “The Teacher,” while in 2004 APSA began its Teaching and Learning Conference, and one year later it also launched *The Journal of Political Science Education*.

The shift to a student-centered learning environment conveys a change in methodologies to modes of instruction akin to a constructivist conception of education. Constructivism’s original idea establishes that “knowledge and learning do not derive from a direct reading of reality or experience, but that both —reality and experience— are the result of a constructive mental activity of the individual” (Coll, 2001: 20). Learning, the theory goes, is more than an active and constructive process, but also an individual and internal process. It is individual because “students must accomplish their own process, both in the construction of meaning and in sense-giving; no-one can substitute them in this task. It is internal because learning is not the result

of a mere understanding of experience, but the upshot of a complicated construction process that implies the modification and reorganization both of the cognitive instruments and the models that serve the purpose of interpreting reality” (*ibid.*: 57).¹

Even though active methodologies are not exclusive to constructivist notions of education and are also used in other non-traditional teaching and learning paradigms, the last two decades have brought their heyday. Active learning is much discussed but to what extent is it a widespread across the Political Science and International Relations classrooms in Spain? This paper seeks to provide a state of the art of the use of active methodologies in the Political Science and International Relations classrooms of Spanish universities. To enhance this goal, this paper will explore:

- The extent to which they are used.
- What do professors understand by the notion of “active methodologies”.
- How they are implemented in the classroom and the existing structural and agency obstacles for their use.
- To understand the reasons underlying the instructional transition made by professors that started their careers lecturing and, at a certain moment, decided to include active learning methodologies as an integral part of their courses.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we explore the state of the art regarding active methodologies, their efficiency in enhancing student learning, and the breadth of their use. We then move on to the method and case selection to explain how the surveys and interviews were conducted and the thematic analysis applied to the data obtained. In the subsequent sections, we present the results showing the abovementioned aims and, lastly, we provide some policy recommendations that offer suggestions about how to move forward in order to improve the quality of university teaching in the Political Science and International Relations Spanish classrooms.

WHAT IS ACTIVE LEARNING?

As with many other concepts in social sciences, there is no agreed upon definition of active learning in the educational literature (Prince, 2004; Bonwell and Eison, 1991). Bonwell and Eison’s literature review on the topic for the annual ASCHE-ERIC Higher Education report identify a series of strategies usually associated with active learning (Bonwell and Eison, 1991: 19), as follows:

1. Students are involved in more than listening.
2. Less emphasis is placed on transmitting information and more on developing student’s skills.

1. Own translation from the original in Spanish.

3. Students are involved in higher-order thinking —analysis, synthesis, and evaluation— (Chickering and Camson, 1987 quoted in Bonwell and Eison, 1991: iii)
4. Students are engaged in activities (e.g., reading, discussing, writing).
5. Greater emphasis is placed on student’s exploration of their own attitudes and values.

From this point of departure, they suggest the following definition: “anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (Bonwell and Eison: 1991: 19). This view of active learning encompasses two dimensions which are inextricably linked. First, an activity in which the student is engaged with *doing* a certain task. Second, a closing activity to reflect upon what has been done. In more technical language, active learning involves doing something, and a further process of metacognition in which there is a reflection on the learning process.

The teacher-centered model has become known as “traditional learning” and has been characterized as “passive”, since the process of learning is understood as knowledge absorption or recording. The responsibility for learning is vested in the teacher and in what he does —or does not!— teach (Michael, 2006: 160). This labeling of “traditional” learning as “passive” is not without criticism, because many instructors claim that “all learning is inherently active and that students are therefore actively involved while listening to formal presentations” (Bonwell and Eison, 1991: iii).

A learning paradigm grounded on active methodologies involves a change in the educational sphere that comprises the following:

A change in the roles of professors and students

Instructors are no longer the “sage on stage” but the “guide on the side”. Their task is meant to be one of “facilitators” who create an appropriate environment to enhance student education. Some even see this shift as going beyond methodology to encompass a moral endeavor where the purpose of the facilitator is to enhance student growth (Hansen and Stephen, 2000: 45). For their part, learners are the actors of their own learning process. They are required to shift from a mental experience of knowledge assimilation to one of inquiry (Anthony, 1996).

A change in teaching techniques

Traditional teaching techniques include “lecture, lecture-based recitation questions, reading assignments” (Powner and Allendoerfer, 2008: 76) and “closed questions, and practice and application of information already presented” (Anthony, 1996: 350) Following Bonwell and Eison’s (1991) definition, active learning comprises a broader spectrum of possibilities encompassing “anything” including activity and reflection on learning. This includes problem-solving, investigational work, small group work,

collaborative learning, and experiential learning (Anthony, 1996). In Political Science and IR simulations, and discussions are widely used too.

IS ACTIVE LEARNING “SUPERIOR” TO TRADITIONAL LEARNING?

According to Kember’s literature review, most scholars believe the student-centered approach to be “superior” (1997: 261). On the other hand, Prince’s (2004) seminal article provides a review of the active learning literature in engineering, and he concludes that all the different modalities explored (active learning during lecture, collaborative learning, cooperative learning, and problem-based learning) have positive outcomes in learning. Michael’s (2006) contribution on another literature review assessment on active learning in the disciplines of the learning sciences of physics, chemistry, biology, and physiology shows that there is evidence active learning works both in middle school and in higher education. Michael contends that this success can be explained because students learn more when they are with others, rather than alone (*ibid.*: 161). The latter claim is also corroborated by Landemore (2012) in Political Science, where she shows that even though people can be mediocre individual reasoners, they might be good problem solvers when engaged in collective decision-making.

In IR we don’t have a meta-study nor an extensive literature review on the matter to sustain claims such as the ones made in natural sciences and engineering. Isolated case studies, seem to confirm that learning is enhanced when using active methodologies (Powner and Allendoerfer, 2008). When looking at simulations, the most widely used active methodology in our discipline, despite problems measuring their validity², several scholars have pointed out in their single case studies that, if done well, they improve student learning (Baranowski, 2007; Bernstein and Meizlish, 2003). Ferreiro’s (2020) IR literature review on simulations shows that there is a clear increase in student motivation. Motivation is something intrinsically positive for learning because “well-motivated students are generally more curious about the topic, choose more difficult tasks, are more ready to invest effort in learning in a sustained way, and are more emotionally involved in participating in learning activities” (Deci *et al.*, 1991: 327 quoted in Mikalayeva, 2016: 215).³ However, motivation should not be over-emphasized, as there is a gap between the subjective perception students have of their learning and the actual learning outcomes (Ferreiro, 2020). In the results section, specifically, on “Reasons for using active methodologies”, the reader will find further elaboration on the distance between perception of learning and actual learning.

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2. There are two main problems for assessing simulations: First, the generalized absence of control groups. Second, the measurement of learning with pre and post-test has a learning effect.
 3. Mikalayeva suggests five sources that explain increased motivation: 1) novelty effect; 2) progressive goal achievement; 3) competitiveness; 4) peer dynamics; 5) multilayered experience (Mikalayeva, 2016: 218).

DO PROFESSORS USE ACTIVE LEARNING?

Lammers and Murphy's review of the literature from the 1970s to the 1990s stresses that during those three decades, lecturing was the dominant method of college teaching and that its use increases with class size (Lammers and Murphy, 2002). In the US, throughout the 1980s "passive" learning occupied between 80% and 95% of class time (Mac Govern, 1993: 183-124, quoted in Morgan, 2033: 366).

Hartlaub and Lancaster (2008: 380) carried out a national survey in the Political Science departments of the US. They showed that 61.5% of faculty reported lecturing between 40% and 80% of the time. Whenever active learning methodologies were used, the most popular student-focused activities involved working in small groups or simulations. Hartlaub and Lancaster's findings (2008) do not show that the number of students per class, nor the personal ideology of the professor, is a relevant variable. The factors they found to have *some* effect on pedagogical choices are gender, years of experience, and rank.

Men lecture more than women (Lammers and Murphy, 2001: 56). According to Hartlaub and Lancaster's results 48% of male faculty lecture more than 61% of the time, compared with only 25% of female professors (Hartlaub and Lancaster, 2008: 382). When looking at years of experience, novices are also more predisposed towards lecturing according to Bueheler and Marcum's (2007) pilot study conducted with 12 graduate students. Their work was carried out in a large Midwestern university in the US, and it highlighted that graduate students relied on lecture even if the respondents did not consider it to be the best pedagogical tool. Moreover, there was a dissonance between the teaching philosophy of graduate instructors who considered they lectured around 50% of the time with the observations taken by the researchers which increased that figure to 75%. Non lecturing time was devoted to class discussion or class activities (Bueheler and Marcum, 2007: 32) but not to simulations, problem-based learning, collaborative or cooperative learning, or other cutting-edge active lecturing instructional methods. The gap between what people say they do and what they actually do in the classroom (Bueheler and Marcum (2007) highlights the difference between theories *of* action versus theories *in* action.

Overcoming the obstacles for implementation of proper active learning is difficult and change needs to come from beyond the classroom, at a cultural and institutional level.

TABLE 1.

SYSTEMIC OBSTACLES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVE LEARNING METHODOLOGIES

1. Student learning	Learned helplessness Student appraisal
2. Group Dynamics	Low tolerance for challenges Social loafing

3. Environmental conditions	Political correctness
	Consumer attitude
4. Evaluation demands	Peer evaluation anxiety
	Product fixation

Source: Own elaboration based on Hansen and Stephens (2000: 42-45).

Lean *et al* (2011) focus on both the institutional and agency features that impede an effective implementation of active methodologies. Their findings show that many higher education institutions give teaching innovation a low priority (*ibid.*: 35; Krain *et al.*, 2015: 148) or only make limited resources available to use new methods (Lean *et al.*, 2011: 235). In addition, there are time constrictions, both in terms of class time needed to implement these methodologies and non-class time needed to learn new strategies (Dancey and Henderson, 2010; Froyd *et al.*, 2013; Miller and Metz, 2014 as quoted in: Wright *et al.*, 2019: 53). Beliefs held by the instructor, such as fear of the unknown or lack of awareness and/or training take their toll, too (Lean *et al.*: 2011: 235). Lastly, some pedagogues are simply satisfied with the lecturing model (*id.*; Dancey and Henderson, 2010; Froyd *et al.*, 2013; Miller and Metz, 2014 quoted in: Wright *et al.*, 2019: 53).

Given the systemic character of many of these obstacles, it is worth asking what can be done, if anything, to improve active learning implementation. Universities tend to address the issue by providing teacher training courses. For instance, training university teachers has become standard in the UK, Norway, and Sri Lanka, with programs that range from 120 to 500 hours of instruction. These are sometimes linked to probation or tenure. (Gibbs and Coffey, 2004: 88). Gibbs and Coffey conducted a study in 1999/2001 covering twenty universities in eight different countries with 104 professors taking training courses. The authors reached a threefold conclusion:

- (i) training increases the extent to which professors adopt a student focus (as measured by ASTI).
- (ii) according to students, it improves teachers teaching and
- (iii) it enhances student's learning.

In contrast, in the control group —those without training— trainees became more teaching centered after a year of teaching, students did not report better teaching of their instructors or if it happened, it was deemed negative. Lastly, no evidence could be found to suggest there was a positive change in student learning” (*ibid.*: 98).

METHOD AND CASE SELECTION

This study has applied a mixed quantitative and qualitative methodology. The quantitative methodology is based on surveys (see questions in the appendix), while the qualitative method is based on interviews.

Surveys

We have applied univariate and bivariate analysis considering the variables Hartlaub and Lancaster (2008) showed exercise *some* leverage in explaining instructional choices: gender, years of teaching experience and rank. In addition, we added type of university because, in the Spanish context, private universities emphasize their work in terms of teaching innovation, and we wanted to see if any difference could be found between public and private institutions. When exploring the obstacles professors found when applying active methodologies, we used the questions from Lean *et al.*'s study (see appendix).

The last question of the survey was an open question that asked respondents why they used active methodologies. Some comments were registered as belonging to more than one category. A code was created whenever there were more than two comments alluding to the same reality. Comments with only one response were ascribed to the category "Other".

In terms of the creation of the sample, in Spain there are 39 universities with Political Science and/or IR departments (even if for some, IR is merged with other departments). However, not all 39 universities have emails of their professors available online, nor is it possible to tell in joint departments what faculty belong to IR and which to the other discipline. A Google Forms survey was sent to 31 universities⁴. In addition, it must be highlighted that adjuncts sometimes work in several universities at the same time, so it's possible that in the email list created for the survey, the same person received the email more than once because of their affiliation with different universities.

The survey was sent to a total of 1078 people, of which twenty-four bounced back because the recipient was *unknown*. Therefore, the total number of sent and received emails was of 1054. The total number of respondents was 152 which means a turn out rate of 14,42%. There is probably a self-selection bias. It is likely instructors that enjoy teaching are the ones that have answered the survey.⁵

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4. The surveys were conducted in Spanish. The excerpts that can be seen in this paper were translated into English by the author. The following universities have studies in Political Science and/or IR but do not have their faculty list available online or if they do, they cannot be contacted via email: Universidad Alfonso X El Sabio, Universidad de Navarra, Schiller University, Universidad Villanueva, EU Business School, Universidad de Burgos. Universidad Europea only had very few emails available online. Loyola Andalucía has a list of professors but not their emails, just a contact form. As I had a colleague working in Loyola university, this person sent the email with the surveys to her peers. However, I had to exclude the rest of institutions. UNED is the distance university in Spain, and it was excluded from the list because of this characteristic).
 5. One of the reviewers pointed out the turnout rate is very low. In addition, to the self-selection bias, we hypothesize that sending the interview between the 20th and 30th June (2021) once classes had finished, might have also had an effect in terms of the number of respondents. Everyone in the sample received the same generic email stating my name and surname, where I teach, why I was getting in touch and kindly asking for 5 minutes of their time to fill out the form.

Those that responded were 58,6 % (89) male and 40,8 % (62) female; 44,7 % (67) worked in private universities while 55,3 % (83) were employed by public institutions.⁶ In terms of rank, the following table shows the distribution of the sample:

TABLE 2.
RESPONDENT'S RANK⁷

Rank	N	%
Chair, professor	8	5,3
Civil servant associate	28	18,4
Private university professor	17	11,2
Non-civil servant associate	19	12,5
Assistant	22	14,5
Adjunct	44	28,9
Other categories ⁸	14	9,2

n=152.

Source: own elaboration.

It can be seen that data does not seem to match since in rank, 11,2 % of respondents report being “private university professor”, whereas the sample roughly divided in half, though it is slightly higher for professors that claim to work in a public institution (55,3 % versus 44,7 %). I believe this is due to the order of the questions since question two asked about the employer (private or public) whereas question three asks about rank. Thus, probably many of those that answered private university for question two (employer) have probably selected adjunct (*asociado*) or associate (*titular*) in rank (question 3), instead of private university professor. Given the sheer number of adjuncts in the sample, 44 people (28,9 %), this suggestion seems to bridge the gap between the number difference in both questions.

6. This question was not responded by two people, so n is 150 and not 152.

7. We have done the translations using American English as follows: *catedrático*, chair/Professor, *profesor titular* (civil servant associate), *profesor contratado doctor* (non-civil servant associate), *ayudante doctor* (assistant), *profesor asociado* (adjunct). We believe the translations for *catedrático*, *profesor titular* and *asociado* bear no problem as they have direct translations into English. Considering *ayudante doctor* is tenure-track but not yet on tenure, the most appropriate translation is assistant, whereas *contratado doctor* is a figure that does not exist in the US or the UK and is difficult to describe. It refers to a professor that has a permanent contract, therefore, they have tenure—and only under very rare circumstances can they be laid off—but they are not civil servant, like an associate.

8. Within those self-identified as other categories, we have the following: collaboration with ANECA (1), pre-doctoral researchers (1), FP personnel (1 case), intern professor (1 case), visiting professor (2 cases). 7 professors do not specify their professional category.

For the open question, we applied a very simple thematic analysis coding each comment into themes.

Interviews

Within the scope of available qualitative techniques, in this study, we have conducted interviews. Interviews serve the purpose of comprehending *what people say they do*. For this reason, our research findings are appropriate to understand theories *of* action, but cannot make any conclusions on theories *in* action, that is interviews cannot tell us anything about what professors *actually* do. While conducting interviews, our intention is to understand why there was an instructional transition for those professors who started off their careers mostly lecturing and later decided to include active learning as an integral part of their mode of instruction.

The panel is composed of knowledgeable informants; that is, scholars of Political Science and IR working in Spanish universities, some of whom not only use active methodologies in their courses, but they have also published scientific articles on active methodologies within the discipline. Informants were obtained through a convenience sample which started with colleagues of the researcher and then used snowballing to reach those professional rank categories where the author had no acquaintances in the upper stages of the professoriate career. The sample comprises twelve interviewees selected according to the independent variables of gender and rank, since Hartlaub and Lancaster (2008: 380) have noted these variables have some influence on instructional choices. I also include the years of professional experience.

However, since the situation of the Spanish public system is one of a bottleneck, with professors having an average age of 47,2 (Rodríguez, 2018), years of professional experience do not necessarily correlate to rank. There are people with many years of teaching who are still in the early stages of the academic trophic pyramid. By contrast, rank is a variable of special interest for this study because it very much relates to situations of job security and “ownership” of courses. This is key because situational stability helps dictate if professors introduce modes of instruction other than lecturing and, in general, to innovate. It is for these reasons that rank is our selected independent variable, though we do take note of the years of professional experience of each of our interviewees as a guide. We required a minimum threshold of 2 years of teaching experience. This standard was set so the interviewee could at least compare the experience of one academic year without using active methodologies and another using them. This being said, the interviewee with least teaching experience has been in academia for four years.

It must also be noted that the public and private systems have different career paths and, according to ANECA⁹ standards, a different merit accreditation system.

9. The Spanish state regulates merit to access the public and private system through a process of accreditation dependent on the Ministry of Education via a specialized agency called ANECA.

On top of this, ten different autonomous communities have their own agencies (Andalucía, Aragón, Canarias, Castilla y León, Cataluña, Comunidad Valenciana, Galicia, Islas Baleares, Madrid and Basque Country), some of which are very important in their territories (Cataluña, Basque Country). Therefore, the professional categories for selecting interviewees follow the career path of the public system established by ANECA, the national entity, as has been shown in table 2.

The twelve people interviewed belong to three state universities (located in Madrid, Barcelona, and Granada) and two private universities (neither in Madrid nor in Barcelona). Except for the category of private university (comprising two instructors), the other ten professors worked in public universities. Out of those twelve professors, ten had extensive experience abroad. Both chairs have been visiting professors in top American or UK universities for, at least, one academic year. Associate professors had predoctoral stays between two and six months —one of twelve months— abroad and multiple visiting scholar positions ranging from two or three weeks to four months. Two interviewees had postdoctoral contracts for two years or more either in the UK or a Scandinavian country. One interviewee studied the PhD in the UK and yet another one had done pre-doctoral stays in the UK and France and several visiting scholar positions in other countries. Lastly, another interviewee started her/his teaching in university, in a Latin American country before deciding to study the PhD.

TABLE 3.
INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

Category	Male	Years of teaching experience in university	Female	Years of teaching experience in university
<i>Professor/Chair</i>	✓	30	✓	20
<i>Civil servant associate</i>	✓	15	✓	22
<i>Non-civil servant associate</i>	✓	12	✓	20
<i>Assistant</i>	✓	6	✓	11
<i>Adjunct</i>	✓	4	✓	6
<i>Private university teacher</i>	✓	10	✓	6

Source: Own elaboration.

To fully guarantee the anonymity of our interviewees, we have decided not to disclose the institutional affiliations of each participant since it could be possible to trace respondents' identities through their rank and university affiliation.

“The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA), is an autonomous body whose aim is to provide external quality assurance for the Spanish Higher Education System and to contribute to its constant improvement through evaluation, certification and accreditation”. Available at: <http://www.aneca.es/eng/ANECA>.

All interviews were conducted by the author and the twelve interviewees contacted decided to participate in this research.¹⁰

The open question in the survey has been analyzed using a thematic analysis that followed an inductivist approach based on the themes that emerged from respondent's answer, while the interviews were also analyzed following a thematic analysis but the approach deductive as it was premised on the following categories:

- Role of professor in education
- Role of the student in education
- Conceptions on teaching and learning

Ten interviews were conducted in July and August 2021, while the remaining two took place in December 2021 and January 2022. All were carried out through MEEET and recorded only via audio. All the material was processed manually without the help of any qualitative software.

RESULTS

The use of active methodologies in class

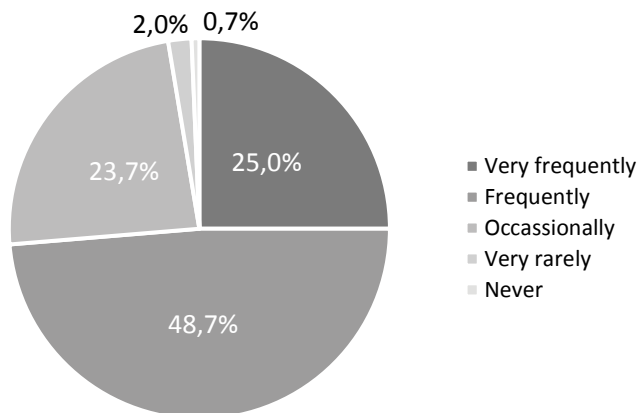
Taking the survey results at face value it would seem using active methodologies is mainstream in the Political Science and International Relations classrooms: 73,7% respondents claim to use active methodologies *Very Frequently* (25%) and *Frequently* (48,7%) versus 23,7% that say *Occasionally* and 3,7% that respond to as *Very Rarely* (3%) or *never* (0,7%).

These results should be approached with caution as they are somewhat counter-intuitive to our daily university experience. We hypothesize the following might explain the alleged high use of active methodologies. First, there is probably self-selection bias in the respondent base since it is likely that instructors that enjoy teaching are the ones who have answered the survey. For instance, when conducting the interviews, almost everyone mentioned at some point they enjoy investing time in their students ("The truth is I like students, I like my students, I like devoting time to them". Civil servant associate, female). Second, as lecturing comes across as a *démodé* form of instruction, the self-perception one has of their own teaching performance implies there might be a desirability bias.

10. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and the excerpts included in this paper were translated into English by the author. Although private universities also have adjunct professors, we did not include this category and just focused on full-time faculty in the interviews because we found it redundant to include adjuncts from both the public and the private system as they both share the common feature of holding other jobs.

FIGURE 1.

USE OF ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES IN THE CLASSROOM (Q.6)



Source: Own elaboration.

Lastly, as the interviews show, there might be a misconception of what constitutes active methodologies. Of the twelve professors interviewed, two people (16,7%) thought active methodologies were exclusively related to student engagement and participation with the course, while 10 (83,3%) said it was related to a process of students creating their own knowledge or as some sort of co-learning. Only one instructor (3%) included reflection on the process of learning as a distinct feature of active methodologies. Lastly, one of the interviewees suggested that, in addition to student commitment to the course, a methodology, if it is to be considered active, must be linked to the professional world (non-civil servant associate, male).

In the “engagement” perspective —though not exclusive to it— active methodologies implementation is put into practice without a prior reflection on teaching pedagogy. Active methodologies were included within the repertoire of teaching because it was seen as “enriching”. Surprisingly, one of the instructors did not know what they were about: “[...] it seems to me that they include participation. However, I am no expert in these concepts on teaching and pedagogy. I assume it is something more interactive. I don’t know what the concept means. My answer is, mainly, class debates. I mean to raise questions and present scenarios. This is what I usually do” (Civil servant associate, male)¹¹.

Amongst the instructors that inscribed active methodologies as a process of self-construction of knowledge, their underlying conception of education is constructivist,

11. Given this answer we asked him about specific teaching techniques and this professor in question had been using simulations for years. However, he was not aware that what he was doing was called an “active methodology”.

which they understood as a process of co-learning where you *learn to learn*, and the traditional roles of professor and teacher are reversed: “Active methodologies are a way of reversing the roles. Students are not just listening and absorbing a percentage of what I am saying [...] what is fun and interesting is that active methodologies force you to ‘wake up’ in class and work to activate knowledge. [...] it also sets in motion skills that are not only rational or cognitive, such as artistic or cognitive skills, even surprise” (assistant, female).

Lecturers think that a reversal of the roles implies that students have a say in *what* or *how* they are going to be taught:

[...] I share the syllabus with students, and I give them the opportunity of saying, “ok, we are going to see this”, but we can model it to see what case studies to explore. For example, in Latin America, they want to look at Venezuela [...], so it’s not only the process of learning but *what* we are going to learn”. (Assistant, male).

An active methodology teaches you to learn and is in constant evolution [...]. I think it changes the focus of knowledge. The traditional axis always follows a traditional path, from the professor to the student. The professor knows and the student learns. Active methodologies are bi-directional. I learn a lot because when they learn in a different way, I also learn [...]. [Active methodologies] are about what is important for them and how to reason so they learn what *you think is important*, but from where they want that learning to come from (Adjunct, female).

Interestingly, even as the last two answer state there is a change to a student-centered approach, the professor still holds the upper hand and sets the “menu” that students must choose from. Thus, the so-called change revolves around *how* a certain content is learned, not about *what* they learn.

In this constructivist discourse, there is a variant highlighted by an instructor that contends active methodologies are instrumental to equip students with the skills deemed necessary for the professional world:

[...] students participate in the creation of knowledge and [...] provides them with something useful professionally. I think that something that engages students a lot is still an academic activity. For example, discussing something in depth, which is departing from student’s presentations, let’s say the last book of some scholar. This is very interesting. But, for me, it is not an active methodology. It is an activity with more similarities with research than with the professional world (non-civil servant associate, male).

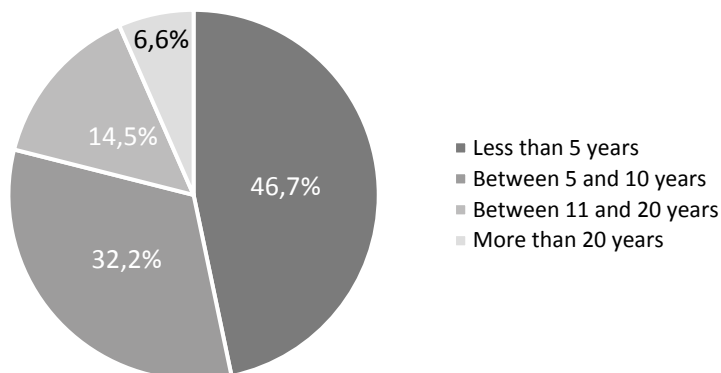
Despite the underlying constructivist approach to education of most of our interviewees, it has already been stated that reflection is not highlighted as a feature characterizing active methodologies. Thus, including a specific metacognitive activity to reflect on the process of learning is rarely included as part of the teaching practice. It must be clarified that when doing simulations, instructors include a debriefing time at

the end, but this is more a way to “close” the class exercise than a constructivist activity to “learn how we’ve learned” kind of scheme.

Most importantly, the application of active methodologies is done in an informal and non-systematic way. Only three (25 %) of the professors interviewed measured learning outcomes of the activities they implement in class. Here, rank is important as those that include scientific measurement of their teaching techniques are an adjunct and both assistants. Two of them measure knowledge before and after the activity while the latter makes the student take a survey. The most common practice instructors is to grade the activity as part of the final course grade. Others take non-systematic feedback from students: “If you mean an evaluation of the methodology of learning [...], I do not use specific measurement indicators, though I could do it. I ground myself on the subjective impression I get from experience: for instance, how, many students participate in a debate in the classroom and the quality of comments and the questions they raise” (Non civil servant associate).

FIGURE 2.

LENGTH OF TIME OF USE OF ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES (Q8)



Source: Own elaboration.

The lack of systematic assessment results from the fact that active learning implementation is a somewhat recent development. Almost half of the survey respondents (46,7 %) declare that they have been implementing them for less than five years, while one third (32,2 %) indicate they have been working with them for the last six to ten years. Only 14,5 % mention their use between eleven and twenty years and a bare 6,6 % for more than 20 years. The findings seem to confirm that the paradigm change is the consequence brought about by the Bologna Process. Our interviews show that professors that have been longer in teaching mention that they started including “intuitively” class dynamics that fostered more student participation but without knowing their attempts were active methodologies (civil servant associate, female).

TABLE 4.

USE OF ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES BY SEX, AGE AND UNIVERSITY TITULARITY

Data in %	Sample total	Gender		Age			Type of university	
		Men	Women	20 to 39 years old	40 to 50 years old	More than 50 years old	Private University	Public University
<i>Very Frequently and Frequently</i>	73,7	71,9	75,8	68,2	76,8	75	77,6	69,9
<i>Very Frequently</i>	25	22,5	29	15,9	30,4	26,9	31,3	19,3
<i>Frequently</i>	48,7	49,4	46,8	52,3	46,4	48,1	46,3	50,6
<i>Occasionally</i>	23,7	24,7	22,6	31,8	17,9	23,1	19,4	27,7
<i>Very rarely</i>	2	3,4	0	0	3,6	1,9	3	1,2
<i>Never</i>	0,7	0	1,6	0	1,8	0	0	1,2
<i>Sample (n)</i>	152	89	62	44	56	52	67	83

Source: Own elaboration.

Gender

Even though we have no data available to determine whether males or females lecture more, our results show that the difference in the use of active methodologies between men and women is almost insignificant. Males mention that they use them *very frequently* and *frequently* in 71,9% of cases whereas women declare the same thing for 75,8% of cases. On the other side of the spectrum, those that *very rarely* or use them, the answers of men (2,7%) and women (3,4%) are also very similar. Thus, our findings do not seem to go in the same direction as the literature that pointed out the men lecture more (Lammers and Murphy, 2002).

Age

Consistent with the literature, at the beginning of the professional career, instructors use active methodologies less than when they become more experienced. However, the results obtained in this study show a very high use of this mode of instruction in whatever career stage: Among people aged 20 to 39, 68,2% affirm they use them *frequently* or *very frequently* (68,2%) versus the cohort between 41—and 50—year-olds (76,8%) or those above 50 (75%).

Type of university

Private universities are known to pride themselves for their student-oriented emphasis. Therefore, according to expectations, results show they use active methodologies more

(77,65 % say they use them *very frequently* or *frequently*), than in public institutions (69,9%).

TABLE 5.

USE OF ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES BY RANK AND YEARS DEVOTED TO TEACHING

Data in %	Total sample	Rank			Years devoted to teaching				
		Chairs and civil servant Associate	Private uni lecturer Non-civil servant associate, Assistant	Adjunct	Less than 5	Between 6 and 10	Between 11 and 15	Between 16 and 25	More than 25
Very frequently + Frequently	73,7	88,9	70,7	65,9	60,9	74,4	66,7	79,5	85
Very Frequently	25	36,1	25,9	18,2	17,4	23,3	29,6	25,6	30
Frequently	48,7	52,8	44,8	47,7	43,5	51,2	37	53,8	55
Ocasionally	23,7	11,1	27,6	27,3	34,8	25,6	29,6	15,4	15
Very rarely	2	0	0	6,8	4,3	0	3,7	2,6	0
Never	0,7	0	1,7	0	0	0	0	2,6	0
Sample (n)	152	36	58	44	23	43	27	39	20

Source: Own elaboration.

The higher up the rank and the longer the respondent has been in teaching, the more active methodologies are applied. The percentage of chairs and civil servant associates that claim to use active methodologies *very frequently* or *frequently* is very high (88,9 %) whereas for non-civil servant associates, assistant professors/private university instructors the number decreases to 70,7 % and 65,9 % for adjuncts. On the other side of the spectrum, amongst those that do not usually use them, it is only 11,1 % among chairs versus almost one third non-civil servant associates, assistant professors/private university instructors (27,6 %) and adjuncts (27,3 %).

Lecturers with more than 25 years of professional experience state that they use them *very frequently* or *frequently* (85 %) versus a decreasing percentage for the rest: 79,5 % for those with between 15 and 25 years of professional experience, 66,7 % for people with 10 to 15 years of experience and 60,9 % of those with less than 5 years of experience. In a middle ground lay people with between 5 and 10 years of professional experience (74,4 %).

These findings are consistent with the literature on professoriate development. Following Nyquist and Wulff (1996: 20) professors go through a process of evolution in different teacher related dimensions: concerns, discourse, approach to authority and students. Regarding the dimension of teachers concerns, instructors undergo three different stages. In the early days, instructors think about self-survival, and they are worried about whether they are going to be liked by students.

From our interviews, we gather they want to know as much as possible of the topic they are going to lecture on. Feeling they “know” enhances their sense of control and security. Since this stage is characterized by self-focus, it’s not possible to go beyond content-grounded and transmission centered classes: “You start off with very dense classes, a lot of content, very prepared. I have evolved towards lighter, less dense, and less structured classes” (chair, male).

The second phase is the skills stage. It is during this stage when instructors focus on teaching methods, what makes for effective teaching, and when they begin to take an interest in assessment and learning. It is then, that instructors start widening their teaching repertoire:

When I started at X university¹², I had already a 10-year trajectory [outside academia, plus 7 years in higher education], so I designed the theoretical and practical classes I saw fit. I was resolved. I was not 21 [anymore] and I did not need to show I had read all of Marx [...]. At 35, at a personal level [...] it’s not the same, you are not so insecure. I think it is both variables, a personal/experiential level, and the level of the course [you are teaching] (assistant female).

In the outcome stage, the focus of attention is on student learning. We believe only two interviewees can be placed in this category, with both at the highest level of the professional career spectrum (chairs) and with more than 20 years of teaching experience. One of the interviewees explains his conception of engagement has stretched beyond the relationship of the student with the course. Now, he includes the link established with the student as one that must be grounded in empathy and that sees the person holistically, not just the role he plays in class. Nyquist and Wulff label this approach as post-socialized because they understand that a “collaborative effort [is] required for student learning to occur” (1996: 20):

I have grown closer to students [...]. It is easier now and far more attractive to approach them, listen to them, talk to them to see what they say, what they think [...].

Active methodologies require establishing relationships with students and these need to be based on trust. You can’t build things with others; you can’t learn when you are departing from mistrust [...]. It is difficult to connect with others because we have no idea of who they are. We do not know their problems or difficulties (Professor, male).

The table shows gender differences. Women are latecomers to the use of active methodologies. 53,2% of women have been using them for less than five years versus 42,7% of their male counterparts. The trend is the same for those using active methodologies for the last 5 to 10 years: 38,2% of men versus 22,6% of

12. To preserve the anonymity of the respondent, we choose not to name the university.

women, although it significantly decreases for instructors with between ten and twenty years of professional experience where men account for 14,5 % and women 12,4 % and no gender differences can be found beyond twenty years of teaching experience.

TABLE 6.

YEARS USING ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES BY SEX, AGE, AND TYPE OF UNIVERSITY

Data in %	Total sample	Sex		Age			Type of university	
		Men	Women	20 to 39	40 to 50	> 50	Private University	Public University
Less than 5 years	46,7	42,7	53,2	68,2	42,9	32,7	53,7	41
Between 5 and 10 years	32,2	38,2	22,6	31,8	37,5	26,9	29,9	33,7
Between 11 and 20 years	14,5	12,4	17,7	0	17,9	23,1	11,9	16,9
More than 20 years	6,6	6,7	6,5	0	1,8	17,3	4,5	8,4
<i>Sample (n)</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>83</i>

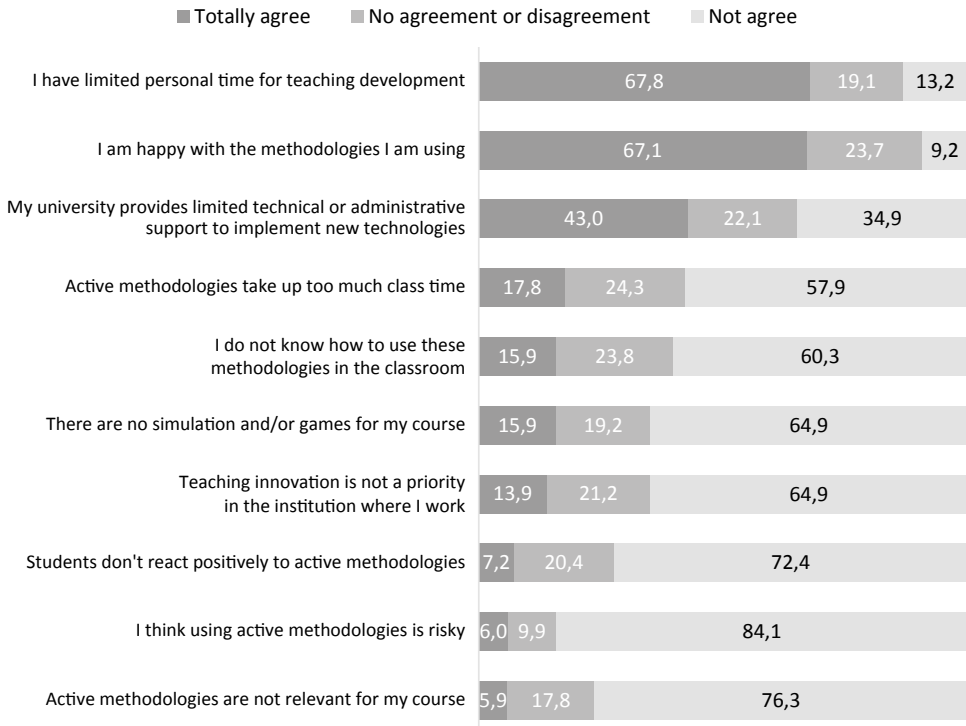
Source: Own elaboration.

Interestingly, when looking at the intersection between number of years applying active methodologies and titularity of the university, we can see 53,7 % of teachers in public universities have been using active methodologies for less than five years compared to the 41 % pointed out by those in private ones. When looking at the next category, from 5 to 10 years, we see results revolve around one third, not quite reaching it in the case of private universities (29 %) while slightly exceeding it in the case of public institutions (33 %). This small difference is repeated in the next stages, that is, both between 11 and 20 years (11,9 % private versus 16,9 % public) and those using them for more than 20 years (4,5 % private compared to 8,4 % public). In all, the results shed light to the fact that public universities have been using active methodologies for longer. This finding contradicts the assumption of teaching innovation in private institutions.

Although the ten questions are the ones used in Lean *et al.*'s study (2011), we have grouped them into four, not three, different groups:

- a. Institutional factors
- b. Lack of resources
- c. Pertinence of active methodologies
- d. Factors related to the professor

FIGURE 3.
OBSTACLES FOR THE USE OF ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES IN PERCENTAGE (Q. 7)



Source: own elaboration using *Lean et al.*'s questions (2011).

Institutional factors

Question seven shows that more than half of the respondents (64,9%) disagree with the contention that teaching innovation is not a priority in their institution. Just 15,9% have this perception of their institution. From this result, it can be inferred that universities value teaching innovation. This inference is consistent with other studies that point to the importance universities give to the scholarship of teaching and learning, though it is also highlighted how “this area of work is especially vulnerable in times of trouble” (*Krain et al.*, 2015: 148).

Lack of resources

If the inference that universities value teaching innovation is correct, then it is paradoxical that not even half of the sample (43%) agree with the assertion that their

university provides support, technical or administrative (Q3) to implement new technologies whereas more than one third (34,9%) disagree. Therefore, even if teaching innovation is valued by universities, the means available for implementation, according to a good number of the faculty, seem to be insufficient.

Factors related to pertinence of active methodologies

The following questions are grouped according to the pertinence of using active methodologies. Firstly, it is important to highlight that more than half of the sample of Spanish scholars disagrees (57,9%) with the claim that *active methodologies consume too much class time (Q4)*. This contrasts with Bonwell and Eason's (1991: iv) literature revision in which they point that scholars were concerned of "adequately covering the assigned course content in the limited class time available".

Question 10 explores respondents' opinion on whether they find *active methodologies pertinent for their course*: more than two thirds 76,3% disagree with the claim they are *not* pertinent versus just 5,9% that agree with this view. In addition, professors are acquainted with the availability of active methodologies in their discipline as only 15,9% consider *there are no simulations and/or games (Q6)* in their area, whereas 64,9% disagree.

Lastly, only 5,9% agree with the affirmation that *students do not react positively to these methodologies (Q8)*, in contrast to 84,1 that disagree.

In brief, professors see the pertinence of using active methodologies, they do not believe they "consume" an excessive amount of class time, and they think that students react positively to this mode of instruction.

Factors related to the professor

When asked about personal time available for teaching development (Q1), 67,8% agree with the claim they lack the time needed for this endeavor. In addition, the same percentage (67,8%) claim they are satisfied with the methodologies they are currently using (Q2) whatever these might be. Just 15,9% agree with the assertion that they don't know how to use active methodologies (Q5) and only 6% agree with the contention that they *find it risky to use active methodologies (Q9)*.

Overall, the results presented on the obstacles to active learning implementation shed light on agreement percentages below 20% highlighting there are no issues seen as major obstacles, except perhaps the institution's lack of resources. Lack of personal time for teaching development is mentioned, but it does not seem to affect the implementation of active methodologies that, in this sample, is widespread. Paradoxically, in the interviews a significant number of professors pointed to class size as the major obstacle for a proper implementation. Lack of skill of the instructor to teach himself/

herself to apply them properly or student's insufficient interest were also mentioned as major impediments.

Reasons for using active methodologies

The last survey question was open, so respondents could answer as they saw fit why they use active methodologies.¹³

The themes have been ordered according to the number of responses in table 7. It is interesting to see the widespread agreement among more than one third of respondents (56) that active learning methodologies have a capacity to engage students, either by increasing their motivation or their interest either in the course or capturing their attention. The next theme shows that 53 respondents claim students learn more this way.

The rationale underlying this argumentation is that motivated students learn more. These enthusiastic responses of the political science community of Spanish academia contrast with findings in the literature in which professors raised concerns that active learning techniques were inadequate “for achieving higher learning levels with complicated material” (Cooper, 1995; Gerlach, 1994; Lord 2001 quoted in Machemer and Crawford, 2007: 12).

Interestingly, the joined results of several simulations conducted in Spanish universities —both public and private— with individuals in all stages of the bachelor's degree show that when applying this active methodology, students seemed to find concept application the most difficult to accomplish. It seems that, despite the methodology used — “traditional” or active—, students face similar difficulties in their learning (Ferreiro, 2020: 300).

There is also a gap between perception and learning outcomes. Students are as optimistic as their professors about their learning when using active methodologies. However, when actual learning outcomes are measured, the reality is a humbler (*ibid.*). This is an important feature to highlight so we do not raise unrealistic expectations about the learning potential of these methodologies.

At great distance, we see respondents believing “they have a practical/real world dimension” (15). This feature is also highly valued by students that want their university studies to enhance their employment possibilities (Cousinou and Inguanzo, 2020: 265).

We find specially telling themes five (*It facilitates better teaching*) and seven (*I enjoy using them*) because we believe they might depict the instructor has a teacher centered conception of learning, although the repertoire includes active methodologies. It is interesting for future research to see whether active methodologies can be used effectively in terms of learning outcomes by professors holding a different conception of learning or, if alternatively, this inconsistency between teaching beliefs and practices has an impact in students' learning.

13. The category “I do not use them” has not been included in the table because in none of the nine comments there were any reasons provided beyond the claim of not using them.

Professors presume positive reactions from students when using active methodologies (theme six “Students show positive reactions to active methodologies”), and this is one of the reasons why they are used. However, student culture can be reluctant to change: “Students perceive innovative teaching techniques in a negative light—reacting nervously to new approaches that press for greater critical and analytical thinking or perceiving them as signs of faculty laziness in not providing information in the traditional lecture format” (Whadar, 2012; Innoue, 2012 quoted in Krain *et al.*, 2015: 148). This negative perception may be due to students holding more teacher-oriented conceptions of teaching than professors (Pauler-Küpinger and Jucks, 2017). So, if active methodologies are to be implemented effectively, students must be previously prepared. This matter also emerged in the interviews.

None of the respondents mentions problems when students work together. Machemer and Crawford’s study citing Cooper and Gerlach (1994) and Lord (2001) points to the “problem of students lacking prerequisite skills to work in teams” (Machemer and Crawford, 2007:12). On the other hand, Ferreiros’ conclusion (2020) on different simulations conducted in different universities and undergraduate years, shows that students enjoy simulations more as freshmen than as juniors and seniors. Working in groups is precisely what older students dislike.

Theme 8 “Student assessment” (2 responses) shows that respondents find active methodologies a better way of evaluating students. This particular question was quite generalized in the interviews where instructors disapprove of exams as a mode of assessment, either because it prevents professors from making them work throughout the semester as they “gamble everything in a final exam” (chair, female) or because they are an inadequate way of testing learning. Three different interviewees used the expression to “vomit information” in the exam; a very graphic metaphor of something that is not properly mulled over.

When looking at theme 9, *teaching innovation*, we hypothesize from our interviews, that the rationale for providing this answer might be linked to the self-image instructors have of their own teaching practice. There is a narrative among instructors, that does not make distinctions in terms of rank or gender, about how their instructional methods had been questioned by superiors or peers: “I did it as labor of love. I invested time and effort, and everyone told me: ‘why do you waste your time with those things?’. Mind me, it was very symbolic when the dean offered a euro to finance my activity” (chair, female). “When I began [...] implementing my way of work [...], I was looked in a VERY WEIRD way” (adjunct, male).

In addition to the open question, the interviews shed further light as to why professors that started off their careers as content-oriented instructors decided to shift to a model of classes that includes active methodologies. All participants, whatever their professional rank or gender share, to varying degrees, a feeling of *dissatisfaction* with the lecture model that did not work for them when they were students or now as professors. Opinions illustrate a stereotyped, almost caricatured depiction of this mode of instruction ranging from “boring” to “conservative” and “not open to change”: “Most of my professors were just very boring and many were not even up to date with their readings” (Assistant, male).

TABLE 7.
THEMES THAT EXPLAIN THE USE OF ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES. SURVEYS

Theme	Verbatim
1. Enhances student engagement by increasing motivation, interest and/or attention (56) ¹⁴	<p>“They stimulate students to incentivize their participation and engagement in learning about the course”</p> <p>“As a way of attracting interest for a course with a significant theoretical workload”</p> <p>“The student learns more and it’s a nicer way of working”</p>
2. It improves student’s learning (53)	<p>“They improve student performance, they collaborate more amongst each other, it improves their leadership skills and self-confidence, they resolve problems better, etc.”</p> <p>“The student learns more and it’s a nicer way of working”</p>
3. They have a practical/ “real world dimension” (15)	<p>“The class should be a space for learning, and you do not learn as much listening than practicing”.</p> <p>“I use practical teaching so students can incarnate actors and policy makers resolving complex problems”.</p>
5. It facilitates better teaching (8)	<p>“I believe in them because of their pedagogical potential”</p> <p>It is an effective way of transmitting knowledge”</p>
6. Students show positive reactions to active methodologies (6)	<p>“Although they sometimes show some reluctance, they end up enjoying these methodologies and they are thankful”.</p> <p>“They are more adaptable and prepare students for their professional life in IR. Students are very happy”.</p>
7. I enjoy using them (3)	<p>“As a professor, I enjoy them [active methodologies] more”.</p> <p>“My job as a professor is more fun and gratifying”</p>
8. Student’s Assessment (2)	<p>“They improve students’ performance [...] and help in a more just student evaluation”.</p> <p>“It allows for evaluating learning in a more pedagogical manner”.</p>
9. Teaching innovation (2)	<p>“For teaching innovation”</p>
1. Other (13)	<p>“To improve”</p> <p>“To adapt to current students”</p>

Source: Own elaboration(n=150)¹⁵.

14. In brackets, the number of comments in each category.

15. The number of comments exceeds 152 because some comments have been categorized in more than one of them.

There is also a sense that Gen Z has decreased attention spans and professors need to adapt: “The model of lecture that works very well needs engaged students [...] actively listening for an hour or an hour and a half. I don’t think that is the average of students today” (Private university professor, female).

Others report to be just more comfortable taking on a *guide on the side* model: “I am always a companion, never imposing [...]. I have never put myself above students, I have always worked with them in a very collaborative fashion: I am a very close person” (Adjunct, female). “I prefer the term [...] ‘instructor’ you are here to guide, to guide rather than to transmit things” (Private University Professor, male).

This need to depart from a *sage on stage* type of teaching was more acute in adjuncts and private university professors that also decoupled the concept of expertise from that of learning:

The best teacher is not the one with 4 master’s degrees and 7 undergrads, along with honors in all courses. Far from it [...]. You can know a lot about something but, currently, what is required is that you are able to transmit it and you distinguish yourself from the rest. To do this you need to control several methodologies, be creative, in a way. Creativity with empirical knowledge, with a grounding that can be measured, right? (Adjunct, male).

You can be a very good teacher without necessarily being number one in that topic (private university teacher, female).

Many of the interviewees admitted, with different self-justifications, that the reason for including active methodologies as part of their teaching repertoire was due to being overwhelmed by lecture preparation and thinking that introducing such activities was a useful way of eating up class time. Several people used the expression “making a virtue out of necessity”:

The ideal situation is to sit in my house and think of a teaching strategy and put it into practice. My reality is that I teach 30 credits [per year] and I don’t have time for that [...]. So, it’s *making a virtue out of necessity*. This [teaching] needs to go far quicker and it is interesting to construct knowledge in a different way [...]. I think the first time you use an active methodology one believes it’s a way of saving time (Private university teacher, female).

Only those that had studied their PhD or spend a significant period of their formative years abroad as postdocs started their teaching practice with some previous theoretical knowledge on the matter. These pedagogical notions better equipped them to shift their teaching repertoire when they felt sufficiently prepared: “I had been invited to a seminar on how to do videos and I did not want to look ‘*bad*’, so I went. I realized there were possibilities for innovation, but it was not until a year or two later that I could make modifications [...]. That course opened my mind” (Assistant, male).

CONCLUSION

This paper has assessed the state of the art regarding the use of active methodologies in the Political Science and International Relations classrooms in Spain. The article has shed light on the conception professors have of these methodologies and how they are being applied. It is not a discovery to state that there has been a change in terms of the expert knowledge a professor believes they should possess to teach. Many of the instructors interviewed —though certainly more acute in those in the lower echelons of academia—, do not regard in-depth mastery of their area of research as a feature that makes a “good teacher”. This shift towards a *guide on the side* role model goes hand in hand with the increased valorization that teaching should be focused on applied knowledge. After all, the argument goes, information is easily accessible “out there”, so there is no longer a need to absorb information that can be googled.

In relation to the key variables of gender, rank, and years of teaching experience (Hartlaub and Lancaster, 2008) it was found that men use active methodologies slightly more than women, and that more teaching experience and higher advancement in the professoriate career ladder led to more extended use of active methodologies. It is also worth mentioning that even though private universities use these methodologies in the classrooms with slightly greater frequency, it is incorrect to think private institutions innovate more in teaching, since public universities have been using active methodologies over a longer time period.

Our results should be taken with caution. Firstly, the survey response rate is of only 14,42%. This probably explains why the apparent widespread use of active methodologies obtained in this sample is counterintuitive to our daily experience in university.

Second, interviews are conducted with professors that openly favor the use of active methodologies. In any case, even if the results were an accurate picture of our classrooms, the stage of development of active learning is still embryonic. Our qualitative data puts us on our guard and nuances the excess of optimism that could be drawn from the quantitative results. Interviews highlight that not everyone using active methodologies know what they are about. But even when the instructor has an informed idea of how they can enhance student learning, there is barely any measurement of the learning outcomes from deploying these kinds of methodologies. The most common way of evaluating whether active methodologies work is assessing the active learning activity through a grade. There is no assessment *per se* of the mode of instruction rather of the associated deliverable. In the few cases where there is an evaluation of the activity, most often the analysis is based on a non-systematized student perception feedback. Yet we know there is a gap between the perception of learning that students hold and the actual learning outcomes; the latter tend to be humbler than the high expectations they raise. As a result of this lack of assessment, we can say that the existing scholarship is at a level of describing individual experiences, rather than grounding teaching practice in solid scientific research. This is somewhat paradoxical since teaching innovation projects are acquiring an increasing importance across universities. It seems instructors

want to be at the edge of teaching innovation and active methodologies fill this void since they come across as “progressive” while lecturing is perceived as “conservative”, “boring” or grounded on assessment practices that enhance “vomiting information”. Moving forward, more effort should be invested in properly assessing learning outcomes, rather than in the current “try and see” model.

We want to end this paper by suggesting some policy recommendations, ranked in order of importance, that seem *sine qua non* conditions to increase the standards of teaching and learning in the Political Science and International Relations classrooms:

Include teacher training programs as an integral part of the professional career

The minister of Universities, Joan Subirats, has contended (in February 2022) that Spain must end with the “anomaly” (Sánchez Caballero, 2022) of not providing teacher training to future professors and that universities must “stop being the exception” (ibid). Thus, the Future Organic Law of the University System—in effect in 2023—will include teaching courses for assistants during the first of their six years in the post. The form and content of this training is still to be determined, but it will incorporate instruction on teaching methodologies. The innovation units of each university will be responsible for providing this schooling to their staff.

The proposal has not been without criticism. It has been argued that assistants already have quite an extensive teaching experience which is obvious to anyone aware of the average age professors get their first full-time post in Spanish universities. Although there is widespread agreement in the university community on the need for teacher training, many believe that this kind of program should be implemented during the PhD formative years.

Interviews show that the reason why professors choose to use active methodologies for the first time is their need to shorten lecture, and to consume classroom time. Left to their own devices, instructors try to do things to the best of their ability. Some self-train, but more commonly instructors learn through trial and error. It goes without saying that experimentation without some previous theoretical knowledge on what is to be achieved can result in a poor application of active methodologies and puts student learning at risk. Even if junior faculty are not able to immediately apply to the classroom what they’ve just learned, training is key to provide knowledge on how to proceed for the future when they feel capable of putting into practice what they have learned. Back in 1990, Boyer’s seminal article made a call to make teacher training a necessary requirement for PhD candidates. Let’s follow his advice! Let’s not wait until they hold an assistant position in their late thirties!

Overall, we contend this future law proposal is insufficient. Teaching excellence is not something that you learn once and you are set for life. We do not apply this rationale to research. Quite the contrary, the PhD is the first piece of research one does in a professoriate career. If university professors are both researchers and teachers, the same logic should apply. However, there is no system of incentives to become a

better teacher. Investing time in teaching does not increase scholar prestige, nor does it impact salary increase. Certainly, there is improvement in making teacher training compulsory, but teaching excellence cannot be achieved unless there is a valorization of instruction as an integral part of a professoriate career.

Overhauling the current system is a titanic task. Let's start with short-time measures and enrich the future law by making ANECA require in *all* different level accreditations (yes, civil servants and chairs too!) that the candidate meets the following requirements:

- A number of teaching hours experience¹⁶.
- A number of teaching training hours completed for each professoriate category.
- Several publications in teaching within the discipline of expertise.

Lastly, make those units of innovation in universities more than course providers and establish routinized class observations as a way of fostering teaching excellence for *all* faculty. Right now, we only know what happens in classes through student evaluations. And, no, student evaluations cannot be taken as the measure of teaching distinction, the reasons for which are not pertinent in this article. Suffice it to say there is abundant literature that explains the biases of this evaluation method.

Remove obstacles to implement active learning

There is sufficient evidence that active methodologies enhance student learning better than lecture, but for this advantage to play out, they need to be properly applied. It has been seen that the obstacles concerning its application go beyond the instructor and should be addressed institutionally. Results shed light to the fact that universities are concerned with teaching innovation, but they do not put the necessary means to live up to their expectations. Professors on their part believe active methodologies are a pertinent mode of instruction and that students mostly react well to them. However, they claim to have no time for teaching development. Rightly so, we believe, if investing time on teaching improvement does not pay off in terms of career advancement.

The call for including the scholarship of teaching and learning as part of a professoriate career cannot become a reality if higher education institutions do not have an incentive to go along this path. Student retention is certainly one of them. Bearing in mind Spain's low natality rate, it goes without saying that in a not so far away future, Spanish universities will be struggling against each other for students. Offering active methodologies as an integral part of courses might win the hearts of our youngsters.

16. This measure is already in place.

In addition, it is our contention that ANECA, when validating programs from different universities, should include that institutions provide *compulsory* teacher training—which most already do on a voluntary basis—and, most importantly, a path of professional advancement grounded on teaching excellence as a basic requirement to meet quality standards.

Rehabilitation of the lecture model

Given the sheer number of students per course both in public and many private universities, it does not seem reasonable to predict lecturing is going to disappear any time soon. Our interviews show that lecturing's bad reputation is based on a stereotyped and simplified notion of what this model can do for students. Certainly, lecturing can be performed poorly. Overcoming this deficiency and training scholars to excel in lecturing is a challenge that lies ahead if we want to improve the quality of student learning. What is at stake is sufficiently important not to fall under the spell of obsessively trying to innovate for the sake of it. Rather, good teaching should be grounded on sound scientific knowledge and following García-Pérez (2021) on best practice.

To outcast the hegemonic model of instruction with pejorative tags and consider what we do most of the time as long bygone is an unnecessary burden.

For the sake of the future generations, let's improve our mostly used model and work for a brighter methodological future where blended modes of instruction combining lecturing and active methodologies at a level of tested excellence become the new tide of the day. Let's join Boyer's call to action and provide the scholarship of teaching and learning the place it should have in a professoriate career!

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APPENDIX

Q1. Sex

- a. Men
- b. Woman
- c. Other

Q2. I work in a university of -----titularity

- a. Public
- b. Private
- c. University School¹⁷
- d. Other (specify)

Q3. Professional rank

- a. Catedrático (professor)
- b. Profesor titular (associate)
- c. Private university professor
- d. Profesor contratado doctor (permanent assistant)
- e. Profesor ayudante doctor (assistant).
- f. Profesor asociado (adjunct)

Q4. Age

- a. 20 to 30 years old
- b. 31 to 40 years old

17. En español, colegio universitario.

- c. 41 to 50 years old
- d. 51 to 60 years old
- e. More than 61

Q5. Years devoted to teaching

- a. Less than 5
- b. Between 6 and 10.
- c. Between 11 and 15
- d. Between 16 and 25
- e. More than 25

Q6. Do you use active methodologies in class:

- a. Very frequently
- b. Frequently
- c. Occasionally
- d. Almost never
- e. Never

Q7. You can see a list of claims related to the main obstacles when implementing active methodologies. Provide the extent of your agreement to each one of them (*totally agree, no agreement or disagreement, not agree*).

- I have limited personal time for teaching development
- I am happy with the methodologies I am using
- University provides with support (eg, technical or administrative to use new methodologies, active methodologies take up too much class time).
- I do not know how to use these methodologies in the classroom.
- There are no simulation and/or games for my course.
- Teaching innovation is not a priority in the institution where I work.
- I think it is risky to use active methodologies.
- Active methodologies are not pertinent for my course.
- Active methodologies take up too much class time.
- Students don't react positively to active methodologies.

Q8. How many years have you been using active methodologies?

- a. Less than 5 years
- b. Between 6 and 10 years
- c. Between 11 and 20 years
- d. More than 20 years

Q9. Why do you use active methodologies?

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Learning about political systems while playing: Testing short-term knowledge retention through a role-play classroom game

*Aprender sobre sistemas políticos jugando: testando la retención
de conocimientos a corto plazo mediante un juego de rol en el aula*

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Abstract

Active-learning environments have been slowly but increasingly integrated into the political science curricula. Students and professors have fun in the active-learning processes. However, we still need evidence to support the nexus between learning and playing to ensure students learn more, or at least the same, with active-learning methodologies than with traditional ones. This article tests the effect of game-based learning on knowledge acquisition about political systems. We conduct a quasi-experiment in a Spanish university on second-year political science major students. Two groups were exposed to the treatment (role-play), and the third did not receive the intervention but a traditional lecture. We conducted a multi-method analysis to explore the data. Our results confirm that students exposed to role-plays have higher short-term knowledge retention about political systems than those who took the traditional lectures. The main sociodemographic factor pushing knowledge retention is the current GPA of students. Qualitative analysis shows that, through games, students perceive a reinforcement of their skills and recognize the usefulness of role-playing games in for teaching electoral formulas, the benefits of redistribution and trade, and the complexities around decision-making in political systems.

Keywords: active learning, innovation, simulation, gamification, experiment, factual and procedural knowledge.

Resumen

El aprendizaje activo se ha ido integrando en los planes de estudio de Ciencias Políticas. Estudiantes y profesores se divierten, pero necesitamos evidencia para sustentar el nexo entre aprendizaje y juego para asegurarnos de que los alumnos aprenden más, o al menos lo mismo, que con las metodologías tradicionales. En este trabajo se comprueba el efecto del aprendizaje basado en el juego en la adquisición de conocimientos sobre los sistemas políticos. Llevamos a cabo un cuasi experimento en una universidad española con estudiantes de segundo curso de la carrera de Ciencias Políticas. Dos grupos fueron expuestos al tratamiento (juego de rol), y el tercero a una clase tradicional. Realizamos un análisis multimétodo para explorar los datos. Los resultados confirman que los expuestos a los juegos de rol tienen una mayor retención de conocimiento a corto plazo sobre los sistemas políticos que aquellos que recibieron solo clases tradicionales. El principal factor sociodemográfico asociado con la retención de conocimientos es la nota media. El análisis cualitativo revela que los estudiantes perciben un refuerzo de sus competencias y reconocen la utilidad de los juegos de rol en la enseñanza de las fórmulas electorales, los beneficios de la redistribución y el comercio y la toma de decisiones en los sistemas políticos.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje activo, innovación, simulación, gamificación, experimento, conocimiento factual y procedimental.

INTRODUCTION

Active-learning environments aim to encourage students to participate in their learning and be more engaged in the classroom (Snyder, 2003). Universities are increasingly promoting active-learning methodologies and innovative teaching (Van Horne *et al.*, 2012). Student-centered teaching is slowly substituting traditional teacher-centered education (Duchatelet *et al.*, 2020), although the prioritization of active learning is still low in political sciences courses (Archer and Miller, 2011).

Many of us have implemented some active-learning activities. For example, it is now more common in political science to find courses with simulations, collaborative video projects, podcasts, social-media-based learning, or infographics. With the institutionalization of exercises or activities to complement lectures as part of the Bologna Process in Spain, every student is expected to have some active-learning experience in every course. Many might recognize that students and professors have fun in the active-learning process. Students might think they are learning with active methodologies, although recent research shows that perceived/subjective learning is higher than the real learning (see Ferreiro, 2020). Therefore, we still need experimental evidence to support the nexus between learning and playing (Baranowski and Weir, 2015). In

other words, we need experimental results to ensure students learn more or at least the same with active-learning methodologies than with traditional ones.

The literature shows, so far, that active learning methodologies in political science have a positive effect on study results (Raymond and Usherwood, 2013), students' engagement (Lazareva and Cruz-Martínez, 2020), affective learning (Jones and Bursens, 2015), and even in encouraging citizen participation (Oros, 2007). However, there is no consensus that active learning methodologies positively affect learning and student performance more than traditional lectures (Powner and Allendoerfer, 2008). If we want to know why and if active learning promotes knowledge acquisition or short-term retention of knowledge, we need to continue testing, preferably with experiments (Omelicheva and Avdeyeva, 2008).

Duchatelet *et al.* (2020) list a series of active learning methods, among which we can highlight: discussions and question techniques, problem-based learning, case-based learning, and game-based learning. The paper's main objective is to test the effect of game-based learning on short-term knowledge retention about political systems. Specifically, we examine the effect of a role-play about a political system versus a traditional lecture on political systems in knowledge acquisition. Is short-term knowledge retention about political systems better after a conventional lecture or an active-learning dynamic like a simulation? To answer this question, we hypothesize that groups using an active learning approach should have acquired more competencies, skills, and knowledge on the subject; thus, we expect them to perform better in the second test than the control group. Secondary objectives include (1) testing if short-term knowledge retention about political systems remains after controlling for individual sociodemographic factors; (2) examining affective and competence dimensions within the active-methodology learning process; and (3) exploring the use of role-playing to understand the decisional and feedback dimension of the political system.

We conduct a quasi-experiment in a Spanish public university on second-year political science major students. Two groups were exposed to the treatment (role-play), and the third did not receive the intervention but a traditional lecture on political systems. We conduct a multi-method analysis to analyze the data: T-tests, chi-square tests, regression analyses, and discourse analysis on the debriefing session after the role-play and open-ended questions in one of the questionnaires.

Our results confirm that students exposed to role-plays have better short-term retention knowledge about political systems than those who took the traditional lectures about political systems. Students learned, on average, 39.3% more thanks to the role-play in experimental group 1 and 24.3% more in experimental group 2. The final shared reflection on the discursive interactions between the participants shows that students become self-perceived as better trained in complex phenomena detailing and concepts articulation while strengthening self-confidence and group identity. We contribute to the literature with experimental results and qualitative analysis of the debriefing session showing the positive effects of active learning methodologies over traditional lectures.

This paper is organized as follows. The following section presents the conceptual framework of political systems (the object of study in our quasi-experiment), role-playing, and active learning. The third section introduces the research design: the learning objectives of the role-play, how we measure short-term knowledge retention, and the description of the role-play. Later, in section 4, we present the qualitative and quantitative analysis and the results. The article finalizes with a general conclusion.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ACTIVE LEARNING

The political system

The political system is the basic structure of analysis in political science and the conceptual framework to explain political phenomena in current societies. David Easton (1953) introduced the systemic approach and the “system” concept. The General Systems Theory from the natural sciences (Ludwig, 1950) gave Easton the foundations to explain the constant interaction between the power structures (polity), the government action (policy), and the daily game of political actors (politics) in every State. In his input-output model, the political system operates as a circular feedback process that receives demands from organized society and returns public policies. Such a process impacts the political system, legitimizing itself by generating stability.

Later, the policy-making model of Norton (1985) complemented Easton’s analytical scheme by conceiving the political system as a linear decision-making process organized in phases in which primary and secondary actors participate using veto powers. Every political system operates in a social environment with which it interacts. Social values and attitudes also modulate the aggregating interests process and social conflict resolution. The seminal conceptualizations of Easton and Norton have been complemented by Almond’s (1976) structural-functional systems theory and Luhmann’s self-controlled systems (1984), which emphasize the search for social balance and self-survival as ultimate goals of the political system.

The main pedagogical objective of the “Comparative Politics” subject is understanding the political system as a process of feedback and decision-making that allows us to compare different countries and differentiate them from a regime perspective (Soto, 2020). Students will then understand the logic of systematic comparison between countries and, thus, describe societies, create typologies of political phenomena, formulate theories, and anticipate likely outcomes in other scenarios. For this purpose, simulations have tried to approach the complexity of political systems for students by using role-playing games. Most of these methodological experiences have been conceived to teach International Relations (Bridge and Radford, 2014; Brynen, 2015) and Public Law subjects (Sáez and Gamarra, 2012; Espaliú, 2017) to recreate the decision-making process within the global governance institutions. In the

area of Political Science, first simulations were carried out to recreate the United States political system (Endersby and Webber, 1995; Baranowski, 2006), although its use has become widespread to understand the functioning of political systems in other latitudes (Gorton and Havercroft, 2012; Ferreiro, 2020).

Role-playing and active learning

In 2005, the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks warned of the need to set guidelines to attain the so-called Europe of Knowledge and identified, for the first time, the expected competencies: to know and to understand, to know how to act and how to be (Huber, 2008).

In this scenario of methodological opportunity, games provide the tool to capture the students' interest to encourage their motivation and develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills (Qian and Clark, 2016). Gamification is a learning technique that transfers the mechanics of games to foreign scenarios, such as the educational-professional field, to achieve learning objectives and better results (Deterding, 2013). A concept is transformed into an activity of competition, cooperation, exploration, and narration (Parente, 2016: 15). The proliferation of experiences and methodological guidelines developed as part of innovation and teaching quality projects (Inglada *et al.*, 2013; Bustos *et al.*, 2017) shows the rise of gamification in Spanish higher education. All of them are designed to optimize the motivation and academic results of the Z Generation —digital, multitasking, dynamic, self-taught, and experiential— which currently attends university classrooms.

Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) provides an analytical framework for assessing the impact of these new active methodological tools on teaching outcomes. Bloom conceived the learning process as hierarchical and cumulative, in which the mastery of lower-level mental abilities (knowing, understanding, and applying) allows the student to manage higher-level abilities (systematize, analyze and evaluate). Kratwohl's contribution (2002) to Bloom's pyramid of knowledge provides a conceptual scheme to operationalize the four dimensions of knowledge: *factual* (to know the basic elements of the discipline); *conceptual* (to relate these elements in a higher structure of functioning); *procedural* (to master the methods of inquiring and doing); and *metacognitive* (to reflect upon the learning process). All of them interact with the following cognitive levels and mental skills:

- *Remember*: students memorize relevant information in the long run.
- *Understand*: capture the profound meaning of the concepts.
- *Apply*: use procedures in specific situations.
- *Analyze*: examine a phenomenon by considering its parts separately and relating them to each other.
- *Evaluate*: make judgments based on criteria and standards.
- *Create*: relate the elements forming a coherent and original whole new one.

Among the many options to implement the constructivist theories of education, simulations are one of the methodologies of problem-based learning (PBS) in which the students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes through real-life situations, applying the same reasoning they will use in the future professional setting. In our quasi-experiment, the simulation is about solving redistribution problems created by commercial activity in a territory with two constituencies. Three elections were held, and elected authorities (students) had to make proactive policy decisions (collect taxes) that could alter the correlation of the system's political forces. The role-play allows students to learn about the complexity of the political world and that it can be modeled but with uncertain results because of the chaotic nature of human interaction (Obach, 2003). Through the classrooms' play dynamics, participants reflect on the actors' motivations and opportunities in the institutional scenario, and they learn to negotiate while reinforcing the group identity (Asal *et al.*, 2015).

The literature has measured the effectiveness of the simulations showing their positive impact on short-term knowledge retention and self-perception by improving the motivation of those with previous knowledge and some intellectual maturity (De Freitas, 2007). In Political Science, simulations are collaborative effort exercises that strengthen oratory skills, confidence on stage, and critical thinking while providing a more profound knowledge of the political process (Boyer and Smith, 2015). Role-playing games and simulations recreate ambiguous environments with a high level of personalization that forces students to reflect from different perspectives, using the rules of logic and assuming the risks of their actions (Kolb and Fry, 1975:54). Therefore, as we stated before, our central hypothesis is that the active-learning methodology of role-playing the political system will be more effective than a traditional lecture in promoting short-term retention knowledge about the complexity of the political system.

Regarding the design, any simulation should be organized around the following phases:

a) Definition of learning objectives

Knowledge. In our quasi-experiment, participants are expected to understand the decisional and feedback functioning of the political system as the basic structure of analysis in the "Comparative Politics" subject. The pre-test (Kahoot 1) measures the initial knowledge, and the post-test (Kahoot 2) measures the knowledge gained.

Skills. We use the Syllabus of the three participating groups as the generic and specific skills framework. Our simulation should improve oratory skills, theoretical knowledge and help students make informed judgments and provide solutions. The subjective post-test will assess changes in those desired skills.

Attitudes. The affective and relational aspects of the learning process will be measured by the subjective post-test and the debriefing session to identify the students' negative (frustrations) and positive (motivations) emotions.

b) Simulation and role-playing

Professors shall provide essential information to participate in the game about timing, dynamics, rules of behavior, and engagement. It is crucial not

to overelaborate the instructions, limit the actions beyond what is allowed in real life, and encourage students' initiative and creativity when they play the assigned roles.

c) Closing session (debriefing)

At the end of the simulation game, participants share their experiences to turn them into learning. Professors lead the debriefing session through a guide of open questions for students to reflect on the actors' strategies and restrictions of institutional design that affected the best policy implementation. This allows professors to observe behavior patterns and see if students were able to recognize differences between simulation and real life. The session ends with a summary of the main points (takeaways) and their connection with the "Comparative Politics" subject topics. Testimonies from the final session are collected and assessed on the subjective report of achievements (perceptions).

d) Evaluation

After the debriefing session, a post-test (Kahoot 2) is distributed to measure short-term knowledge retention. These results are compared with the pre-test. Finally, students evaluate the simulation.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Learning objectives of the role-play

Following Kratwohl's (2002) revision of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of the dimensions of knowledge mentioned above, the role-play seeks to build a series of factual and procedural knowledge about political systems. Factual knowledge refers to basic elements, concepts, and terminology about political systems. Students acquired these through lectures in the control group, while in the experimental groups, these are expected to be learned in the role-playing and debriefing session. Procedural knowledge implies understanding how political systems work. This is put into practice in the role-play, where students are expected to discover the complexities of the workings and decision-making of a government and the electoral process in a democracy. Finally, the debriefing session of the role-play also seeks to develop metacognitive knowledge about political systems.

TABLE 1.

COGNITIVE LEVELS EXAMINED IN THE PRE-AND POST-TESTS

	Question	Dimension of knowledge	Intellectual skills in the cognitive process
1.	Which of the following forms of democracy best represents today's Western democracies?	Factual about democracies	Remember

Question	Dimension of knowledge	Intellectual skills in the cognitive process
2. Which branch of government has the function of enforcing the laws of a state?	Factual about branches of government	Analyze
3. What is a political system?	Factual about the political system	Remember
4. What is an input?	Factual about Easton's input-output model	Remember
5. In Spain, which electoral formula is used for its elections to the Congress of Deputies?	Factual about elections	Remember
6. It refers to the territory used to translate votes into seats in parliament.	Factual about elections	Remember
7. The support or tolerance of the parliamentary majority is necessary to form a government in a presidential system?	Factual about presidential versus parliamentary systems	Understand
8. Which of the following characteristics represents the parliamentary system?	Factual about presidential versus parliamentary systems	Understand
9. In the role-play, the head of State was democratically elected?	Procedural about presidential versus parliamentary systems	Analyze
10. What do you call the differences that mark fractures between groups in a human community?	Factual about the political system	Remember
11. The role-play is a good example of a <u>parliamentary</u> system.	Procedural about presidential versus parliamentary systems	Analyse/Apply
12. How are parliamentary seats distributed with the D'Hondt divisor formula?	Procedural about elections	Understand
13. In real-life politics, who usually initiate legislation in most parliamentary systems?	Factual about branches of government	Remember
14. This is where the parliamentary system's main debate, negotiation, and laws are agreed upon.	Factual about branches of government	Remember
15. What is an output?	Factual about Easton's input-output model	Remember
16. What is the main advantage of the systemic approach for Comparative Politics?	Factual about the use of the political system in Comparative Politics	Analyze

Source: Own elaboration.

How do we measure the active learning acquired?

To test the effect of the role-play on learning about political systems, we conducted a quasi-experiment with three groups of the “Comparative Politics” course in the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology at the Complutense University in Madrid. Comparative Politics is a mandatory course for every student. The course is 4,5 ECTS credits and is taught in Spanish. The course aims to deepen the knowledge of the most relevant objects of studies and methodologies of comparative politics. The political system is the subject’s basic structure of analysis covered in the three groups included in this experiment. Each group is taught by one of the co-authors. Two groups were exposed to the intervention (role-play), and the third did not receive the intervention but a traditional lecture on political systems. The assignment to a control or experimental group among the three groups of Comparative Politics was randomized. Students were not randomly assigned to a control or experimental group because students chose to take classes with one of the authors considering various reasons not examined here. This is why we consider this a quasi-experiment rather than a fully-fledged experiment. Both the lecture and the role-play lasted one session of 90 minutes.

TABLE 2.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	Experimental Group 1	Experimental Group 2	Control Group
<i>Degree</i>	Sociology and International Relations (3 rd Year students)	Political Science (2 nd Year students)	Political Science (2 nd Year students)
<i>Number of students</i>	47	54	33
<i>Date of Pre-test</i>	Second week	Second week	Second week
<i>Date of Quasi-Experiment</i>	Third week	Third week	Third week
<i>Date of Post-test</i>	Fourth week	Fourth week	Fourth week
<i>Number of students participating in the role-play/lecture</i>	43	51	19
<i>Pre-test response rate</i>	89.3%	N/A (data lost)	42.4%
<i>Post-test response rate</i>	80.8%	74.1%	39,4%

Source: Own elaboration.

Students did not know if they were in the control or experimental group. Participating in the role-play was not mandatory to approve the course; however, it was part of the evaluation. Every student was informed that the data collected would be used anonymously to improve the course and research purposes. A series of tests are given before and after the role-play/lecture playing Kahoot. Kahoot is a fun, fast and competitive way

of testing knowledge. Students complete the first pre-test about political systems knowledge in the second week of the course. Unfortunately, we lost the pre-test data in experimental group 2 due to technical errors in Kahoot. In the third week, the control group received a lecture on political systems, and the experimental group did the role-play. In the fourth week, the experimental group had a 30-minute debriefing session where students reflected on the role-play and the knowledge acquired about political systems. We also analyzed the answers to a script of open-ended questions related to the activity and the skills acquired. Students in the experimental and control group took the post-test in the fourth week of the course. One week after the role-play, the post-test of competencies, attitudes, and sociodemographic questions was distributed.

We used multi-method analysis in this paper. First, we used chi-square and T-tests to confirm the effect of the treatment on short-term knowledge retention and to test the knowledge acquired between and after the role-play in the experimental groups and the lecture in the control groups. Second, we used descriptive statistics to show an observational analysis of the knowledge about political systems. Third, ordinary least-square (OLS) regression analysis tests the potential explanatory factor of sociodemographic variables.

Fourth, and regarding qualitative techniques, we conducted two debriefing sessions (Group 1 and 2) to engage participants in an informal group discussion focused on five topics: process identification, interactions, plausibility of the game, and systematization of learned lessons. Through discourse analysis, we examined students' speeches to ascertain how students related to the accountability concept and how they lived this experience. The open-ended question forms completed by all the students complemented our analysis of perceived motivations and emotions.

Description of the simulation exercise

We modeled a miniature representation of a social quasi-experiment, which also helps to provide a deeper insight into methodological issues. To make the simulation work, professors stage the social, economic, and political system in accordance with some prerequisites. The social system was composed of individuals (the students), all of which had equal rights but had an underpinning cleavage: the physical division of the classroom into two halves. This cleavage was an arbitrary decision based on the infrastructure of the classroom, which divides the seats into two sections. There is no evidence that this is a factual division among students¹. Two constituencies were created based on this division (east and west).

For the economic system, we gave students cards that represented four different types of commodities: food, education, housing, and health. Each card has a value and

1. Our intention with this division was not to create a division but to check if the students would adapt to that situation.

provides a certain number of points depending on how they are stockpiled. The game's objective was to accumulate the maximum possible points to win. Students were allowed to trade their cards with other students. They were told they could trade them in the order they wanted, but cards could not be given for free. Cards have either a logarithmical or an exponential logic of accumulating points. The following picture shows the cards to see the mentioned effect.

FIGURE 1.
PLAYING CARDS IN THE GAME



Source: Cards originally designed by Horacio Diez.

Playing cards were distributed in the following way. Each participant was given cards of a single type or combination, which aimed to incentivize the initial exchange (e.g., if I have two health cards, I will rationally look to exchange one of them for housing or a food type to increase my total number of points). A particular type of card was given to students on one side of the classroom, whereas other types were given on the other side. Therefore, the seating cleavage also corresponded to the kind of commodities students had. We also created wealth by giving some students an extra number of cards of the same goods, whereas others had just one card or none. We wanted to work on the question of exclusion, and that topic arises when some participants are not given any cards. We explained that not everyone starts with access to the same goods and services in the real world.

Once the economic and social systems were settled, we also set the conditions to develop the political system. We defined a Parliamentary system with an election of 5 representatives. Through a proportional system, representatives were elected in two constituencies, one bigger than the other (but the lesser one being overrepresented). The smaller circumscription elected two representatives, while the larger one elected three. One week before the simulation, the professors asked for three volunteers to become leaders of three political parties. They had to name their party and elaborate a political program/manifesto including four policy areas (i.e., food, education, housing, and health). After presenting their electoral programs to their classmates, political parties competed in an election.

Votes were cast for each party, and seats were assigned. This was an occasion to teach how the d'Hont formula works in practice with a real voting example. Afterward, a five-member legislature was established, and it lasted strictly 30 minutes. In those 30 minutes, students had the chance to trade, whereas political representatives agreed on a government, approved and collected taxes, and developed their redistributive policies. Once the 30 minutes were over, new elections were held (with the possibility of new parties arising), and we ran the second legislature for 30 minutes. Finally, the exercise ended with a final vote for a third legislature.

OUTCOMES

Analysis of learning outcomes

We conducted two chi-square tests to check if students of the experimental group outperformed those of the control group. The pre-test was performed in all groups to measure students' prior knowledge. We expect to find no statistically significant differences because all students have the same degree, and most are in the same year.

Overall, we can state that both control and experimental groups operated similarly. We find no statistically significant differences between groups on most questions, except for questions 3 and 7. Therefore, we can argue there are no critical differences in terms of previous knowledge about political systems between the control and experimental groups.

TABLE 3.
STUDENTS' RESULTS COMPARED BY THE EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUP

		Groups		Total	Statistically significant differences
		Control	Experimental		
Question 1	Incorrect	7,1 %	7,1 %	7,1 %	No
	Correct	92,9 %	92,9 %	92,9 %	
	Total	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	
Question 2	Incorrect	50,0 %	61,9 %	58,9 %	No
	Correct	50,0 %	38,1 %	41,1 %	
	Total	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	
Question 3	Incorrect	50,0 %	90,5 %	81,5 %	Yes
	Correct	50,0 %	9,5 %	18,5 %	
	Total	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	
Question 4	Incorrect	42,9 %	61,9 %	57,1 %	No
	Correct	57,1 %	38,1 %	42,9 %	
	Total	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	

		Groups		Total	Statistically significant differences
		Control	Experimental		
Question 5	Incorrect	71,4 %	64,3 %	66,1 %	No
	Correct	28,6 %	35,7 %	33,9 %	
	Total	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	
Question 6	Incorrect	7,1 %	2,4 %	3,6 %	No
	Correct	92,9 %	97,6 %	96,4 %	
	Total	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	
Question 7	Incorrect	64,3 %	31,0 %	39,3 %	Yes
	Correct	35,7 %	69,0 %	60,7 %	
	Total	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	
Question 8	Incorrect	7,1 %	26,2 %	21,4 %	No
	Correct	92,9 %	73,8 %	78,6 %	
	Total	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	

Source: Own elaboration.

To test if the application of active learning techniques had an impact, we can compare the results of both groups after the simulation of the political system. We excluded questions 9 and 11 as they were related to issues only covered in the simulation. We find significant differences in half of the questions (10, 12, and 15). Every time there are significant differences, the experimental group outperforms the control group considerably (i.e., 20 points in Q10, 43 points in Q12, and 37 points in Q15). However, in the other half of the questions, there are no statistically significant differences, although the experimental groups outperform the control in two out of those three.

TABLE 4.

STUDENTS' RESULTS COMPARED BY THE EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUP

		Groups		Total	Statistically significant differences
		Control	Experimental		
Question 10	Incorrect	30,8 %	10,7 %	13,6 %	Yes ²
	Correct	69,2 %	89,3 %	86,4 %	
	Total	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	
Question 12	Incorrect	92,3 %	49,3 %	55,7 %	Yes
	Correct	7,7 %	50,7 %	44,3 %	
	Total	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	

2. Statistically significant at the 0.07 level.

		Groups		Total	Statistically significant differences
		Control	Experimental		
Question 13	Incorrect	46,2%	52,0%	51,1%	No
	Correct	53,8%	48,0%	48,9%	
	Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
Question 14	Incorrect	92,3%	82,7%	84,1%	No
	Correct	7,7%	17,3%	15,9%	
	Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
Question 15	Incorrect	92,3%	56,0%	61,4%	Yes
	Correct	7,7%	44,0%	38,6%	
	Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	
Question 16	Incorrect	53,8%	46,7%	47,7%	No
	Correct	46,2%	53,3%	52,3%	
	Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	

Source: Own elaboration.

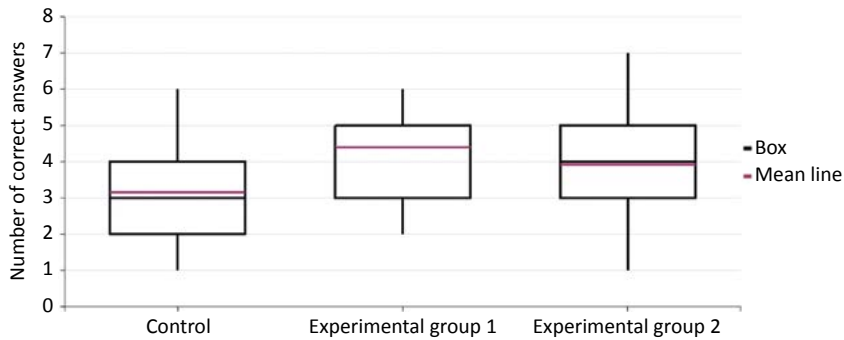
If we look closely at the questions where the experimental group outperformed the control group, those were explicitly related to the political system (Q10 deals with the notion of cleavages, Q12 with the electoral system, and Q15 with the concept of output). The other three questions served as control questions as the content asked was not related to the simulation itself. We observe a positive impact of this kind of active methodology on students' performance, although we need to confirm the overall effect, which we do in the next section.

Learning while playing? Testing the effect of role-plays on short-term knowledge retention

To test the effect of the role-play (treatment) on the student's knowledge of political systems, we conducted unpaired T-tests between the experimental and control groups. We found a positive effect of role-plays over traditional lectures on short-term knowledge retention in the first experimental group ($t(49) = 3.008$, $p = 0.004$) but not in the second ($t(48) = 1.498$, $p = 0.141$). Students learned, on average, 39.3% more thanks to the role-play in experimental group 1 and 24.3% more in experimental group two. However, it is impossible to confirm the statistical significance of the experimental group's two effects (the mean difference is 1.241 and 0.765, respectively)³. On average, students had 3.2 correct answers out of eight in the control group ($SD = 1.463$), 4.4 correct answers in experimental group 1 ($SD = 1.220$), and 3.9 correct answers in experimental group 2 ($SD = 1.622$).

3. We are measuring here learning with the average number of correct answers in the control and experimental groups.

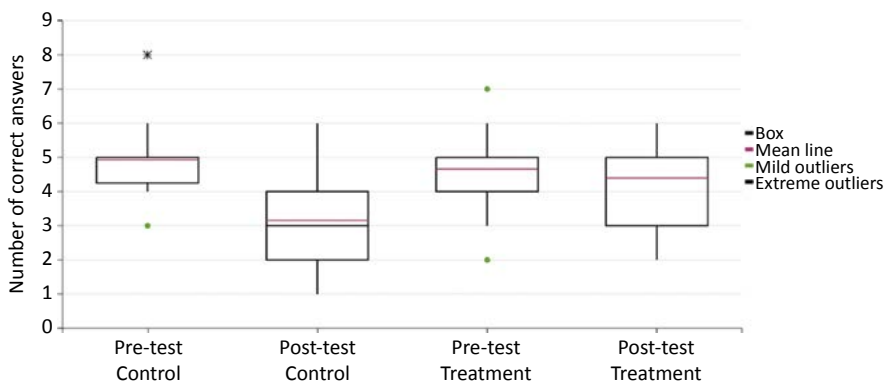
FIGURE 2.
EFFECT OF ROLE-PLAYING ON KNOWLEDGE ABOUT POLITICAL SYSTEMS



Source: Own elaboration.

We also consider it relevant to test if students gained significant knowledge because of the experimental group’s role-play and the lecture on political systems in the control group. We conducted a T-test between each group’s pre-test and post-test results to measure this effect⁴. There is a significant difference between the factual knowledge of political systems before and after the lecture ($t(25) = 3.529, p = 0.002$). Surprisingly, students reduced the number of correct answers between the pre-and post-test. On average, students got five correct answers out of eight on the pre-test and 3.2 correct answers on the post-test. Surprisingly, there is no significant difference between the factual knowledge gained between and after the role-play.

FIGURE 3.
EFFECT OF LECTURE AND ROLE-PLAY ON KNOWLEDGE ABOUT POLITICAL SYSTEMS



Source: Own elaboration.

4. As mentioned, pre-test data of Group 2 was lost due to a Kahoot technical error as the software did not produce a spreadsheet with students’ results. We are using here the data from Group 1.

Interestingly, the number of correct answers in the post-test was smaller in the control and the experimental group. One reason might be that the post-test had more complex questions than the pre-test, which will require further analysis. The mean difference between the pre-and post-test in the control group was 1.775 and in the experimental group was 0.476. This means that even though, on average, students had a larger share of incorrect answers in the post-tests of the control and experimental groups, the difference was statistically significantly smaller in the experimental group ($t(43) = 3.599, p = 0.0008$). So this is another hint at the positive effect of role-playing over traditional lectures on knowledge acquisition: students in the control group might be more prone to answering the post-test randomly (thus a higher variance of results) than those in the experimental group.

Testing the determinants of knowledge about political systems with OLS regressions: treatment and sociodemographic factors

The previous section provides evidence of the positive effect of active learning on short-term knowledge retention. It would be relevant to examine whether short-term knowledge retention about political systems remains or not after controlling for individual sociodemographic factors. Kyoshaba (2009) shows that parents' socioeconomic status matters in understanding students' academic performance. The rationale behind this is that parents with higher socioeconomic status are more capable of providing an environment that encourages the development of skills that facilitate success in school and higher education. Aidoo-Buameh and Ayagre (2013) and Zeegers (2007) confirm the relevance of university entry grades and prior academic performance on the current academic performance of undergraduate students in higher education. Kapinga and Amani (2016) ratify the relevance of university entrance exam points and highlight the importance of the student's choice of a degree program. Gibson (2008) concluded that students' socioeconomic status plays a role in their engagement behavior, which might also translate to learning. Parents' highest studies help us determine students' attitudes towards completing their studies (Czakó, 2017), implying more engaged students with higher probabilities of better academic performance. The families' cultural capital matters in understanding the academic achievement of students. The number of books at home is a proxy of cultural capital and is one of the family background determinants influencing students learning (Wang, 2004).

Considering the scholarship, we incorporated the following five sociodemographic factors in our model: University entrance exam score (PAU in Spain; score from 0-14), grade point average in the current bachelor (GPA; score from 0-10), highest studies achieved by any of their parents (5-point Likert scale)⁵, binary variable to assess if the

5. No education is coded as 0, primary education as 1, secondary education (ESO, EGB, school graduate) as 2, post-compulsory secondary education (bachillerato, BUP, FP) as 3, and University studies (bachelor, master or doctorate) as 4.

current degree was their first option and the number of books at home (5-point Likert scale)⁶. We also incorporated a binary variable to re-test if participating in the role-play remains relevant. To confirm the potential effects of the role-play and these sociodemographic factors, we conducted a multivariate OLS between student's knowledge after the simulation (the number of correct responses in the post-test), a binary variable to test if students were part of the experimental group and the five sociodemographic control variables. The formula of the OLS model is: $Y_s = \beta X1_s + \alpha X2_s + \delta X3_s + \varepsilon X4_s + \zeta X5_s + \eta X6_s + A$; where Y refers to the scores in the post-test for every student (s), $X1$ refers to university entrance exam score, $X2$ GPA, $X3$ highest studies achieved by any of the student's parents, $X4$ the number of books at home, $X5$ is a dummy variable to test if the current degree was the first choice for the student, $X6$ is a dummy variable to test if the student participating in the role-play, A is the intercept, while β , α , δ , ε , ζ , η represent the regression coefficients.

Table 5 shows that a student's GPA is the only sociodemographic factor with a statistically significant relationship with learning about political systems. For every one-unit increase in GPA (i.e., a student with a seven versus an eight), we expect a 0.3 increase in the post-test score after holding the remaining factors constant to their respective means. However, the effect of participating in the role-play did not appear to be relevant after controlling for sociodemographic factors. Professors should consider this because the learning process can be increased with active-learning strategies, but underlying factors also matter.

TABLE 5.

OLS BETWEEN SCORES IN POST-TESTS ABOUT POLITICAL SYSTEMS, PARTICIPATING IN THE ROLE-PLAY, AND FIVE SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Explanatory factors	Beta Coeff.	p-value	SD	LCL	UCL
University entrance exam score	0.057	0.606	0.109	-0.163	0.276
Grade point average	0.282	0.035	0.130	0.020	0.543
Highest studies achieved by any of the parents	0.104	0.607	0.202	-0.300	0.509
Number of books at home	0.222	0.274	0.201	-0.181	0.625
The current degree was the student's first choice	-0.400	0.425	0.498	-1.397	0.598
Participated in the role-play	0.583	0.320	0.582	-0.582	1.749
Intercept	0.068	0.952	1.114	-2.165	2.301
R	0.480				
R2	0.230				
Adjusted R2	0.146				
F-statistic	2.742	0.021			
N	62				

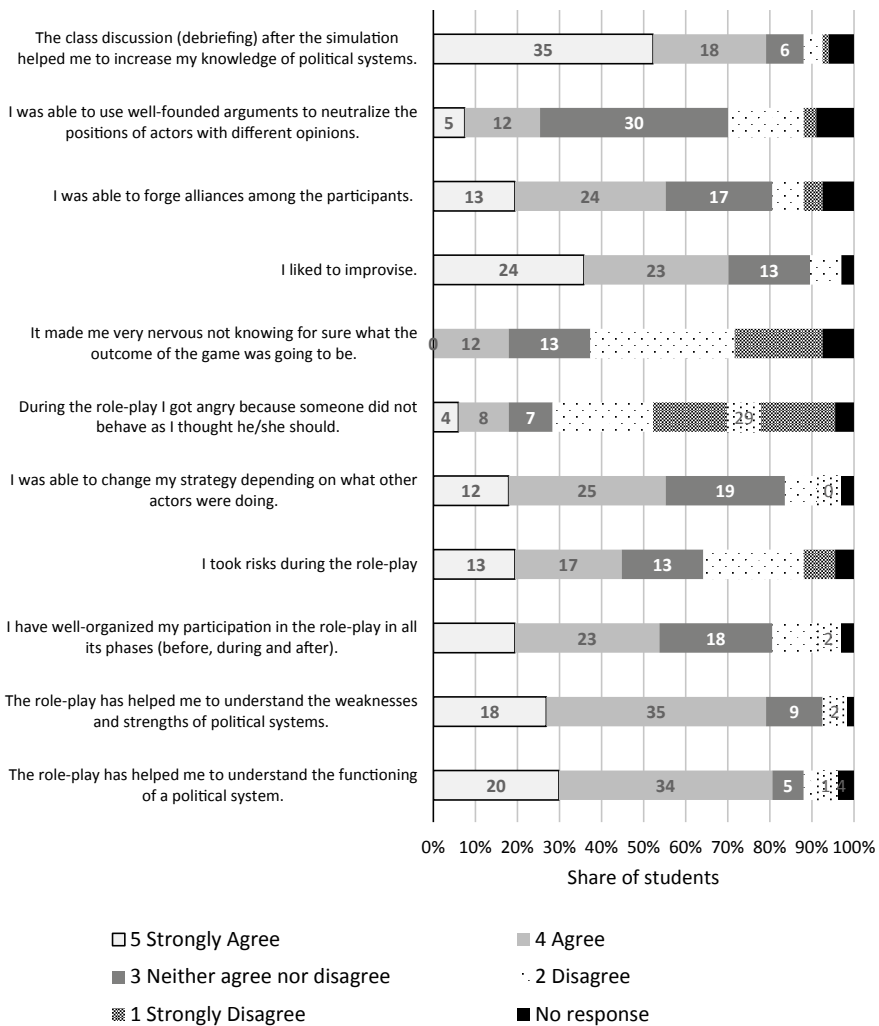
Source: Own elaboration.

6. Zero books is coded as 0, 1-25 books as 1, 26-100 as 2, 101-200 as 3, and more than 200 books as 4.

Attitudinal and competencies result in the role-play evaluation

Figure 4 presents the affective and competence dimensions within the learning process. Each of the eleven questions refers to a personal interaction or competence related to the active learning process. The figure shows the percentage of students participating in the role-play who strongly agree (5), agree (4), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1) with each attitudinal statement. The figure also shows the number of students who responded to each statement.

FIGURE 4.
RESPONSES TO THE ATTITUDINAL AND COMPETENCE TEST ON THE LIKERT SCALE

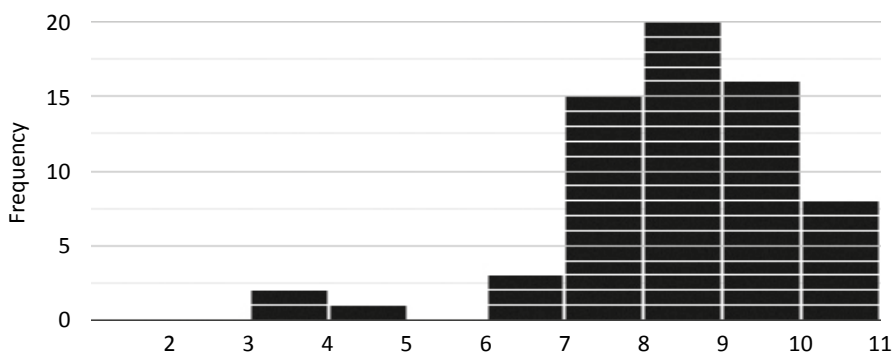


Source: Own elaboration based on Kolb and Fry (1975) and Ferreiro (2020).

81% of students strongly agree or agree that the role-play helped them understand the functioning of a political system. 79% strongly agree or agree that the role-play helped them understand the strengths and weaknesses of political systems. The same share of students has the same opinion about the usefulness of the debriefing to increase the knowledge of political systems. This last point confirms the utmost importance of having a debriefing session in any game or simulation to allow students to reflect and share their experiences on what has happened and transform them into knowledge (Ferreiro, 2020; Cruz-Martínez and Fonseca, 2020; Boyer and Smith, 2015).

Most students were able to forge alliances in the game (55%). However, as we explain in the qualitative section, having more explicit instructions on what could and should not be done might facilitate students' interactions in future role-plays. On the other hand, a larger share of students liked to improvise (70%). Most students (54%) considered their participation in the role-play was well-organized. In the previous week of the simulation, having briefly explained that students would need to come with three political parties, each with a list of five candidates for the role-play, might have contributed to this positive result. Finally, most students did not feel angry with the game's outcomes nor were nervous about the uncertainty of not knowing what the outcome would be (82% each). Figure 5 shows the generalized positive evaluation of the game. 68% of students gave grades of 8, 9, or 10 in the overall role-play assessment.

FIGURE 5.
STUDENTS' OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE-PLAY



Source: Own elaboration.

Qualitative analysis: debriefing and final evaluation

Professors led the discussion on the understanding of the game through five sets of open questions involving students in this metacognitive activity where they transform their experience into learning:

a) Processes, objectives, and resources identification

Was the best policy implemented? Participants analyzed the evolution of votes and seats during gameplay, pointing out that:

- Initial interexchange —tax collection, wages, purchase of goods and services— generated wealth and well-being, and the general well-being improved.
- The first redistribution reduced the original inequalities, and the coverage of goods and services was expanded: “I lost points with the first redistribution, but then I won again. In the end, we all had our needs covered, and none of us was rich”.
- Favoritism in the allocation of public goods and unsupportive practices were committed. Professors inquired about the effect of electoral use of reasonable allocation and tax evasion on final redistribution: “I hid a playing card not to pay taxes or lose points”. “We ran out of playing cards, and we thought about creating inequality intentionally so we could redistribute again. Even if that idea was against our values [...] but we would have won”. As such disclosures went by, participants pointed out the elections as the only mechanism to punish abuses of power since our simulation game did not include other actors who could activate horizontal accountability.
- Voters assessed the successes and failures of all redistributions. This affected the party system fragmentation, shifting from a bipartisan system to one with four political forces in the third election of experimental group 2: Unión Ciudadana, Ricos, Demos, and Cs.

Who were the winners and losers? Participants reflected on the reasons for the electoral success of winning parties:

- Information asymmetries: “If people had real-time information, all voters could have seen the positive evolution in the common well-being as a consequence of the exchanges we did”.
- Altruistic behaviors: “I was the only one who kept voting for the Demos party even if I lost points. As the general well-being was guaranteed through the redistribution policies, I did not mind losing some cards”. “I shared my playing cards with my partner because I had 6 of health, and she had none. It is better to have a playing card of every good than many of the same”.
- Voter locations and issues representation: “It is a matter of preferences. For some people, a policy is understood as fiscal brutality, while for others is just redistribution”.
- Party identity: In the case of the Unión Ciudadana party (experimental group 2), students stressed the importance of hard voter loyalty to maintain representation in the institutions.

- Erosion of the ruling coalition and social unrest: In all simulations, the ruling party lost votes after holding the government but remained in power. During the first exchanges, there was a mismatch in possession of goods, especially food, provoking hunger rows and demonstrations against the government, which people accused of being fascist. Professors invited students to consider whether this type of response had been given in contexts different from the UCM (other universities, countries). They reflected upon the salience of socialization spaces in activism and the strength of social capital in democracies.
- Electoral system: Demos party (experimental group 2) went from 3 to 4 seats, with no increase of votes, no voter movements or leaders' registration in other constituencies, and without gerrymandering. So, students visualized the particular way the d'Hondt formula distributes seats.

b) Interaction and communication

How did the lack of information impact your strategy in the role-play? We provided a few instructions on the players' roles to encourage proactive and self-directed participation. This lack of information had a limiting effect on the performance of some students, which was overcome in successive electoral rounds: "In the beginning, we had a minor role as a government because we did not know that we had all the government's functions, and we assumed that we could only collect taxes. However, the first round was to learn, and then we did better".

For other participants, however, it was not inconvenient for dynamism and the variety of their actions: "As we did not know what we could do or if there were strict rules, we understood that it was better to give people playing cards of education than playing cards of food because this way, you arrive faster and in better conditions to the labor market, and thanks to the labor insertion, you will solve the feeding issue. In future games, perhaps, it would be good to assign higher scores to education and thus earn points to obtain a master's degree, not only compulsory education".

Some students even proposed to kick-start the political system's feed flows. They asked whether they could address citizens (discourse of accountability) or establish direct communication mechanisms with the authorities (participatory and deliberative democracy instruments). The lack of information also stimulated the identification of the role played by professors in the game: "I identified that professors were the economic powers who influenced the direction of the political system from the shadows".

These testimonies show that non-directed learning environments stimulate element and dimension relationships in students with greater conceptual capacity (Hancock, 2002).

c) Plausibility of the game

To know the limits of the simulation, participants identified the extent to which the game experiences were far from the real world:

- Friendship bias of party interactions: Students acknowledged that friendship permeated the game atmosphere. This comradeship spirit avoided betrayals and strategic behaviors among government partners nor the emergence of party factions.
- District bias in voting: They noticed that the party system that emerges from the rules of the game revolves around the district as the only structuring cleavage. “We were all the same. There were no ideologies, and we could not sell ourselves as left-wing or green parties to get the vote. We could not develop an identification party program”.
- Lack of companies and businesses: Government action was not affected by the pressure of interest groups or lobbies. Therefore, students could identify critical aspects of the political system as the input-output feedback process and its structural-functional dimension. Regarding the biases of friendship and district, they reflected on how these links restrict the daily play to conquer power and influence (*politics*) and channel the aggregation of interests. In terms of the economic powers, they warned that these collective actors condition the distribution of power (*polity*) in a society and the measures undertaken (*policies*) since they are part of the social environment that formulates demands and weaves support in the political system. To reduce these biases, professors proposed expanding the number of players in future editions of the game, including participants from other groups (to minimize the friendship bias) and diversifying structures and actors playing new roles.

d) Summary of the main points and their relationship with the study topics (take-aways)

Systematizing lessons enable students to compare their experiences with Political Science predictions:

- Commerce produces wealth, although it generates inequality: Our game contextualizes the study of the environment in the input-output model and the possible relations between economic development and democracy.
- Redistribution generates well-being: Participants noted the role of the State as a redistributive agent, approaching the study of policy outcomes and welfare model comparison.
- Electoral formula: Changes in the number of parties because of the elections allowed students to understand the electoral systems and compare their effects on democratic performance.
- Complexity around decision-making in a limited time: Experiences lived in the game, such as goods surplus, ruling under pressure, or doing nothing as

the best possible decision, brought students closer to analyzing the agent's decisions and public election theory.

e) Utility of the simulation

Finally, participants related their own experiences about what they learned:

- Short-term knowledge retention: Students agreed that kahoots facilitate information retention, especially from unsuccessful responses. Public exposure to failure in the heat of competition seems to stimulate individual learning: "I feel so much anger... to see that you miss that answer, and it affects your position. So, you remember that concept more. You know why you failed". This testimony confirms the impact of gamification on student memory and motivation (Ferreiro, 2020; Raymond and Usherwood, 2013; De Freitas, 2007), given the importance of the ludic way that digital natives give to the learning process and their appreciation for the dynamism and intensity of social interactions (Bautista, 2010). However, the effect on the concept's retention requires prior knowledge of the topics covered in the simulation. As the students reveal: "If you guess randomly, you do not hold anything back. It does not work if you have no idea about it". Therefore, and as Moizer *et al.* (2009) proved, to get the most out of simulations, it is essential to combine them with other teaching methodologies, including the most traditional ones (lectures).
- Complex phenomena detailing: Simulation facilitated the materialization and particularisation of the political processes under study. The plausibility of the game allowed participants to understand the sophistication of the political system dynamism: "In our classes, we do not see the complexity of what we study. We only see the definitions of the models of democracy, and that is very theoretical. You do not have time to see all the details. But when you are in the game, you realize. I could see it when I played the role of the police, what could and could not be done, the decisions that could be made, and the consequences". This testimony confirms the relevance of personal experience for the holistic understanding of sociopolitical processes. As Obach (2003) pointed out, the awareness of such complexity leads students to reflect on the motivations and opportunities that arise from the institutional scenario.
- Concepts articulation: Students' opinions showed an ability to relate concepts that seem static and see them in their procedural and dynamic dimensions. This process was especially evident in the students' analysis of the electoral formula. Students were able to analyze how regulation (institutional sphere), conditions of representation (actor's sphere), and ideology (values sphere) encourage changes in public policies (collective goods allocation sphere): "I understood the electoral system because of the distribution of seats in the two constituencies and the three elections held. Without a change in the number

of votes, the number of representatives changed, which affected us later in the exchange of the playing cards and the final redistribution". This analytical ability is a higher-order intellectual skill since it requires categorizing and structuring knowledge (Kratwohl, 2002). It is one of the expected competencies to be acquired through simulation games in our "Comparative Politics" subject (see section *Learning objectives of the role-play*).

- Collaborative interaction: The simulation was a collaborative effort that fostered peer learning. This was highlighted by the students when evaluating the performance of their peers: "Even if you prepare yourself just for your role, what you do adds to what others do. You must listen to and value their arguments. You learn from your peers. And you learn, above all, to negotiate". As evidenced by Asal *et al.* (2015), the game allows the insertion into political reality from a critical, reflective, and participatory perspective that fosters integration and group identity, as testimonies of the closing session confirmed: "We were all in it together as a government. And even though we knew we were going to fail with the deal and lose points, we were always together and loyal. I mean, if I lose, we lose together. You team up with classmates you have not spoken to in class or have not been assigned to do group work with".
- Self-confidence and self-assertion of abilities: Closing session testimonials reinforce the importance of personal interactions in active learning (Carr *et al.*, 2015) and the effect of confidence on self-esteem and decision-making ability (Boyer and Smith, 2015). The oratory required to negotiate the exchange of playing cards, or the role of activists and their demonstrations, increased student confidence to overcome stage fright and traditional reluctance to public speaking: "You see closely the real task of a representative, which is to sit, listen and make decisions. At first, that scares you, but then you say to yourself: I am capable. You have to overcome your fear".
- Normalizing the processes, institutions, and actors of the political system: Simulations recreate events and dramatize different situations between peers. This exercise brings national institutions closer to university students in a familiar scenario, normalizing the political processes, public agencies' tasks, and the primary skills of the political actors. "In the United Nations Model, I did not feel comfortable. It is just elitist posturing, and if you have no previous experience, you cannot participate. There is no interaction, it only seeks to make a show on stage by yourself, and in this simulation, we must work together. It is more accessible; we all participate". In the view of participants, replication of the national political system generated less reluctance than other educational tools used to emulate global governance. Thus, the slightest imposture, more spontaneity, and inclusiveness would favor the receptivity of the game and the feeling of internal political effectiveness of the students.

Lastly, to finish our quasi-experiment, participants completed an evaluation questionnaire that also included two open questions about the usefulness of kahoots and simulations in teaching “Comparative Politics” subject, which corroborate the testimonies of the debriefing session:

Regarding Kahoot as a teaching tool, 50% of respondents noted its positive effect on remembering concepts. Despite this, 9.5% conditioned such outcomes to the need of a lecture before and after simulation: “It seems to me that it is a handy method to establish knowledge once these have been addressed, in some way, in the previous sessions”.

Dynamism and fun while participating (30.4%) and motivation (31.7%) were other teaching virtues of the kahoots:

It is pretty good because they all participate, even people who often do not participate in class because of their shyness. It is an excellent initiative to include everyone in learning.

I love it. It is so much fun. It increases interest and attention, making you want to attend class because you are interested in the subject.

The important thing about Kahoot may not be the activity itself but having teachers predisposed to value such pedagogy and orient their work to make classes more understandable. And much of that is missing in this Faculty.

The anonymous questionnaire allowed negative opinions to emerge that were not revealed in the debriefing session. Thus, 19% of the participants rejected the use of this tool because it was considered not very reflective or showed discomfort:

Kahoot stimulates thinking, although it is somewhat stressful. It generates a bit of anxiety; there is little time for each question.

It is OK to learn punctual things, but I do not think Kahoot transmits truly reflective knowledge. It is useful, although I consider it counterproductive because of the little time to think.

These testimonies warn of the limitations of active-learning methodologies and their adverse effects on certain students, for whom competition and winners’ podium exhibitions could be intimidating and discourage their learning process (Moizer *et al.*, 2009).

Regarding the evaluation of simulations as teaching tools in the “Comparative Politics” subject, all respondents underlined the game’s effectiveness in learning aspects of the government functioning and elections in a playful, participative, and entertaining environment, in addition to improving oratory skills. In the recommendation section, the students proposed to complicate the game and extend it in several sessions to allow students to plot strategies of institutional redesign, organization of actors, or subvert the established order:

More time is needed. I think professors should set a single standard: everything is allowed, just like in the real world. In this way, participants can draw up a broader strategy: social partnership, design new constituencies, increase the number of representatives or impose equitable taxes. If I knew there were no limits, I would have staged a coup d'état.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper contributes to the literature showing that active-learning methodologies positively impact students' short-term retention of factual and procedural knowledge about political systems. Our simulation was about resolving redistribution problems in a territory with two constituencies. Three elections were held, and students, who served as elected officials, made proactive policy decisions that altered the correlation of the system's political forces. With this role-play, we wanted the students of the Comparative Politics subject to understand the decisional and feedback dimension of the political system. By using Kahoot, we looked for a dynamic, competitive, and playful way to test their knowledge acquisition.

The quasi-experiment shows, as hypothesized, that students learned, on average, 39.3% more thanks to the role-play in experimental group 1 and 24.3% more in experimental group 2 over the control group. We were also interested in testing the explanatory power of sociodemographic variables. Students' GPA is the only sociodemographic factor with a statistically significant relationship with learning. A one-point increase in the GPA increases the learning about political systems by about 9.8%. The qualitative analysis provides valuable information on the competencies that were strengthened in the role-playing and the usefulness of the active-learning activity to teach students electoral formulas, the benefits of redistribution and commerce, and the complexities around decision-making while playing. The metacognitive dimension of the simulation shows that students perceived themselves as better trained in complex phenomena and concepts articulation while simulating the processes, institutions, and actors of the political system. Students' opinions also reveal the positive effect on increased fun, self-confidence, peer learning, and participation in the class while confirming the complementarity of these techniques with traditional lectures, where there is more time for analytical and depth thinking.

These results represent a challenge for most of us, trained under the traditional teaching model and a constant adjustment of the innovation and teaching quality units of the universities. With a view to the external validity of the results, we aim to continue developing and strengthening the role-playing game, expanding the number of participants, including students from other universities, and randomly assigning them to the experimental and control groups to limit the identified biases.

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Films, world politics and the International Relations classroom: Learning to do a postcolonial analysis of *The Breadwinner*

Películas, política mundial y el aula de Relaciones Internacionales: aprender a hacer un análisis poscolonial de El pan de la guerra

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Abstract

This article presents and evaluates an activity developed in an area studies course on the Middle East. Learners must use postcolonialism and the theory of Orientalism in the analysis of a film about Afghanistan. The activity's general purpose is to teach students to read the film in terms of the *truth effects* it creates rather than its trueness. It develops in several stages and combines active (e.g., collaborative learning) and traditional (e.g., lecturing) learning methods. Throughout, data are gathered for analysis, mainly short reflections written by students at several stages in the process. A thematic and narrative analysis is conducted of the data set. The article contributes to the literature in teaching international relations with films by offering insights into an active learning process. Results show that the activity helps students to improve critical thinking skills, most visible in the evolution from plot-focused readings of the film to readings in which questions are formulated around the film's Western-centrism. It also accomplishes to raise awareness on postcolonialism's potential as an international relations approach but fails short to systematically address postcolonialism's limitations.

Keywords: international relations, postcolonialism, film analysis, active learning, critical and analytical thinking competencies, thematic and narrative analysis.

Resumen

Este artículo presenta y evalúa una actividad desarrollada en una asignatura sobre Oriente Medio. Los alumnos deben usar el poscolonialismo y la teoría del orientalismo en el análisis de una película sobre Afganistán. El propósito general es enseñar a leer la película en términos de los *efectos de verdad* que produce en lugar de como representación verdadera. La actividad se desarrolla en varias

etapas y combina métodos activos de enseñanza —como el aprendizaje colaborativo— y tradicionales —como la clase magistral—. A lo largo del proceso se recogen datos en forma de reflexiones escritas de los estudiantes que se analizan con los métodos de análisis temático y narrativo. El artículo contribuye a la discusión sobre el aprendizaje de las relaciones internacionales con películas ofreciendo una aproximación detallada a un proceso de aprendizaje activo. Los resultados demuestran la mejora en la capacidad de pensamiento crítico de los estudiantes, con una evolución significativa desde lecturas centradas en la trama del filme hacia análisis posteriores que generan preguntas alrededor del punto de vista occidentalista de la película. La actividad también contribuye a la comprensión del potencial del poscolonialismo como enfoque de análisis de las relaciones internacionales, pero puede mejorarse la trasmisión de las limitaciones de este enfoque.

Palabras clave: relaciones internacionales, poscolonialismo, análisis de películas, aprendizaje activo, competencias de pensamiento crítico y analítico, análisis temático y narrativo.

INTRODUCTION

This article presents and evaluates a film analysis activity designed for an upper-level undergraduate course in International Relations (IR). The activity was developed for the first time during the Spring Semester 2020/21 with 36 participants. The participants were the students sitting in Political Challenges in the MENA Region, the area studies course I have taught at University of Deusto since the Spring of 2019. The course is presented as an introduction to the study of the region and world politics. The course establishes postcolonialism as a preferred analytical approach¹. This is justified by the importance that postcolonial thinkers attach to imperialism and colonial history in the constitution of the contemporary world, and to the role of cultural discourse in the legitimization of power practices (Loomba, 2015). Accordingly, understanding the theory of Orientalism (Said, 2003) is a priority affair. Amongst the many discursive spaces that can be subjected to analysis through the lens of Orientalism, popular culture —in particular, films— is one of the most fertile ones.

Analyzing films is politically significant due to their capacity to elicit in audiences' questions about truth and accuracy, but film analysis in an educational setting requires thoughtful planning. This means that learning objectives, assessment and learning methods need to be carefully defined. *The Breadwinner* (Twomey, 2017), an animated drama film about Afghanistan in the lead-up to the 2001 invasion, was my choice (see Tomé-Alonso and Ferreiro Prado, 2019, for other options). The activity's general aim was to teach students to do a postcolonial analysis of the film —namely, to learn to read the film in terms of the *truth effects* it produces rather than of its trueness— and, more specifically, to identify Orientalist elements. This aim is closely related to two

1. In my understanding, a postcolonial approach is an intersection of elements from critical constructivism, poststructuralism, historical materialism, feminist and cultural studies.

key competencies my course seeks to improve: analytical and critical thinking². The article thus evaluates the activity's effects on a) the development of the said competencies (with a focus on critical thinking), b) awareness related to the potential of theory, and c) sense-making of one's own learning process. The question guiding this research is whether by planning a student-centered, active learning activity, we will achieve a satisfactory result in terms of the critical thinking skills developed by the students and their understanding of the potentialities associated to the selected theoretical approach.

This article can be generally read as a contribution to the literature on teaching and learning IR and Political Science with "new" methodologies, which in recent years has seen an exponential rise (Ferreiro Prado, 2020; Ishiyama *et al.*, 2015). The buzzword in this literature is often "active learning" which involves moving attention from the instructor to learners and getting them to take responsibility of their learning process³. But, more specifically, the article contributes to the literature on teaching IR with films. Thus far the literature has not offered the small planning details and practical ideas that can help instructors to incorporate film analysis in their courses. IR instructors can find relevant indications in the literature about films that can be used to discuss realism, neoliberalism, or constructivism (Weber, 2001), but we lack mentions of postcolonialism as well as works that offer detailed insights into and evaluation of comprehensive pedagogical experiences. Besides, while some reflections can be found in the literature referred to the teaching of problem-solving vs. critical theory informed approaches to IR (Lamy, 2007), no works have been done on teaching postcolonialism and associated methods. The only mention can be found in Díaz Sanz and Ferreiro Prado (2021), where we concluded that, when teaching postcolonial approaches to IR, it is important that learners become aware of their condition as world political subjects.

The article is organized as follows. The first section offers a review of the literature on teaching IR with films. The second section introduces the postcolonial approach in IR that orients my activity design. The third section presents the activity design and highlights the stages in which data for analysis were collected. The fourth section explains the methods. The fifth section presents the results relative to a), b) and c) (above). The sixth section discusses the results and considers areas for improvement. Lastly, a brief conclusion is offered.

TEACHING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WITH FILMS

The use of films as teaching material in International Relations (IR) (and Political Science) courses is a long-established practice (Gregg, 1998). The literature, which

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2. Analytical thinking is understood here as the capacity to analyze elements, relations and the organizing principles within a whole (Kratwohl, 2002). Critical thinking is understood as the capacity to examine assumptions and look at the implication of the ideas one or others hold (Cohen, 1993).
 3. See Prince (2004) for an overview of the advantages and disadvantages attached to student-centered learning.

often underscores the positive learning results, has discussed manifold aspects related to teaching with films (Genovese, 1984; Kuzma and Haney, 2001; Lobasz and Valeriano, 2015; Simpson and Kaussler, 2009; Valeriano, 2013; Waalkes, 2003). Overall, scholars underline the political quality of films, the potentialities associated with film viewing in courses that seek to foster active learning, and the specific opportunities for learning IR. Genovese (1984: 3) starts off from the premise that films make “political statements” about socially relevant topics such as war, peace, power, diplomacy, or political campaigns. They can, therefore, be easily picked up as “discussion-generating tools” (*ibid.*: 4). Films can be used as primary course material in combination with a reader or textbook to cover basic concepts (Valeriano, 2013: 55; Lobasz and Valeriano, 2015), or to engage in advanced discussions in IR (Kuzma and Haney, 2001; Weber, 2001). They can also be used in combination with other teaching methods like simulations and role play (Simpson and Kaussler, 2009).

Films normally arouse interest and might address world political issues that are less available in non-entertainment media (*ibid.*: 425). Waalkes (2003: 157) sees in the work with film clips the possibility of reflecting on ethical issues and thinking up “advanced” research questions. Generally, films offer students an experience that breaks with traditional instructional models that foster students’ passivity. Contrarily, teaching with film is highly related to active learning (Prince, 2004). Kuzma and Haney (2001: 34-35) consider film viewing as a multisensorial experience that can be emotionally very powerful, and foster learners’ creativity and freedom of interpretation. Valeriano (2013: 52) associates the potency of visuals with knowledge retention, finding that “visual analogies are a superior instructional method compared to other options”. One reason for this is that films have the capacity “to dramatize the undramatic’ aspects of global politics” helping to bridge the gulf between filmic narratives and abstract concepts (Gregg, 1998: 4).

Teaching with films might seek to illuminate these said abstract concepts (see, for example, Lantis, 2013) or IR theories more generally. With respect to the latter, Cynthia Weber (2001) suggests that both films and IR theories be inspected as two realms where world political narratives are produced. In this way, she encourages us to look at IR theories as “cultural practices where stories that *appear* to be true get told” (*ibid.*: 282). Teaching students “to be critical readers and writers of narratives about international politics” (*ibid.*: 281), therefore, implies developing the ability to unpack the *truth effects* of the theories any IR student is expected to be knowledgeable of, and of the other media participating in world political talk. As far as we are concerned, this boils down to films.

ORIENTALISM AND POSTCOLONIALISM: NARROWING DOWN THE MEANING OF ANALYSIS

With a genealogy that harks back to literary studies in the case of postcolonialism, in the early 1990s, postcolonialism and IR were two uncannily “self-referential” fields

(Darby and Paolini, 1994: 372). Over the last three decades, however, dialogue across fields has notably expanded (Barkawi and Laffey, 2002; Chowdhry and Nair, 2002; Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004; Loomba, 2015; Seth, 2013). Like other critical developments within IR, postcolonialism questions the neorealist onto-epistemology and Westphalian myths that dominate IR analysis. It investigates how the legacy of colonialism shapes the contemporary world and contributes to the construction of global hierarchies. It draws attention to culture, trying to understand how cultural institutions and cultural discourse produce the subjects of international relations.

One major contribution to the study of culture and global power is Edward W. Said's theory of Orientalism. In *Orientalism* (2003), Said illuminates the relationship between colonialism and Europe's cultural discourse of the Orient. The Oriental Other is the condition of possibility of the modern Western subject (Hurd, 2003) and a source of legitimization of Britain and France's colonial adventures in the "Muslim Orient" throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Later, the U.S. takes over the great power status and the leading role in the production of the Orientalist imaginings. This task sees tipping points in the aftermath of the Cold War and of 9/11, when Muslim/Arab Others are increasingly associated with anti-hegemonism and anti-Westernism. This is also a period in which the imaginative construction of the Middle East and North Africa as a terrorism exporting, anti-democratic and gender equality averse region crystallizes (Culcasi and Gökmen, 2011; Falah, 2005; Tuastad, 2003). If there is one subject that embodies the most extreme negative ideal of the East, it is the Taliban's Afghanistan (Manchanda, 2020).

Today, reflection on Orientalist discourse and practices is part of a broader program of postcolonial studies that aims to decolonize world politics. Decolonizing involves placing dominators and dominated in the same analytical framework and unpacking their relational ontology; questioning the universality of Europe's historical experiences; challenging the modern categories of thought that underpin world political discourses; and incorporating the voices and experiences of "the subaltern" to narrations of the international (Sabaratnam, 2011). In this regard, it is important to mention that, despite the great popularity of Said's ideas among many critical intellectuals, the original formulation of Orientalism's theory in the late 1970s is not without flaws. For the purposes of this article, it is important to highlight feminism's critique of Said's theorization in two respects. On the one hand, feminists argue that, by implicitly assuming that the conqueror and producer of Orientalist cultural discourse was a European male, *Orientalism* occludes the active participation of metropolitan women (writers, travelers, wives of diplomats, etc.) in the whole colonial enterprise (Lewis, 1996). On the other hand, *Orientalism* also fails short to register instances in which "Oriental" women actually resisted the domination staged by white male conquerors. This is particularly important today when the tendency to picture "Oriental" and "Muslim" women as lacking agency and victims of evil males persists, thus paving the way for narratives about liberation enabled by Western saviors (Abu-Lughod, 2002).

In short, postcolonial analysis is one of the possible paths for analyzing the international reality. Taking this path is associated with an onto-epistemology of the

international that is anti-foundationalist as compared to those of realism or liberalism. In our activity, the purpose of enhancing the critical and analytical competencies of students is linked to the adoption of a postcolonial approach. In the choice between rationalist or reflectivist, positivist or post-positivist analysis, post-colonial analysis is aligned with a philosophy of science that questions the subject/object divide and the neutrality of knowledge and representation (Hollis and Smith, 1991; Lamont, 2015). It is also associated with a general critical attitude towards the stories that, woven into theories or into films, appear to be true (Weber, 2001). As in the famous Coxian wording “film and literature are also for someone and for some purpose” (Lobasz and Valeriano, 2015: 406). Therefore, by adopting a post-colonial approach the students sitting in my course must develop skills that enable them to “recognize that cultural artifacts not only represent but also participate in politics” (id.: 406).

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

The Breadwinner (Nora Twomey, 2017) is an Irish-Canadian animation drama film that narrates the story of a 10-year-old girl (Parvana) and her family in the lead-up to the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan. It is based on a best-selling book by Deborah Ellis and had Angelina Jolie as co- executive producer (Wikipedia, n. d.). The film shows the harsh life conditions of Afghans under Taliban rule. The protagonist’s father, a mutilated from the Afghan-Soviet war, has been taken to a prison on the outskirts of Kabul. Without the tutelage of a man, the women of the family remain vulnerable and isolated. To break their confinement, Parvana adopts a boyish appearance. Against the backdrop of Afghanistan’s troubled history and constant fear of the Taliban, Parvana’s struggle culminates in the liberation of her father on a night when the first American bombers fly over Kabul.

The activity is related to a specific module in the course that deals with the representation of Muslims/Arabs/Middle Easterners in media and cultural discourse, thus using *The Breadwinner* as a study case. The activity is designed on the hypothesis that, after the first viewing of the film, students will carry out a non-critical and fundamentally descriptive analysis of the film; and that, the seminar/online discussion stage will allow students to take their critical and analytical skills to a higher level by being able to detect the Orientalist assumptions nourished by the film through both the story and the visuals. It is also expected that by doing this analysis students will develop an awareness of what it means to do a postcolonial analysis of a film and, more generally, of postcolonialism’s potentialities as an IR approach. The learning objectives are:

- a) to identify Orientalist/neo-Orientalist elements in the film;
- b) to identify the visual plane as constitutive of Orientalist/neo-Orientalist discourse;

- c) to relate different levels of representation (textual and visual) and examine how they work together for the construction of the film.

The activity develops in several stages during the second half of the semester. It combines several teaching and learning methods:

Stage 1: Lecturing

The lecturing stage takes up a single 50-minute session in which students are introduced to the theory of Orientalism.

Stage 2: Film screening and first data collection (initial reflections)

The film is screened once during class hours. After this, students are requested to write a 150-word text addressing this question: “Why is the film *The Breadwinner* interesting for an IR student?”. Students submit their individual responses in the course’s Moodle platform.

Stage 3: In-class reading seminars (3 seminars/1-2 hours each) and group discussions in online forums

The seminars begin with a presentation of an assigned reading (see Table 1 left column) by a class group followed by debate and summary of the main take-aways. After the seminar, students must discuss the film based on the ideas presented by the different authors in the reading list. The discussion develops in online forums, where students are presented a series of questions (see Table 1 right column). Within the overall activity plan, the only relevant step for student assessment is Stage 3. Students are assessed based on whether their responses in the online forums show accomplishment of the learning objectives. The activity is 10% of the final grade.

TABLE 1.
STAGE 3 IN THE ACTIVITY DEVELOPMENT

In-class reading seminars	Group discussions in online forums
<i>Seminar 1</i>	<i>Questions:</i>
Assigned reading: Hurd, Elizabeth S. 2003. “Appropriating Islam: The Islamic Other in the Consolidation of Western Modernity”, <i>Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies</i> , 12 (1): 25-41.	How does the argument that “the Islamic Other has been appropriated by a Western modern Self” resonate with the release of <i>The Breadwinner</i> ?
	Do you find similarities between “the Orient” presented in the film and “the Orient” manufactured by the US/Europe?
	Is the notion of seraglio useful to analyze gender roles and ideals of domesticity in the film?

In-class reading seminars	Group discussions in online forums
<p><i>Seminar 2</i></p> <p>Assigned readings:</p> <p>Culcasi, Karen and Mahmut Gökmen. 2011. "The Face of Danger. Beards in the U.S. Media's Representation of Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners", <i>Aether: The Journal of Media Geography</i>, VIII. B: 82-96.</p> <p>Tuastad, Dag. 2003. "Neo-Orientalism and the new barbarism thesis: aspects of symbolic violence in the Middle East conflict(s)", <i>Third World Quarterly</i>, 24 (4): 591-599.</p>	<p><i>Questions:</i></p> <p>One important idea in Culcasi & Gökmen's article is that, in the Western imagination, Muslims have a certain appearance (men are bearded and women are veiled) and that appearance is full of political significance. A certain appearance is an indicator of "civilization", "modernity", "religiosity", etc. (or lack of them). How is this idea relatable to the film? What does the film accomplish by picturing male and female characters the way they are?</p> <p>In the film, war is an important, yet little explained theme. How does the film associate Afghanistan with war? How does the new barbarism thesis help us disentangle this association?</p>
<p><i>Seminar 3</i></p> <p>Assigned reading:</p> <p>Falah, Ghazi-Walid. 2005. "The Visual Representation of Muslim/Arab Women in Daily Newspapers in the United States", in Ghazi-Walid Falah y Caroline Nagel (eds.), <i>Geographies of Muslim Women</i>. New York: Guildford Press.</p>	<p><i>Questions:</i></p> <p>In the analysis of "The Visual Representation of Muslim/Arab Women in Daily Newspapers in the United States", Ghazi-Walid Falah presents several relevant arguments which are usable in the analysis of <i>The Breadwinner</i>.</p> <p>Falah's argument boils down to the idea that seldom are Muslim/Arab women represented as having "normal lives": they are either "passive victims" of conflicts or "misguided political actors". You will probably agree with me that, in the film, we see more of passive victims than of misguided political actors. My question is: how is this "victimization" accomplished? Can you give specific examples or depict specific scenes? And is there any space for female agency in the story?</p> <p>Lastly, if you were filmmakers or film producers, had the power to produce a more complex portrayal of Afghan women and show them doing "normal things" (in other words, if you had the chance of not reproducing an Orientalist/neo-Orientalist imaginary), what kind of normal things would choose to show?</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

Group discussion is one of the strategies by which students can significantly improve their analytical and critical thinking competencies. Group discussion is a form of collaborative learning in which small groups of students cooperate to construct “knowledge through consensus building among the individual group members” (Wolfe, 2012: 421). The use of small groups (3-4 students) seeks “to increase student knowledge and to enhance higher order thinking skills” (id.) and “students’ interdependence” (Bruffee, 1995: 17). Specifically, studies of film teaching have shown that “collaborative learning practices can help achieve educational objectives, including: (1) promoting a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught; (2) allowing students to make conceptual linkages between theory and real-world examples; and (3) increasing retention of knowledge” (Lantis, 2013: 234).

The groups in the learning experience presented here were rather medium-sized (5-7 students). The purpose of group discussions was to get students engaged in answering the questions, exchanging ideas, and benefiting from each other’s interpretive and analytical capacities to generate a theoretically informed conversation around the film. Each student had to contribute to each forum thread with short texts of about 80 words and follow-up on group members’ contributions.

Stage 4: Second data collection (Closing reflections, debriefing and survey)

Once group discussions finish, students are asked to a) write “Closing reflections”, and b) participate in a debriefing session. To complete the “Closing reflections” stage, students are asked to go through their initial analysis and think about how the reading of postcolonial texts and the group discussions have affected their interpretation of the film. They are then asked to address this question: “What does it mean to analyze world politics or international relations from a postcolonial perspective?”. Students are requested to write at least 150 words. Students submit their responses in the course’s Moodle platform.

To wrap up the activity, a debriefing session is conducted during a 50-minute session, the purpose of which is to critically assess the learning process since the onset of the activity. To ensure the collection of enough feedback on Step 3, an online survey is made available to students on the Moodle platform. The survey is anonymous and includes 13 Likert-type questions. The questions seek to know whether the readings-based online discussions facilitate the fulfilment of the learning objectives, whether students understand better the potentialities associated to postcolonialism and IR approaches in general due to the activity, and their level of satisfaction with group work.

DATA AND METHODS

The article seeks to broaden our understanding of the effect of the activity on a) the development of analytical and critical thinking competencies, b) awareness related to the potential of theory, and c) sense-making of one’s own learning process; and, from this draws conclusions on the adequacy of the student-centered and active

learning philosophy that informs the activity planning. The data set consists of 32 textual units of the category “Initial reflections”, 30 textual units of the category “Closing reflections”, notes from a debriefing session and survey data⁴. The 62 textual units were imported into Atlas.ti software. Following a mainly inductive strategy, codes have been generated to systematize the data. The main methods of analysis are interpretivist research methods. Through thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) the article illuminates a) and b); narrative analysis is done to unpack c) (Bevir, 2006).

RESULTS

THE FILM AND THE REAL (DEVELOPING COMPETENCIES)

In Stage 2, students prioritize plot and description and tend to ignore the influence of Orientalism

Generally, students’ responses in the “Initial reflections” validate the starting hypothesis of this work. In Stage 2 of the activity, cognitively students are bent towards describing rather than analyzing the movie. Learners construct their responses to the question “Why is *The Breadwinner* interesting for IR students?” by reference to the film’s plot. At this point, students’ understanding of the last part of the question —“for IR students”— works at the level of the topics relatable to a world politics’ agenda (i.e., war, conflict, human rights, etc.). Responses disclose little critical capacity. By this it is meant that students are not yet engaged in a decolonial exercise as defined by Sabaratnam (2011). The category “Film’s principal themes” grouping three codes (see Table 2) has been created to designate the theme/s that come to prominence in the student responses. Students tend to foreground one or two principal themes and identify a range of other sub-topics.

TABLE 2.
FILM’S PRINCIPAL THEMES

Code	Grounded
1. Afghanistan under the authoritarian regime of the Taliban and effects on civil population	16
2. The situation of Afghan women under the Taliban	9
3. Inter-imperial rivalries and the geostrategic interests of great powers in Afghanistan	8

Source: Own elaboration.

4. It means that not all students enrolled in the class (36) participated in the project. The only compulsory part of the activity was participation in Stage 3. Both Faculty and participants granted permission to the realization of this research project.

The main theme in 16 textual units is “Afghanistan under the authoritarian regime of the Taliban and effects on the population”. This code is assigned to instances of text where the main focus is the Taliban, their governing style and civil-political relations. In students’ reflections the link between the evil Taliban rule, “war”, “conflict” and a suffering population is strong, but this tends not to be put in a relational framework that factors in the role of great powers in Afghanistan’s history. Whenever students find that the film is interesting for an IR student because it reveals the impact of long-term inter-imperial struggles over Afghanistan the code used is: “Inter-imperial rivalries and the geostrategic interests of great powers in Afghanistan” (8)⁵. In sum, the first main theme explains Afghanistan’s *disastrous* (my emphasis) situation in the lead-up to the 2001 invasion by reference to the Taliban rule (understood largely as an endogenous phenomenon), whereas the second theme considers the impact of colonialism and imperialism on present-day Afghanistan. The latter is the interpretation that comes closest to postcolonial tenets, but it is the least frequent theme in the data set.

The following excerpt exemplifies the first theme and the relevance of the Taliban’s actorness:

Firstly, we can see the Taliban regime, its ideas, and the lifestyle of the period. It is essential to understand the ideas of the Taliban regime because the regime had impact on the region and the world as well. The regime took the power after the Soviet-Afghan war and stayed in power until 2001, which means that the regime itself were a huge “actor” in the region and in the global world. Secondly, the movie shows that facts and lives of the people who lived under Taliban regime and experienced two wars (Soviet Afghan war and 2001 War in Afghanistan). These two wars shaped the history, policy, and the form of the region so people’s lives as well⁶.

Two elements in the student’s response deserve more attention. First, the lack of recognition of foreign involvement in the creation of the regime that oppresses the Afghan population. Indeed, the film keeps silent about US support of the Afghan *mujahedeen* in their war against the Soviet empire during the Cold War. Second, the identification of the Taliban and “wars” as the two factors that mold people’s lives. But “wars” here are “experienced”. They do not seem to be something other than a blurred happening without an intelligible grammar.

In the following excerpt, another student elaborates further the characteristics of the Taliban regime and the way in which people, including women, are victims of it:

The movie is located in Afghanistan, Kabul, in a period of domination by the Taliban, with an authoritarian regime [...]. An IR student can realize how the citizens

5. Numbers in parentheses stand for code occurrences.

6. Quotations from students’ Initial and Closing reflections are reproduced in their original form, without altering their words by correcting errors.

of countries suffering these kinds of authoritarian regimes are subject to human rights abuses and their dignity as human beings is not respected. Gender inequality the Taliban brought to Afghanistan is important, as women could do nothing but stay at home, they could not even speak up, not even show their bodies and they were constantly abused. In fact, they were not treated as human beings.

In fact, the fragment echoes the second theme with highest grounding in our sample: “The situation of women under the Taliban” (9). The student argues that the film documents the excesses of an authoritarian regime, especially over women and girls. In this way, the excerpt establishes a strong connection between “authoritarianism” and the situation of women. Since the film contains many scenes in which non-Taliban male and female characters are mistreated by Taliban characters, the emergence of this topic is unsurprising.

Mentions to the situation of women and the obligations imposed by the Taliban on them (namely, wearing *burqas*) are abundant. The obvious explanation is that the film tells the story of a 10-year-old girl, her mother and sister who, due to the father’s imprisonment, must develop strategies to survive in Taliban-ruled Kabul. This prompts references to the strictures of traditional societies and the role of religion in public life: “The film [...] different social struggles within a traditional society, it is undeniable that the most striking characteristic is how it approaches the subject of women and our struggle to climb up the ladder within society, something that is even harder to achieve for a girl like Parvana that lives under the complications that come from religious views governing the political powers”.

Lastly, the following text unit represents a prime example of a student who builds his Initial reflection around the theme with the lesser grounding “Inter-imperial rivalries and the geostrategic interests of great powers” (8):

The movie the Breadwinner is an interesting take on the war film genre. I say this because it is not placed directly in the conflict but in an area that has experienced battle and is waiting for another. Throughout the movie, we see the encroachment of the USSR and how it continues to affect Afghanistan with empty tank husks left as relics or how those who lived through the conflict continuing to bear the scars. In addition, we hear many of the characters refer to Afghanistan as a nation between empires and this links back to the tradition of colonialism and the experience with the Russian and British Empires and how this links to the Cold War with the Soviets and the American and once again in the modern day with the US’ hegemon and their imposition of “Western” values.

In their explanation of the *Afghan problem* (my emphasis), the student prioritizes inter-imperial/inter-state competition over domestic conflict between rival actors. The listing of three major periods of foreign interference in Afghanistan since the 19th through the present suggests that making proper sense of current events in Afghanistan requires the adoption of a long-term perspective and fair understanding of colonialism’s legacy, which is consonant with the postcolonial

approach in IR. In another excerpt, a student asserts that “this film prompts the audience to consider how great empires have fought each other over lands. Historically, there has been a desire for conquer and expansion for ideological, economic, and strategic purposes”. Both quotations echo the tendency to view Afghanistan as a cursed land and long-term object of imperial desire (Manchanda, 2020), as well as the inattentive attitude of imperial powers vis-à-vis the people. In this narrative, the Taliban stand as an endogenous “solution” to an externally imposed life of neglect.

In Stage 2, students tend to interpret that the film represents rather than participates in the construction of “the real”

Weber (2001) considers IR theories as meaning-making sites that generate *truth effects* on the reality they seek to explain. This view also informs her approach to working with films in the IR classroom. Accordingly, her pedagogical work is oriented towards “suspending a concern with what is true and what is false so that what makes something appear to be true of false can be analyzed” (*ibid.*: 286). This section discusses students’ takes on the film’s relationship to reality/truth. It establishes two categories depending on whether students attribute the film the capacity to *represent* or to participate in/*perform* “reality”. The first category —*Representational capacities*— speaks of a lack of critical view of the film’s relationship to truth. It is premised on the idea that the film is neutral and accurate with regards to the “facts” it represents. The latter —*Performative capacities*— speaks of the ability to identify that the film offers a biased view of reality and therefore constructs *a* truth.

Table 3 shows the distribution of the capacities in the 32 text units. Twenty-eight mentions to the film’s capacity to represent reality and 13 mentions to performative capacities have been coded. Four student profiles appear. Thirteen students identify only representational capacities (marked in light grey). Five students identify only performative capacities (marked in dark grey). Twelve students identify capacities of both types. In two student responses (S7 and S10, marked in light green) references to capacities do not appear.

Twenty-two of the 32 Initial reflections make assumptions about the film’s capacity to “instruct the audience”. The underlying reasoning is that, since the film deals *accurately* with war, invasion, gender inequality, Afghanistan’s traditional society or the Taliban, the film provides global audiences with trustable knowledge. It has been considered that students attach an instructional value to the film when expressions such as the film “illustrates”, “describes”, “reflects”, “helps to familiarize”, “offers an approximation”, “shows”, etc. appear in students’ writing. For instance, “It is worth recognizing that the film helps the viewer become familiar with the daily life of families and women in the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan” or “it describes the Afghanistan of recent years after the rise of the power of talibans, after wars against URSS and the fundamentalism”.

In five instances, students reasoned that the film represents reality according to an insider perspective or the point of view of women. For example, “the movie shows the point of view of women in the conflict”. This genre of interpretations is a corrective to the general claim that the film instructs the audience from no particular point of view but fails to consider the movie in terms of the *truth effects* it produces.

A different understanding of the film’s relationship to the real world can be sensed every time students question the film’s neutrality. The code “The film is not neutral” (8) is assigned to text instances in which students pinpoint the film’s lack of objectivity. In fewer occasions, students wed the lack of neutrality to Orientalism’s productive capacity. The code “The film is Orientalist” (2) is assigned to sections of text when terms such as “orientalist” or “orientalism” appear. Doing so indicates that students are trying to make an argument which is grounded in a concept/theory they are starting to be familiar with. In these cases, there is also a clear identification of the West/East framework embedded in the film. For instance, “It is essential to acknowledge that very often movies like this portray the western vision of the situation, easily falling under stereotypes and orientalism”.

Not all students, however, share the view that the film is Orientalist. For others it is exactly the opposite; they assert that the film is an invitation to overcome the prejudices and stereotypes about the Oriental that colonize the Western imagination. The code “The film challenges Orientalism” (3) is assigned to reflections that point in that direction. For example, a student begins his reflection by listing a series of elements in the film that convey an orientalized idea of Afghanistan, and then states that “However, as the film continues, another perspective emerges, a more nuanced perspective”. Other students consider that the film challenges the Orientalist imaginary because the movie shows “female agency” even in the context of the Taliban repression.

In sum, the analysis of the students’ Initial reflections shows a remarkable tendency to interpret the film from the “film itself” (Rose, 2001), without reflecting on the *truth effects* that derive from the choice of storylines and the combination of visual and textual elements in the film. Simultaneously, evidence is found that some students, at this point in the activity, sense that the film is not independent of the context (discursive and otherwise) of its production (id.). This tendency becomes much more visible and widespread after having gone through Stage 3 in the activity, as shown in the analysis of the students’ Closing reflections below.

POSTCOLONIALISM’S POTENTIALITIES

In Stage 4, students have developed an acute understanding of the potentialities associated with adopting a postcolonial approach in IR

Students’ “Closing reflections” come as a response to the question: “What does it mean to analyze world politics or international relations from a postcolonial

perspective?”. The analysis of the data discloses two levels of reflection. The first level concerns the potentialities for analysis (even for political practice) that students associate with postcolonialism. The second level, which we will discuss in the next section, concerns students’ sense-making of their own learning process.

As Table 4 shows, the potentialities associated with postcolonial analysis have been further clustered into four groups.

TABLE 4.
POTENTIALITIES ASSOCIATED WITH POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS

	Code	Grounded
A	Identify the role of popular discourse in the production of global hierarchies	13
	Identify the role of colonialism in the production of global hierarchies	12
	Look into historical, societal, and cultural processes and relations involved in the establishment of global hierarchies	9
B	Complement traditional analysis in IR	9
	Identify the Eurocentrism of traditional IR	4
	Understand why states behave as they do	2
C	Develop structuralist understandings of political violence	1
	Identify Orientalism and Western-centric perspectives	9
	Adopt a critical perspective vis-à-vis established “truths”	8
D	Incorporate subaltern voices and perspectives	8
	Overcome paternalistic attitudes	1
	Promote a peace-oriented agenda	1

Source: Own elaboration.

Group A contains three codes that refer to what postcolonial analysis can enlighten with respect to the relationship between colonialism, popular culture, and the production of global hierarchies. The code with highest grounding “Identify the role of popular discourse in the production of global hierarchies” (13) has been assigned to text segments in which students focus on the contribution of popular cultural forms to the (re)production of an imaginary of the Arab/Muslim world that perpetuates the difference between “us” and “them”. Examples include the following:

It is Westerners vision of the Middle East, and, in this case, of Afghanistan and its society the one that is portrayed in “The Breadwinner” even if the producers and director of the film might believe that they are giving an “accurate” and “realistic” representation of this concrete region of the world.

The breadwinner is an important film for IR students to understand the political power of popular content and to understand the relevance of the content that we consume and the power it has.

Students stress the power of popular culture to foster one-sided visions of the Middle East/Afghanistan, and Western audiences' inability to question mainstream representations, thus producing cultural industries' desired effect which is to disseminate their "truth" —a truth that, in turn, is convenient for global hegemonic agendas.

A related potentiality is "Identify the role of colonialism in the production of global hierarchies" (12). Here, students cherish that postcolonial analysis is an approach that considers the legacy of colonialism for world politics, meaning that world political analysis cannot afford to ignore the influence of past events or colonial forms of relation across North and South in the postcolonial present:

Analyzing world politics from a postcolonial perspective, means that we analyze how and why did the hierarchical world order come into place, recognizing the everyday injustices that existed in the past with the least favored regions, and that still nowadays influence them to a large extend.

Finally, I think that these understanding of the present with lenses that take into consideration the colonial legacy is fundamental in order to frame, understand and act in the world of politics, and also to leave behind the paternalistic approach that I have referred to before.

As the above statement shows, for one student, acknowledging the role of colonial legacies in the game of world politics is a necessary step to accomplish another "post-colonial" obligation which is to "Overcome paternalistic attitudes" (1). This is relevant because it suggests that other than an awareness-raising intellectual effort, postcolonial analysis prompts a commitment with a practical political agenda that includes a change of attitude towards governments and societies in the Global South; or an even more ambitious project which is to "promote peace" (1) (see cluster D).

Cluster A contains yet another code that groups instances of text specifying the different levels at which colonialism and enduring imperial forms operate. For some students, therefore, postcolonialism is tied up with analyzing world politics by "Looking into historical, societal, and cultural processes and relations involved in the establishment of global hierarchies" (9); thus, looking beyond inter-state power relations: "A postcolonial perspective to the analysis of international relations essentially forces you to go beyond the hegemonic discourses and power relations between states, to a greater scope of analysis involving dynamics at the societal and cultural levels".

A second set of potentialities has to do with the contribution of postcolonial analysis to IR analysis. Several students situate postcolonial analysis as a "Complement to traditional analysis in IR" (9). As shown below, adding a postcolonial layer to the analysis of international relations enables "a greater critical understanding of the power dynamics that dominate the world", something which is in turn related to the interest in fleshing out the power relations between colonizers and colonized, and the relevance of constructed visions of the Other:

Widens the traditional (and dominant) IR understandings and implies a greater critical understanding of the power dynamics that dominate the world. Moreover, the lenses used by Postcolonialism, enable a focus that in my view other perspectives to IR lack. Meaning by this that this perspective, looks at the reality from the literature of the colonial power over the colonized, which implicates a deconstruction of the constructed perspectives about the Orient (mostly).

For another student, postcolonial analysis complements IR analysis because it pays attention to categories such as “identity”, “culture”, “gender”, “class” or “ethnicity” which are not so common in “mainstream” analysis. And yet another student defines postcolonial analysis in terms of adopting an alternative epistemology. Indeed, this is a very important remark. It reveals awareness that different approaches to IR are not just a colorful repertoire of fruits in a market from which one picks up based on random preference, but that different IR approaches are linked to specific onto-epistemologies.

Some reflections “Identify the Eurocentrism of traditional IR” (4) and the role of the postcolonial approach in unpacking modern categories of thought that are also embedded in Orientalist discourse: “The postcolonial IR theory challenges with the mainstream IR theories by bringing the discourse of colonialism in the world politics. The mainstream ones have the Western centric approach, and this is one of the targets of criticism by the Postcolonial theory. Their theory and approach are based on criticism of Western’s construction of other as backward and irrational”.

Lastly, two more codes are included in this cluster. One is assigned to sections of text where students underline that postcolonial analysis furthers “Understanding on why states behave as they do” (2) and “Develop structuralist understandings of political violence” (1). The occurrence of the former indicates that for at least two students postcolonialism is also useful for the analysis of an IR classical theme: state behavior. The latter —“Develop a structuralist explanation of political violence” (1)— is directly related to the “new barbarism thesis” (Tuastad, 2003) debated in Seminar 2 and the online discussion that followed.

Finally, cluster C groups all those potentialities associated with the questioning of Orientalism and the Western-centric perspective on reality, as well as the questioning of established truths. In Stage 4 of the activity already many students associate postcolonial analysis with the potential to “Identify Orientalism and the Western-centric perspectives” (9). This applies to popular discourse and *The Breadwinner*, but also to other genre of discourses. Thus, as one student notes, postcolonial analysis helps in “Identifying (Neo)Orientalist discourses, characterized by generalizations and cultural assumptions, as well as Manichean processes of ‘othering’: civilians v. barbarians, order v. disorder, rationality v. irrationality”.

A different code has been assigned to tracks of text where an explicit concern with the Orientalist/Western perspective is not identified, but the association of postcolonial analysis with the capacity to question “the dominant and mainstream” is expressed. The code “Adopt a critical perspective vis-à-vis established ‘truths’” (8) is assigned to instances where students sense that postcolonial analysis offers tools to challenge

established frameworks for thinking the reality around them, as in “to question what is established, to look for a new and freed perspective and try to open our eyes on what we call our ‘normality’” or “an important alternative lens to understand the international sphere outside the established perspective”.

Finally, it is significant that, for some students, the postcolonial approach serves to “Incorporate subaltern voices and perspectives” (8) to analyses of international relations. A student, for instance, writes: “I also believe that adopting a postcolonial perspective means being ready to listen and pay attention to testimonies and voices of marginalized people which have been historically left out of dominant discourses”. Differently put, some students sense that the postcolonial approach is helpful in decentering “us” from the narration of world politics.

MAKING SENSE OF THE LEARNING PROCESS

In Stage 4, students (unexpectedly) set out to make sense of their own learning process and three main narratives come to the fore: eye/mind opening, loss of innocence and deconstruction

The students’ final reflections go far beyond “objectively” enumerating the possibilities that postcolonial analysis opens. The analysis of these texts reveals that students use this space to make sense of their own learning process. Table 5 shows a series of codes, their grounding and examples from the real text that exemplify the different categories into which student’s reflections on their learning process have been systematized. A more advanced exercise of interpretivism allows us to observe that three narratives stand out referred to how students make sense of their learning process. Some of the self-assessment categories are visibly related to the said narratives.

Eye/mind opening narrative

The image of the mind or eyes opening to a new or more nuanced reality gives access to a narrative about the learning process that acknowledges enlarged capacities to think about international reality and the film. There are examples of actual text that directly express this idea: “I feel I have opened my mind” or “The last week’s readings have completely opened my mind”. This narrative resonates loudly as students engage in a self-evaluative process when asked to write Closing reflections on the film. The narrative is associated with students’ acknowledgement that their perspective on the movie has changed; that they are now able to see the film in more complex terms; pierce through the surface of things and “see beyond”. Acknowledgement that analytical and critical thinking capacities have been enlarged is an ability of which eye/mind opening depends. The same is true for the other two narratives. The eye/mind opening narrative pictures a more capable student, but not excessively emotionally involved.

Loss of innocence narrative

Innocence is a human state associated with childhood and happy old times when reality seemed kinder and devoid of duplicity. So, when we see students narrating their learning process in terms of losing their innocence or ceasing from being naïve, we feel the expression of a certain sense of bitter disappointment regarding how things are “in reality”. The difference between this narrative and the mind opening narrative is that, while opening one’s mind has to do with identifying more dimensions to a phenomenon, developing analytical skills to address that phenomenon and, in short, a process of intellectual growth; the loss of innocence narrative denotes that the transformation operates at a psychic level. It touches directly on a person’s coming of age and gaining awareness of unpleasant realities. As several students confess: “I first saw it [the film] in a totally innocent way”, “Looking back at my first thoughts on the movie, I think now that I was a little bit naïve” and “At first, I thought this movie was really accurate regarding the representation of the Orient and their traditions. However, it is some kind of naïve of not seeing the Western ideal through the movie”. Tracks of text coded as “Initially, I was unable to identify Orientalism and its visual constitution”, “Initially, I was unable to read the film within a geopolitical framework” and “Initially, I was unable to question established discourses” relate to this narrative too.

Deconstruction narrative

In the deconstruction narrative the development of the activity affects students in a very personal way and is psychically transformative as in the loss of innocence narrative. The distinct element here is that students become aware of their participation in the establishment of (a received) truth but see the possibility of change. They seem to mean that, once the trick has been revealed to them, there is no alternative but change things. The excerpt below notwithstanding acknowledges the difficulty of changing everything we have believed in so far. The narrative is strongly associated with the assessment that “Throughout, I have had to question my assumptions, prejudices, and stereotypes”, also evident below:

I think that analysing world politics and international relations from a postcolonial perspective means to detach ourselves from the western clichés that we might have acquired since we were children.

I think that analysing world politics and IR from a post-colonial perspective takes a whole deconstruction of our beliefs and what we thought was the reality (for Western people). The orientalist perspective is so deeply rooted in our construction and what we’ve been told [...] that it’s really difficult to free ourselves from that.

TABLE 5.
SELF-ASSESSMENT

Code	Grounded	Examples
Throughout, I have had to question my assumptions, prejudices, and stereotypes	8	<p>It has given me the opportunity to build new arguments, to detect long-held assumptions and to apply and see reality through a different perspective</p> <p>Becoming aware of one's own prejudices vis-a-vis colonised peoples, derived from the Orientalist discourse that "we" as people from the metropoli might have been exposed to</p> <p>I realized that some of the Western stereotypes of the Middle East were really ingrained in my mind. Starting from no knowledge of the Middle East, I can now take much more perspective on what I observe in the media or in discourse about the Middle East created by the West.</p> <p>This Orientalist portrayal of women is something that I did not consider when I first watched the movie, but now after having read the texts and having discussed about it with my colleagues, I clearly identify the trend.</p> <p>Now that I read the analysis I did a couple of months ago, I notice that I did not pay attention to elements that in fact, reflect the Orientalist approach that rules many visual representations of the Middle East.</p>
Throughout, my perspective on the movie has changed	7	<p>Throughout, my perspective on the movie has changed.</p> <p>It is clear that my perception of the movie has changed a lot since we began this discussion.</p> <p>I can now take much more perspective on what I observe in the media or in discourse about the Middle East created by the West.</p>
Throughout, I have developed analytical and critical thinking	5	<p>Going through my initial analysis of the Breadwinner [...] makes me be aware of the interesting development and evolution of acquired abilities that the gradual reading dynamics accompanied by the understanding of the context and the postcolonial perspective studies (in-class lectures) have increased my ability to analyse and to extract important elements from texts or visual representation materials.</p>

Code	Grounded	Examples
Throughout, I have been able to see/go beyond	4	After all our lectures, reading and discussion, I'm now able to take more distance, to use different angles, to notice way more information than before, and most of all to see behind, beyond. the arguments of the postcolonialist authors have enabled us to go beyond a superficial analysis of those ideas to look at deeper elements.
Initially, my analysis was simplistic, narrow-minded, too general or lacked an academic perspective	4	I can see that my analysis at the beginning was much more general and lacked an academic perspective. I can observe that it was very much carried forward through my personal point of view about the Middle East region, my knowledge of international geopolitics and my cultural background.
Throughout, I have been able to develop a more complex vision of the movie	3	The way I see it, the reading of postcolonial texts has given me new perspectives and ideas on the analysis of the movie.
Initially, I was unable to read the film within a geopolitical framework	2	In the previous analysis, I could not associate this with the general division that the west has been doing and developing throughout the years between the west and the east.
Initially, I was unable to question established discourses	2	Before this I would not question to such extent the realities shown by discourses but now I realize I have to rethink many ideas.
Initially, I was unsure about how to interpret the film	1	At first [...] I was not very sure about how to interpret the film.

Source: Own elaboration.

DISCUSSION

The results offer substantial indications that the activity contributes positively to a) the development of competencies, especially of critical thinking, b) the development of awareness related to the potential of theory, and c) to making sense of one's own learning process. It has also achieved to prompt students to construct a map of the potentialities associated with the postcolonial approach in IR that is not restricted to the specific theory of Orientalism. The latter achievement has exceeded my initial expectations. Given that students had not previously been instructed in Weber's (2001) or Sabaratnam's (2011) theses, this has largely been an inductive journey. By engaging in the exercise of dissecting the film through theoretical arguments that were somewhat more limited in their explanatory scope (those in the reading list), learners have been able to move away from the understanding that the film represents reality as it is to the vision that the film participates in the construction of that reality, thus generating *truth effects*.

Overall, I read these as indications that critical thinking skills have been developed. But to test the impact of the film on the analytical capacities of students, one should analyze the online group discussions in Step 3. Grading was based on that step (obviously the most important for students!), but the focus of my analysis here has been on the "before" and "after" Step 3. This article has not provided enough data to draw all possible conclusions regarding the activity's capacity to enhance analytical skills, which also depend on additional objective assessment tools such as replicating a cognate exercise —namely, asking learners to apply what is by now a learnt theoretical approach to a different film (or a similar cultural product). The truth of the matter is that this logic was applied in the final grading of the students enrolled in Political Challenges in the MENA Region in 2019/20, since they were asked to submit group projects consisting of a film analysis (40% of the final grade). But an analysis of the resulting projects has not been developed for the purposes of this article.

Still, it is important here to get some sense of whether the activity design was overall successful and that includes mention of Step 3. Data from the debriefing session, the survey and the "Closing reflections" offer relevant insights. In the "Closing reflections", group work and collaborative learning have 12 mentions, often to underline that it was "nice", "entertaining" and "enriching". Only once a student admits that "I found very hard to discuss the films with my mates because I felt each one didn't want to share personal opinion". References to the adequacy of the seminar/online discussion dynamic are also frequent (15). As one student notes, "As postcolonial perspective requires critical analysis and deeper linkages of ideas, group work has also nourished the experience, enabling us to go further from our initial interpretations and correlation between the texts and the films". Also, during the debriefing session, students pondering over group work and the active learning methods opined that "It's good to learn in a way where we are put in an active position and the teacher is there facilitating the learning"; or, what is perhaps the most epic sentence uttered by one of the students in the class, "on your own you go faster, but together we go further".

We cannot, however, ignore that a potential desirability effect is behind students' overall positive responses and that the less enthusiastic simply did not voice their opinion. The survey data actually confirm that group work elicits mixed feelings. It must be also mentioned that less than half of the student population attended the debriefing session, with only eight students openly expressing their views on the learning experience. Some bits of overheard conversations between students participating in the debriefing session, allow me to think that, at least for some of them, the activity sowed a seed. Their position as receivers of popular culture material and consumers of representations of Arab, Muslims and Middle Easterners was transformed. They acknowledged to be then much more conscious of the embedded Orientalism, especially when it comes to women⁷.

Thirty students completed the survey. The data teach us three main lessons. First, the level of satisfaction with linking the film to readings is very high⁸. For example, 13 students "Totally agree" with the statement "Discussing the film based on academic texts has helped me to analyze the point of view about the story"; 16 students "Agree" and only 1 student "Neither agrees nor disagrees". Secondly, answers are more distributed across the Likert-scale in questions relative to group work. Eleven students "Totally agree", 12 students "Agree", 2 students "Neither agree nor disagree" and 4 students "Disagree" with the statement "Group work on the film has served to build a more complete analysis of the film". This casts doubts on the overall satisfaction with group work but, on the other hand, students acknowledge that they benefited from their peers' inputs. This comes to view when we see that 15 students "Totally Agree", 12 students "Agree" and only 3 students "Neither agree nor disagree" with the statement "Reading the contributions of my peers in each thread has made me reflect on elements of the film that had not caught my attention".

Thirdly, survey data show that the activity needs to improve its capacity to teach the limitations attached to postcolonialism as an analytical approach and its stand within the broader repertoire of IR approaches. Sixteen students "Totally agree", 8 students "Agree", 3 students "Neither agree nor disagree" and 3 students "Disagree" with the statement that "The work on the film has helped me to understand the contribution of postcolonial studies to International Relations"; whereas 11 students "Totally agree", 11 students "Agree", 6 students "Neither agree nor disagree" and 2 students "Disagree" with the statement "The elaboration of a postcolonial analysis has

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7. The gender and female agency question has appeared constantly in the conversation, especially around whether the film allowed us to see Afghan women in other than passive roles, but in my course, I have not made visible the feminist critiques of Said's original formulation of Orientalism. Obviously, doing so would be positive and could allow students to address the question of whether white females (Nora Twomey and Angelina Jolie) doing a film about Afghan women is a practice of "epistemic violence" (Lewis, 1996), or otherwise.
 8. The survey did not include a question about the specific questions I formulated related to each reading. Student feedback on this could be useful to improve Step 3. My own impression is that the questions worked quite well except for the very last one.

helped me to better understand what other approaches to IR (realism, liberalism, etc.) are useful for”.

In this regard, I must acknowledge that while in the design of the activity and throughout its development, I have focused on students understanding the potential of the postcolonial approach to IR, I have made less effort to share the criticisms coming from the rationalist-positivist camp regarding the great deconstructive potential of approaches steeped in critical theory but lacking in problem-solving capacity. I do not necessarily agree with the assumptions behind this point, but surely the theoretical training of my IR students would be richer and more honest if the critiques levelled at the “non-mainstream” IR approaches were made evident. This could also help students to grasp better the distinct analytical horizons that rationalist-positivist vs. reflectivist approaches to IR illuminate.

Finally, it is important to mention that the experiment was carried out with only one group of students due to the need to assess everyone with the same criteria. Organizing a group control was not an option. A group control would have allowed us to know whether the learning objectives can be achieved by following other learning methods, and in which points the achievement differs. Nor can we know whether an alternative activity design would have had a comparable effect to that obtained here in terms of the development of critical thinking and understanding of the theoretical approach.

CONCLUSION

Teaching is an exercise in continuous learning and many of us will surely continue to ask ourselves questions about how to turn a nice idea in our heads into a solid pedagogical experience. Here I have shared the effort of planning a film analysis activity for students majoring in IR. The question guiding my research has been whether by planning a student-centered, active learning activity, the critical thinking skills of my students and their understanding of the potentialities associated with postcolonialism would see themselves improved. Considering that the only traditional teaching method employed in the activity was a 50-minute lecture, and based on the results from my analyses, the overall conclusion is that the idea was successful. However, it is also important to bear in mind one should not think about critical thinking as a competency that can be attained once and for all. Critical thinking requires long-term commitment with estrangement with the things we believe in, and with the stories than films and theories tell.

Also, the path traced here is not the only option available to teach about postcolonialism. The activity discussed is especially useful if one is interested in teaching the relevance of the culture-power nexus for postcolonial thinkers. Following in the footsteps of active learning defenders, I have betted that getting students to do the analysis of a cultural product themselves (getting into the story, looking at the details, drawing connections with other films) would be a more lasting learning experience than

hearing or reading about how others conduct cultural analyses. Postcolonialism nonetheless is a broad program and might be addressed from different (and complementary) angles like the international political economy which other colleagues might find more useful. Similarly, film viewing can be combined with learning methods I have not considered here. The options are infinite for IR instructors.

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The case method in the teaching of contemporary Arab political thought: The shutdown of the pan-Arab newspaper *al-Ḥayāt* as a case study

El método de caso en la enseñanza del pensamiento político árabe contemporáneo: el cierre del periódico pan-árabe al-Ḥayāt como caso de estudio

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Abstract

Backed by the development of postcolonial studies and subaltern studies, the teaching of contemporary Arab political thought as a “border” and interdisciplinary subject must provide students with the theoretical and conceptual tools to respond to the ideological, social, political and intellectual dynamism of contemporary Arab societies in transformation. To apply this methodological approach, this article presents a practical activity based on the case method (CM). As its general objective, the method challenges students to assume learning as a space for cross-cultural reflection through the analysis and argumentation of a real case history: in this instance, the definitive closure of the influential pan-Arab newspaper *al-Ḥayāt* in March 2020, after almost 75 years of existence. The activity trains students in general and instrumental competences, such as critical text analysis, by positioning them face-to-face with the case under study. After analyzing and evaluating the case elements provided in the classroom, students can apply any previously acquired knowledge about reform, identity, democracy, culture, Arab nationalism, capitalism, etc. Responding to the case in question, students proved to be able to develop alternatives and synthesize their own views. This method also encourages students to analyze their self-perception of this process.

Keywords: active methodologies, case method, Arab political thought, MENA Region, teaching.

Resumen

Respaldao por el surgimiento de los estudios poscoloniales y los estudios subalternos, la enseñanza del pensamiento político árabe contemporáneo como materia “fronteriza” e interdisciplinaria debe

dotar a los estudiantes de las herramientas teóricas y conceptuales para responder al dinamismo ideológico, social, político e intelectual de las sociedades árabes contemporáneas en transformación. Para aplicar este enfoque metodológico, este artículo presenta una actividad práctica basada en la metodología de caso. Su objetivo general es que los alumnos asuman el aprendizaje como un espacio de reflexión intercultural a través del análisis y la argumentación de un caso real: el cierre definitivo en marzo de 2020 del influente diario panárabe *al-Hayāt* tras casi setenta y cinco años de existencia. La actividad fomenta la formación de competencias generales e instrumentales, como el análisis crítico de textos, a través del posicionamiento de los alumnos frente al caso de estudio. Tras analizar y evaluar sus elementos impartidos en el aula, los estudiantes son capaces de aplicar los conocimientos adquiridos previamente sobre reforma, identidad, democracia, cultura, nacionalismo árabe, capitalismo, etc. Respondiendo al caso en cuestión, se confirma que fueron capaces de desarrollar alternativas y sintetizar sus propios enfoques. Este método también les permitió analizar su autopercepción de este proceso.

Palabras clave: metodologías activas, método de caso, pensamiento político árabe, región MENA, enseñanza.

CONTEXTUALISING THE LEARNING PROCESS: PARTICULARITIES OF THE MENA-RELATED SUBJECTS IN A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

The introduction of new theoretical frameworks in the classroom capable of endowing teaching with an appropriate epistemological approach to different academic subjects is making more and more sense. In this case, bearing in mind the emergence of postcolonial studies and subaltern studies, the teaching of contemporary Arab political thought, as a “border” and interdisciplinary subject, cannot be approached as a forensic analysis of a petrified and *orientalised* reality. Rather, it must provide students with the theoretical and conceptual tools that respond to the ideological, social, political and intellectual dynamism of contemporary Arab societies in transformation. The theoretical framework of post-orientalism (Dabashi, 2012), applied from within a transcultural epistemology, allows them to address this genuine reality through active learning (Ferreiro Prado, 2020). On the one hand, this approach facilitates a contextualized-problematized access to critical knowledge of Arab contemporary political thought, its main authors, its concepts and its debates; on the other, it directly challenges students from the beginning of the teaching process, questioning their agency and responsibility in learning, as well as their commitment to social transformation (Melero Aguilar, 2012).

To apply this methodological approach, this chapter presents a practical activity based on the case method¹. Its general objective is for students to assume the practice of learning as a space for cross-cultural reflection through the analysis and argumentation

1. Special thanks to the cohort of students enrolled in “Contemporary Arab Thought” at the University of Granada (2020-2021).

of a real case, namely, the definitive closure of the influential pan-Arab newspaper *al-Hayāt* in March 2020, after almost 75 years of existence since it was founded in Beirut in 1946. With this objective in mind, the activity encourages the training of general competences such as the “development of reflective attitudes and a critical spirit” (CG1) and the “appreciation of cross-cultural interconnection, curiosity and an open attitude towards other cultures, ideas and paradigms” (CG13) as well as instrumental competences, such as critical text analysis.

The activity took place during the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021 and developed in three phases in May 2021. It was based on the positioning of the students just before the aforementioned case. The previously acquired knowledge about reform, identity, democracy, culture, technology, Arab nationalism, capitalism, etc. (the conceptual dimension) will be applied after analysing and evaluating in a reasoned way the available elements provided by the teacher (the analytical dimension) (Benito and Cruz, 2011). These elements include primary textual sources in Arabic, and secondary textual sources in English and Spanish, and photographs. Responding to the case question “what does the shutdown of *al-Hayāt* imply in ideological and political terms?”, students should be able to develop alternatives and synthesize their approaches to the question, assuming the consequences of their decision. Students will then discuss these alternatives and approaches in small groups and present them in the reassembled class (the synthetic dimension). As the secondary objective, students analyse their self-perception of this process through the final writing of an intellectual autobiography. Finally, a qualitative evaluation will be carried out.

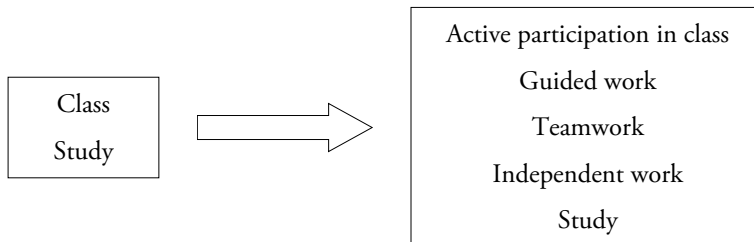
Following the latest trends in pedagogy, many studies point out the importance of enhancing learning through effective practice (Fernsten and Fernsten, 2005; De Miguel Díaz, 2005; Esteve Mon and Gisbert Cervet, 2011; Jones *et al.*, 1997). This practice also implies a set of important changes in the traditional mental framework of the teaching process in the university classroom, going from a teaching-oriented to a learning-centred methodology (Tourón and Martín, 2019: 31). This educative transformation also implies a change of paradigm, as long as the student is now an engaged actor in its own learning process. Students are neither isolated in terms of their personal and academic relationships nor in ideological terms. More often, students of Middle East and North African (MENA) studies and related areas in public universities as the University of Granada usually have directly experienced the diversity of the region and its particularities. They are usually deeply engaged in the cultural and political narratives about Middle Eastern and North African societies, being themselves North African in origin or connected to Arab and/or North African friends and/or families.

Compared to students in other private universities (Díaz Sanz and Ferreiro Prado, 2021: 2), they appear to be especially concerned about the problematized subjects usually represented in Western media, such as the *hijāb* (Ramírez and Mijares, 2021), Muslim minorities, migration, terrorism and such. Instead of finding postcoloniality (Shoat, 1992) and neocoloniality as problematic concepts lacking in *objectivity* (Díaz Sanz and Ferreiro Prado, 2021: 3), fourth-year undergraduate students enrolled in the

Contemporary Arab Thought course at the University of Granada respond comfortably to this post-structuralist perspective and prove eager to overcome the preconceptions and problematizations of Arab and Islamic reality in social terms. Thus, taking into account the new paradigm, this sensibility and proximity with the academic object should be stressed. The university lecturer in this situation should use the proximity between subject (student) and object (MENA studies) to go along with students in their learning journey in order to reach the ultimate goal not only of achieving social transformation through critical knowledge but also fighting islamophobia, racism, xenophobia and other forms of inequality and injustice. Thus, the teacher or academic lecturer should not remain a mere *magister* who teaches *ex cathedra* but instead become someone whose academic experience may facilitate the students' learning process through the use of active methodologies and the implementation of alternative systems of evaluation (Ferreiro Prado, 2020: 13). This process should transform the students into active subjects of their own learning and principal actors of social transformation (Melero Aguilar, 2012). This change significantly affects the role of students in the learning process:

GRAPHIC 1.

THE NEW ROLES OF STUDENTS IN THE EHEA



Source: Benito and Cruz (2011: 18).

That said, it is necessary to note that despite the change in the theoretical paradigm, the lack of economic and academic resources in public higher education, along with the speed and superficiality with which the process of assimilation into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has been undertaken in Spain, has left this transformation of roles in its initial stage. Students and university lecturers still face many difficulties in overcoming this problem in terms of resources, time and effort (Masjuan i Codina *et al.*, 2009). Because of this, classic paradigms continue to predominate in the classroom. The question remains how this new paradigm could be applied in an academic context where the study of the Middle East and North Africa also implies a social narrative constructed in terms of perception and action.

Bearing in mind the importance of this societal observation, the learning process should consider the epistemological element in the classroom. That is why the post-orientalist perspective (Dabashi, 2012) may help teacher and students to adopt a critical

stance towards the object (Arab political thought) and towards the dialectical relationship that takes place between the student and the political ideas and contexts constituent to the process. This conceptual dimension is essential to undertake the analytical dimension of the practical activity at the heart of the case method.

Thus, the main goal of subaltern studies (Spivak, 2010), including those theories such as post-orientalism that call for an epistemological reform of knowledge in the Arab and Islamic region—from Edward Said to Hamid Dabashi—is the meeting of diverse *othernesses* without an ideological, historical and cultural center in a synchronous world (Macías Amoretti, 2019). Overcoming the ethnic-territorial limits of thought and, therefore, the concept of national identity as an ideological starting point, would be the first step to overcoming the epistemological limits imposed by contemporary power relations between the center and the periphery, as in the traditional narratives of “West-MENA”. An alternative narrative, properly presented to the students, would help them to re-categorize traditional center-periphery political narratives and thereby re-evaluate the premises of modernity that frame non-Western thought. In the case of contemporary Arab thought, these premises of modernity are the nation-state (culture-identity), democracy (politics) and development (economy). Thus, new active methodologies offer significant tools for connecting this shifting paradigm to different “levels of knowledge” as in Bloom’s taxonomy (Ferreiro Prado, 2020: 14)² and to the three “typologies of political reasoning” found in Rosenberg (1998)³. Students must link these elements critically to their own way of learning and thinking about the “other” in cross-cultural perspective, taking into account that knowledge also comes from the “other” (al-Jābrī, 2003). In this sense, the concepts of “interdisciplinarity” and “border” thinking in classroom activities are understood from a post-structuralist perspective.

Cooperative learning and the case method (CM): possibilities in MENA studies

As part of active learning methodologies, cooperative learning’s main objective is to encourage collaboration among students distributed in small groups in order to maximize learning. In this way, the students assume an active role, seeking information and solving the proposed task while promoting the development of their classmates’ learning, since they all contribute in the same way to the resolution of the proposed task. To do this, the students must necessarily assign interdependent roles to

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2. According to Bloom *et al.* (1956), these levels are: 1. Remembering; 2. Understanding; 3. Applying; 4. Analysing; 5. Evaluating; and 6. Creating.
 3. Sequential, linear and systematic (Rosenberg, 1998: 548); these typologies are directly linked to the cognitive description of Arab reason by the Moroccan philosopher Muhammad ‘Abid al-Jābrī (1935-2010): *bayān* (demonstration), *‘irfān* (illumination), and *burhān* (deductive reasoning) (al-Jābrī, 2001).

the members of their group (the reader-recorder-verifier technique) or seek and complete the information that the teacher has previously distributed in a fragmented manner (the puzzle technique) (Benito and Cruz, 2011: 27). Any practical application of this methodology in the case of Contemporary Arab political thought and other MENA-related subjects would involve different techniques, such as historical commentary, social and economic contextualization and cooperative discourse analysis, either by assigning different roles by group/text/source or by giving random snippets of the text/source to members of each group. The role of the teacher in this collaborative methodology consists in the first place of explaining the group's learning objectives to the students very clearly. Secondly, the activities must be prepared according to the objectives specified (which could be a single topic, a concrete practical activity or the whole subject). The interdependence of the work groups must be guaranteed and defined by the teacher from the very beginning of the activity and should follow a clear set of criteria. The teacher is also responsible for monitoring and evaluating group activity in accordance with the abovementioned objectives. Even though the teacher's role as a planner and counselor is essential, students must participate with their instructor in resolving any doubts or problems that may arise during the learning activity.

Cooperative learning and the case method are fundamentally practical methods, as long as they integrate the acquisition of skills and attitudes and realize academic objectives (Escribano and Del Valle, 2008). They also possess an affective dimension (Ferreiro Prado, 2020: 20) and democratic component that is especially valuable in learning MENA politics in general terms and Arab political thought in particular (McNergney *et al.*, 1999). The case method is a form of cooperative learning, in which the active participation of students is encouraged through their interaction as subjects of their own learning process. Its distinction from other active methodologies such as problem-based learning (PBL) lies in the teacher's proposal of activities related to subject content, though groups must resolve the assigned case autonomously, preventing an unequivocal or so-called "correct solution" (Moallem *et al.*, 2019):

Because there are no "right answers" to case issues, both teachers and students are liberated from the tyranny of the right-answer syndrome. The instructor who creates classrooms conditions of psychological safety can extend people's thinking about matters critical to living in a democracy: understanding differences, choosing from alternatives, helping fellow students, stimulating ethical thinking and acting, learning about history and understanding the complexity of moral decisions, and testing beliefs and myths against the reality of life (McNergney *et al.*, 1999: 13-14).

This learning method is therefore basically autonomous and possesses a strong self-assessment component, since it is possible to detect and remain aware of group deficiencies and difficulties while observing obstacles encountered while solving proposed tasks. This may lead students to solve concrete problems and even continue

with their learning. The main techniques used according to this learning method relate to sharing and corroborating sources of information, analysis methods and consultation tools, so it implies learning methodologically and technically along with learning about the object itself. Having this ultimate goal in mind, the proposed case-method activity must be well planned, and its objectives clearly integrated not only in terms of both general objectives and syllabus competences but also in terms of the method's learning philosophy and active methodologies in general terms. Contrary to traditional learning, the case method proposes a kind of circular learning, in which the case to be analyzed is first presented and discussed and its learning requisites identified. This marks a turning point that finally leads to the problem's solution or to new problems to solve. The last phase utilizes an evaluation that concludes not so much with a solution to a problem as with the clarification and exposition of methodological difficulties in learning in order to be able to solve them later. As Zerrillo states: "Case teaching transports the educational experience from passive to active learners [...]. The case setting, whether it is a class discussion or an assignment, demands that the students actively participate in solving a problem" (Zerrillo, 2021: 4-5).

Nevertheless, the case method includes more than a solution to a problem as in the PBL method; it also involves taking a stand on a given case developed from a real situation. Consequently, participants engage in a practical activity to try to extrapolate previously acquired knowledge (the conceptual dimension) about a specific scenario. After analyzing and rationally evaluating the available elements (necessarily limited in sources and time), the students should be able to take a stand and defend a critical position vis-à-vis the case (the analytical dimension). At the same time, students should be able to develop alternatives and synthesize their ideas, experiencing the consequences of their decisions in the first place (an ethical commitment), debating them in small groups, and presenting them to the full class (the synthetic dimension). This makes it one of the most active and practical methods to be used in the classroom.

The proposed case must be a real case extracted from an equally real context that is directly linked to the theory and the conceptualization used in the learning content. This type of learning is especially suitable for practice in the Political Thought classroom generally and Contemporary Arab Thought classes particularly because it adds context, perspective and prospective analysis to a clearly problematized area. Perspective must be taken into account in the planning, development and evaluation of a case method activity.

TABLE 1.
ELEMENTS AND METHODS IN A CM ACTIVITY

CM element	Case	Study question(s)	Debriefing	Follow-up
C-method	Theory/Praxis	Analysis	Discussion	Evaluation

Source: Author, based on Berbeco (2019).

In any case, according to Berbeco (2019) the case study involves four main elements:

- A case related to a concrete issue extracted from reality to which students should apply theoretical principles.
- Study question(s), in order to facilitate the students access to the analytical dimensions of the case.
- Debriefing, so students can debate and undertake small-group discussions, allowing active participation without leading to a predetermined solution.
- Follow-up, in different dimensions (such as individual or group), form(s) of self-perception and rubric(s).

Along with these four main elements, the use of new active teaching methods such as the CM must be accompanied by the use of diverse learning tools and resources. Active methodologies and use of teaching resources, some of which are detailed below, offer two common objectives. In one objective, they actively involve the student, transforming them from a mere passive spectator to an active evaluator and analyst; on the other, they find ways of presenting information that lies closer to a student's reality while maximizing procedures that transcend mere reading. Then, on the one hand, they attempt to approach the reality of political analysis through simulation and prospective analysis, a practicable part of the case method while, on the other hand, they attempt to bring the student closer to original sources and away from second-order materials such as textbooks.

Arabic media as a learning tool: questioning post-coloniality and ideology in the classroom

There are powerful reasons to subject Arab mass media to active methodologies as applied to the study of the Arab political context. In social terms, university students of MENA-related subjects have an open mind to this particular undertaking, which interprets social, economic, cultural and political facts through different political views. In pedagogical terms, the use of the media in the classroom entails changes in the role played by the teacher, as required by active learning methodologies such as the CM.

On the one hand, the Arab press can be an object of study itself, since it is important for students to know how to read the press in critical terms (political analysis). Furthermore, Arabic-language press uses its own lexical and iconographic code, so it can be used as a methodological resource to allow a first approach to the lexicon, the ideological and symbolic structures and the connotations of the Arab press and its *milieu*. Progressive knowledge acquired in the Arabic language should be essential to gain first-hand access to the Arab media and thus to political debates and ideas (Suleyman, 2003). Unraveling a press release, contrasting front pages, differentiating opinion and information in substance and form, sequencing sections, and analyzing pictures or rewriting a headline constitute some of the many activities that can be performed in the classroom to help students to decode the language of the press and critically analyze mainstream political discourse in Arab societies (political narrative).

On the other hand, the Arab media can be a very effective learning tool. In this sense, media discourse is not a closed text, so it may be used to contrast information issued by other sources, continuously raising historical dimensions and analyzing for concepts, ideas and silences. In the case of Arab countries, this is especially relevant, since there is a large number of government-funded media outlets, mainly newspapers, traditionally used for ideological and political purposes. Whether there is a marked ideological monism characterized by the implantation of a dominant ideology, or a concentration of political power in a charismatic personality surrounded by a network of interpersonal, family or patronage ties (Elias Hanna, 1993: 126-127). Media discourse and debates may help the students to enter political, social and economic arenas.

Obviously, the political situation has slightly changed in some contexts such as Tunisia in recent years (Owais, 2011). In general terms, the increasing presence of digital newspapers that escape state control and censorship and the common use of social networks have undoubtedly signified the social and political empowerment of Arab citizenship, as evidenced in the *techno-praxis* (Anderson, 2004) undertaken during the Arab revolts of 2011 and 2012. For these reasons, it is important, in order to achieve a certain degree of objectivity and usefulness in the classroom, to consider different ideologies, countries and languages, starting with the case of contemporary Arab thought—in the Arabic language whenever possible. This linguistic element is not just a “devotional” or “exotic” performance in the classroom; it may be observed within the framework of postcolonial debates on identity and *coloniality* (Bennabi, 2016). These debates have “generally been approached in an essentialist way that reduces its discourses to a certain literate Islamic heritage [that] has confined the understanding of these discourses to an imminent, ahistorical tradition and has isolated them from other regional discourses” (Kassab, 2010: 11). From our perspective, this “post-anti-colonial critique” (Shohat, 1992; Kassab, 2010) is an essential foundation in the learning experience whenever the object of study is a post-colonial or “subaltern” subject whose “political expression” and identity is directly linked to the Arabic language (Suleyman, 2003). This core idea is stressed by the postcolonial Tunisian historian Hédi Timmoumi who, when considering his particular approach to subaltern studies, asks if it is possible to subvert colonial categories of knowledge (epistemology) using colonial tools (methodology) (Omri, 2020: 332). In his view, this query also applies to the Arabic language; therefore, it could be utilized as the first study questions addressed to students when planning a case method activity in terms of cross-cultural learning and critical thinking, as is the case.

THE CASE METHOD AND ARAB POLITICAL THOUGHT: A PRACTICAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Bearing in mind the main elements mentioned above, this part deals with the description of the practical development of a real case method or CM activity carried

out during the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021 in the Contemporary Arab Thought class (27911 Contemporary Arab Thought/Pensamiento Árabe Contemporáneo, OP, 6 ECTS)⁴. In this case, we analyze the academic and social context of the students, the theoretical concepts and methodological tools used in the activity, and the provisional results of the follow-up. One of the main categories in the curriculum of this course is the political and ideological emergency that characterizes the intellectual development of contemporary Arab thought throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The emergence of the Arab State, on the one hand, and the building of new social and historical relationships between post-colonial Arab societies and the Arab State, on the other hand, are thus the epistemological framework in which political concepts as “democracy” (*al-dīmuqrāṭīyya*), “civil society” (*al-mu-jtama‘ al-madani*), or “human rights” (*huqūq al-insān*) are studied. This conceptual approach allows students to understand the ideological development of contemporary mainstream political ideologies in Arab countries such as Arab Nationalism, Arab Socialism, Pan-Arabism, Marxism, political Islam and other Islamic-related ideologies, Liberalism(s), and so forth (Abu-Rabi’, 2004: 63-92). In general terms, this course tries to fill a very important gap in the study of contemporary Arab societies, both in cultural and political terms, and contributes to the enhancement of inter-cultural critiques and ability in self-reflection among students.

That said, the course is designed for fourth-year students as an optional course in order to strengthen theoretical insights and methodological capacities acquired in the mandatory courses of the undergraduate degree (BA) program in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Granada. Therefore, we may well assume that there is a personal motivation in the choice of this particular subject by students in their final year. Along with that, the number of students is still very low, so every year the class generally consists of a small group made up of eight to twelve students. This low enrollment level is usually perceived by the students as a very good opportunity to take advantage of the learning situation, as long as the teacher-student relationship is more direct than in other overrated university courses. The learning activities should also take this low enrollment into account as an opportunity for students to develop individual skills through group activities, debates and cooperative learning. In the case of this particular CM activity, four female students took part in the three different phases of the case study in two class sessions held on May 31st and June 2nd, 2021, in addition to independent research work, reflection and small-group debate during the previous week. All of them signed an individual consent form accepting the conditions of this activity and the subsequent academic research.

In the 2020-2021 cohort, a number of the students enrolled in the course had “personal interest” in the subject. All of them were interested in the contents, but also wanted to “go beyond” the concrete political history of contemporary Arab world in

4. See the course’s summary in: <https://grados.ugr.es/sites/grados/default/public/guias-firmadas/2021-2022/27911E1.pdf> (October 2021)

order to “get involved” in the ideas that allowed political change to happen in the Arab context, according to their final briefing for the case method activity. Indeed, 50% of the students were “heritage learners” (G-HLL)⁵ (ElHawari, 2020), mostly Spaniards of Arab descent (specifically, in this case, Moroccan) who studied Arabic and Arab Studies as part of a personal process involving the cultivation of knowledge, family culture, abilities and identity. These students contribute largely to the enhancement of the conceptual approach and to the debates on given subjects from different cultural and ideological perspectives, mainly by leading cooperative learning activities with fellow students. They also play a very important role in enhancing the linguistic abilities of their classmates in the Arabic language.

TABLE 2.

STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE CM ACTIVITY

Cohort 2020-2021	Type	Gender	Enrollment	Academic background
2	G-HLL (Arabic)	F	Ordinary	Arabic and Islamic Studies
2	No HLL	F	Ordinary	Arabic and Islamic Studies

Source: Own elaboration based on ElHawari (2020).

The case: the shutdown of al-Ḥayāt in 2020

Designing a CM activity in this context necessarily involves a multidisciplinary approach. The selection of the case for this activity was based on the interest of current hot Arab political issues. Furthermore, the case’s echoes are directly linked to some of the main characteristics and conditions of contemporary Arab political thought, such as the dialectics and tensions between tradition and modernity; idealism and pragmatism; cultural identity and westernization; technology and ethics; economy and politics; particularism and universalism; capitalism and human rights, and so forth. In this sense, this particular case allows students to put their previous knowledge of contemporary Arab political thought into practice.

At the time, the final shutdown of such a prestigious pan-Arab Arabic newspaper as *al-Ḥayāt* in March 2020 (al-Majhadānī, 2014: 92) appeared as a clear learning opportunity to put the interdisciplinary case method approach into practice. In order

5. Heritage Language Learners (HLL) are described as those who study a “heritage language”, in this case Arabic language and its culture. According to ElHawari, “a heritage language is a language of people that belongs to the past: the near or far past. This language is no longer the present dominant language at the place where the individual, in this case the HLL, lives” (ElHawari, 2020: 3). The HLLs of Arabic language are divided into G-HLL (Geographical HLL), whose family comes from an Arabic speaking country and uses an Arabic dialect, and M-HLL (Muslim HLL), whose family comes from an environment where Arabic is a common language, as in many Muslim-majority countries in Africa and Asia (*ibid.*: 74-75).

to engage the students, it was essential to present the case in a clear way, stressing the core elements of the case from the beginning, including strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. To do this, the teacher s introduced the case during the first session, dividing it into a deductive structure as follows: background; description; analysis; and conclusion.

a) Background

The press in the Arab world has been a fundamental vehicle for cultural, linguistic, political and ideological expression of modernity. Its origins can be traced back to the first modern newspapers issued in Syria, Lebanon or Egypt during the mid-19th century. All of them were somehow linked to the region's Ottoman and European intelligentsia, developing in parallel to Arab societies as principal actors of contemporaneity in the convulsive context of colonization, the independence processes and various post-colonialities. For this reason, the majority of Arab national newspapers accompanied and championed different nationalist political liberation projects, some of them becoming the official bulletins of authoritarian states while others raised a critical awareness among citizens embracing diverse ideologies from liberalism to Marxism, while passing by pan-Arabism or political Islam. The Arab press projected a special identity in the field of language and culture, becoming the almost exclusive supporter of modern standard Arabic (MSA), first called *luġhat al-jarā'id* (the language of the newspapers), and thus demarcating one of the main boundaries between the diversity of Arab societies "from the [Persian] Gulf to the [Atlantic] Ocean". Since the mid-twentieth century, this projection would also be present among the Arab diasporas of Europe and the Americas (*mahjar*), a context in which new cultural and identity awarenesses of Arabic expression would arise and re-emerge.

b) Description

The newspaper *al-Hayāt* (meaning "life" in Arabic) was founded in Beirut in 1946 (first number issued 01/28/1946), just after the proclamation of the Lebanese National Pact (1943). In a very short period, it became one of the most important daily newspapers in the country and the region, attracting many prestigious intellectuals and journalists from Lebanon and other Arab countries. These intellectuals and writers found in its pages a space to propose ideas and expose diverse points of view in a complex scenario such as the national construction of the post-colonial state, in which political ideologies fought for hegemony. From the beginning, the founder of the newspaper, Mr. Kamel Muruwwa (1915-1966), wanted to convert *al-Hayāt* into a space of intellectual freedom and critical thought in direct opposition to the authoritarian regimes that already in the 50s and 60s were about to be established in the Middle East, such as the Ba'athist regime in Syria and the Nasserist in Egypt. For the same purpose, Muruwwa founded the Anglophone "sibling" newspaper *The Daily Star* in 1952. Given the difficulties of containing ideological

polarization in the Middle East at that time, *al-Ḥayāt* was an exception in the media spotlight, admired by some and hated by others. In 1988, after Muruwwa's assassination in 1966 and the end of material difficulties during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), the founder's heirs sold the newspaper to the Saudi capital investors of Prince Khaled bin Sultan al-Sa'ud (b. 1945). The Saudi Prince relaunched the newspaper by reinforcing its international dimension in the wake of the "off-shore" model that other Arab newspapers that had begun to adopt since the end of the 1970s and the 80s, such as *al-Quds al-'Arabī* (1989) and especially *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (1978), both published in London. To this end, *al-Ḥayāt* moved its headquarters to London and established editorial offices in Riyadh, Jeddah, Beirut, Cairo, Amman, Baghdad and Dubai, in addition to Paris and New York, becoming one of the most important international newspapers worldwide and the most influential pan-Arab newspaper, distributed and read throughout the Arab world and beyond. Until the second decade of the 21st century, its print run was estimated at around 150,000-200,000 copies, placing it as the second largest Arabic publishing distribution group after *al-Sharq al-Awsat*.

FIGURE 1.

FORMER *AL-ḤAYĀT* HEADER WITH THE ARABIC MOTTO, "LIFE IS BELIEF AND EFFORT (*JIHĀD*)"



Source: *Al-Ḥayāt* (2020)/public domain.

c) Analysis

In the case presentation, strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities are stressed as the main parameters for students to analyze. Beyond the economic and political complexities of the late twentieth century, *al-Ḥayāt* was able to maintain the liberal principles that had led it to be considered an intellectual reference throughout the Arab world, taking into account the writers who signed opinion articles from the most diverse ideological trends and critical perspectives. However, since the 1990s, pieces of news on Saudi Arabia and the West tended not to be excessively scathing. Even so, *al-Ḥayāt* was banned in Saudi Arabia on several occasions. The historical continuity of a medium like *al-Ḥayāt* seemed to be one of its

major *strengths*, along with the editorial prestige of a newspaper that had become a broad and recognizable intellectual forum. These two strengths were added to a third: Saudi capital made *al-Hayāt* a business project solidly backed by one of the most stable and growing economies on the planet. The *weaknesses* of a communication giant such as the publishing company Dār al-Ḥayāt began to grow evident with the emergence of new communication technologies and their application to the news media. As with most paper-based press media, the growth of digital media posed one of the greatest *threats* to pan-Arab newspaper in terms of competitiveness and informational immediacy and highlighted the economic weakness of traditional media compared to new generation digital media in terms of staff, offices, media, printing, distribution and sales. Another important threat was the progressive ideological polarization and the difficult role of Saudi Arabia in a context less and less prone to intellectual debate in the Arab world and internationally since 2001. However, *al-Ḥayāt* wanted to make clear the *opportunities* to compete in this new context by launching an online version of the newspaper in 2002, and also a local Saudi edition more focused on regional issues. These movements were also perceived as new opportunities to reinforce *al-Ḥayāt's* character as an opinion leader in terms of critical participation and intellectual plurality.

d) Conclusion

The pan-Arab daily newspaper *al-Hayāt* closed its historic office in Beirut in January 2018, firing around 100 employees for financial reasons. Later that same year, the offices in Cairo, Dubai and London were closed as well. In June 2018, the last edited number of the newspaper was issued on paper, maintaining the online version and a downloadable pdf edition (as happened in February 2020 with *The Daily Star*). In March 2020, at the beginning of the global pandemic of COVID-19, the newspaper announced the definitive closure of the media outlet.

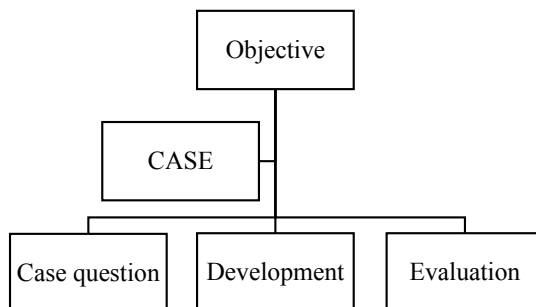
Once the case was presented in these terms, the students are able to understand the importance of the case and to design different approaches to the study questions and their debate. To do so, they have to face the presented parameters of analysis by going further into the context and the ideological and political complexities of the contemporary Arab world.

Design and study questions

The design and the structure of the activity based on the CM follows a progressive deductive structure that facilitates the learning process in terms of not only knowledge but also self-awareness of the students' abilities and personal skills (Benito and Cruz, 2011). After setting the objectives of the case, actions such as communication (individual and/or group), observation and dialogue take part in the ultimate identification of achievements and problems in order to provide

solutions. The CM is not merely a way of acquiring new knowledge on a given subject, but rather a way of establishing a positive and self-aware attitude towards learning. These are the foundations of the proposed activity. Bearing this in mind, the activity was presented following this structure:

GRAPHIC 2.
CM ACTIVITY STRUCTURE



Source: Own elaboration.

1. Objective: To answer the case question and propose horizons and alternatives.
2. Case question: What does the closure of *al-Hayāt* imply in ideological and political terms? In any case, giving the nature of this activity, the fact that there is no such thing as a “right answer” or “correct solution” to the case question was very much stressed in the presentation. This perspective allows freedom in critical thinking and helps teachers to facilitate the exchange of perspectives and ideas among students.
3. Evaluation: The follow-up was based on a “intellectual autobiography”, the fulfillment of an individual diary and a final questionnaire (self-assessment-co-assessment) related to an evaluation rubric.
4. Development: 2 class sessions of 2 hours each. These sessions were held on May the 31st and June the 2nd, 2021. These two sessions were preceded by both the individual independent work and the small-group debates prior to the final debate in class (debriefing). This debate decisively put the analysis and conclusions in context and led to a final resolution of the case question. To prepare the debriefing, the debate was recorded by the teacher with the individual permission of the students.

TABLE 3.
CM ACTIVITY DESIGN AND STRUCTURE

Work Type	Contents	Phase
Individual	Reading of the basic materials and case study	I
	Case presentation	

Work Type	Contents	Phase
Individual / group	Start. Reflect individually and subject the answer to specific questions (small group):	
	1. What is the relationship between ideology, politics, history and the market?	
	2. At what point is a divergent drift established in the editorial/intellectual/business project?	I
	3. Are there determining elements of the contemporary Arab context in this case?	
	4. Is it possible to include such concepts as “democracy”, “power”, “liberalism”, “secularism”, “nationalism”, “capitalism”, “identity” and “culture” in the case analysis?	
	5. What are the possible effects in the medium-to-long term?	
	Developing. Analysis of text materials, discussion and assessment of alternatives. Decision making (small group)	II
	Presentation of results: exposition and argumentation of decisions (large group)	III
Debriefing	Closure	III

Source: Own elaboration, based on Benito and Cruz (2011).

Along with the case presentation (analytic dimension), a basic set of bibliographic materials was given to the students. Among them, there were two main sources (Ayalon, 1995; al-Majhadānī, 2014), mainly dealing with the relationship between Arab media and society from historical and social perspective. Other complementary materials were made up of different references, from the general open sources about *al-Hayāt*, including Wikipedia⁶ news on the closure and difficulties of the newspaper in different periods and languages, mainly English and Arabic (Abu-Fadil; Abū Rizq; *al-Akbbār*; and *Middle East Eye*)⁷. All these materials contain basic information about the newspaper and also public journalistic information issued in the Middle East that could give the students a hint of inner-Arab perceptions on the social, political and economic process leading to the final shutdown of *al-Hayāt*. These materials were also

6. General information about *al-Hayāt* is available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Hayat> (English); [https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/الحياة_\(جريدة\)](https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/الحياة_(جريدة)) (Arabic) (May 2021).

7. See Abu-Fadil, Magda. 2018. “Al Hayat daily adrift in a sea of Media sharks”, *Arab Media & Society*, (15/08). Available at: <https://cutt.ly/uNGDvBm> (Retrieved: 02/09/2022); Abū Rizq, Muḥammad. 2019. “Man a’dama *al-Hayāt* al-sa’ūdiyya? Taḥqīq li-l-Khalij Online yakshif al-mustawir”, *al-Khalij Online*, (20/09). Available at: <https://alkhaleejonline.net/ثقافة-سوفن-تخفي-عن-كثير-من-أخبار-السعودية-تحقيق-ل-الخليج-أونلاين-يكشف-المستور> (Retrieved: 02/09/2022); *Al-Akbbār*. 2017. “Jamāl Khāshuqjī khārij *al-Hayāt*”, (01/12). Available at: https://al-akhbar.com/Media_Tv/242012 (Retrieved: 02/09/2022); and *Middle East Eye*. 2020. “Pan-Arab newspaper al-Hayat officially closes after decades of journalism”, (04/03). Available at: <https://cutt.ly/nNGDPQL> (Retrieved: 02/09/2022).

important to answer the study questions and to construct arguments for the final resolution of the case question.

Debriefing

The debriefing in any case method activity constitutes one of its core elements and represents its synthetic dimension. The debriefing should allow students to debate and perform small-group discussions, stimulating active participation without leading to a given solution. In this case, a debriefing was developed during the second and third phases of the planned activity. The class (large group) divided into two small discussion groups, so there were two two-student groups (A and B). The small number of students offered an advantage in terms of not only organization but also emotional dealing, as long as the students already knew each other and, to a certain extent, were familiar with the personalities and personal abilities of their classmates.

After studying the case and reading the bibliography, the students engaged in an initial period of discussion in small groups. These discussions took place outside the classroom and academic hours, without the presence of the teacher and the rest of the students. Nevertheless, this small-group discussion was vitally important; the one hand, to finding a proper answer to the study questions and, on the other, to prepare for the final classroom debate and debriefing. Responsibility and accountability are essential to the learning process during this phase, although no written record is required, the better to enhance the self-awareness of students during the learning process. To some extent, they were as well aware of the importance of the process as they were the importance of the learning content and concepts. The idea of asking questions in the context of contemporary Arab thought class rather than looking for a correct solution received special stress.

In the final discussion in the classroom, each small group subjected their arguments and partial answers to the study questions, adding arguments to supplement their answers to them. Some of the ideas that came out in this debate, held on 2 June 2021, can be related as follows⁸:

In the process towards the final shutdown, the market is essential, as long as we are dealing here with a society with important economic benefits. We see a progressive collapse in this sense. This collapse is evident in the firing of employees and the closing of international offices around the world and is related to the growing importance of the online journalism (Small group A).

Capitalism would be an economic framework that strengthens the political structures of authoritarian regimes, as it is in the case of Saudi Arabia. It may lead to political weakness in contexts of financial crisis. Nevertheless, we do not see it as

8. The debate was recorded with the consent of the students.

the most determinant element in this case, apart from the above. It is more about political decision-making based on political interests, using different means (Small group B).

Thus, the students did not see capitalist economy and new technologies as the ultimate cause of the closure of such an important international newspaper. There are other reasons, the students argued, relevant to the historical and political situation of the Arab world, whose particular condition in terms of politics relates to authoritarianism:

On the one hand, it is about building a space for pan-Arab intellectual debate that overcame the regional political particularities (ideology); on the other hand, the Saudi political interests are progressively mining this space, whose main turning points are the Lebanese Civil War [1975-1990], and the appointment of Prince Muhammad Bin Salman as Saudi crown prince [2017] (history). To some extent, the digitalization process contributed to enlarging the democratic options in the Arab world, and perhaps this has been seen as a threat by Saudi interests, as the case of Jamal Khashoggi would demonstrate (Small group A).

Regarding the specificities of the Arab context, the debate led to a rather significant argument:

We have not seen any sign of Arab specificities: authoritarianism is not specifically Arab, and there are other similar examples in Asia or Latin America. We conclude that Arab culture or Islamic religion, in general terms, do not play a significant role in this case. It is about political authoritarianism and economic interests, as in other contexts (Small group A).

The relationship between Saudi Arabia and the West is more important than a mere inter-Arab reading in this case, since the former relevant Arab actors (as it used to be Lebanon in cultural and political terms in the past) are not relevant now, not anymore (Small group B).

Nevertheless, political concepts can be used to bind different arguments such as absence of democracy and resistance (case of Jamal Khashoggi), capitalism and authoritarianism, and panarabism and nationalism:

The power and international influence of Saudi Arabia did manage to erase any kind of responsibility. It is impunity that allows Saudi Arabia to put an end to a significant witness of the intellectual history of the Arab world, and as critical forum for its political thought as *al-Hayāt* was. This impunity is based on fear of the people. Democratic information could eventually lead to rebellions and revolutions as happened in the past (from Nasserism to the Arab Spring). Capitalism contributes to reinforce this impunity because of the economic and geo-strategic alliances for which lack of freedom is a price to pay (Small group B).

In a second phase, Saudi nationalism (which is one of the strongest ideological representations of the Arab state) tries to develop a new international image. Independent journalists like Jamal Khashoggi, who was fired from *al-Hayāt*, was an obstacle to building this positive image, as he was denouncing the lack of freedom and the repression of the Saudi regime towards critical journalists in the country [...]. He was killed for that later on. They [the Saudis] put an end to this unique critical space represented historically by *al-Hayāt* in terms of plurality and independence. Arab intellectuals somehow lose their voices in this international perspective, and the Arab street loses its plurality. It is a critical loss in terms of democratic space and pluralistic representations of the Arab world, whose consequences eventually reach us all (Small group A).

This final assertion does demonstrate how the CM activity contributes to obtaining a personal perspective of a learning object. It is also important to point out that the study questions were especially relevant to proposing an answer to the case question beyond the diversity of the arguments stressed by the small groups.

Follow-up

Within the framework of the EHEA, academic follow-up is defined as “the process of communication between teacher and students where the former provides the feedback to allow the students to develop their individual skills and knowledge” (Benito and Cruz, 2011: 67). The affective dimension adds value to this academic task as long as the teacher must personally accompany students during their learning process. In this context, it is not merely a task of tutoring, but rather, on a broader plane, fostering an attitude of active listening and dialogue with the students and their possible doubts or learning problems. Thus, the follow-up must point out the academic, ethical and social responsibilities of the students, especially when dealing with a highly sensitive issue such as Arab political thought and its relationship with its society. It is a progressive process in which, after setting the case objectives, activities such as studying and debating (individual and group), observation and dialogue contribute to the ultimate identification of achievements and problems in order to provide solutions. The CM does not merely offer a way of evaluating knowledge of the subject but rather a way of establishing a positive climate for learning and affirming a mutual commitment of responsibility between teacher and student.

In this case, the follow-up tried to focus this affective dimension towards the learning process through the development of diverse tools for the proposed activity. The first one was an “intellectual autobiography” in which students tracked their own path in ideological and intellectual terms, stressing the obstacles but also their personal progress. The other tools used in follow-up were the individual activity diary, with both academic and mainly emotional content, and the fulfillment of a final questionnaire (self-assessment) related to an evaluation rubric.

a) The intellectual autobiography

The idea of writing an intellectual autobiography is based on the linguistic approach of the “linguistic autobiography” in which a given number of individuals review their trajectory regarding their languages and add their personal point of view towards them (Otxandorena Satrustegi, 2019; Idiazabal Gorrotxategi and Dolz Mestre, 2013). The purpose of an intellectual autobiography is similar, however, it analyses the main ideas, values, ideologies and thoughts related to their individual intellectual progress in both academic and personal terms, adding comments on the value of these ideas and the knowledge supporting them, or on the possibility of change. This autobiography should be written by students after the CM activity ends and should respond in general terms to the following guiding questions:

What are my values and intellectual principles? Where do they come from? How have they manifested themselves in this course? And in this particular activity? Have they been confirmed/refuted/changed or shaken? How do I critically position myself before the Arab reality? And before my immediate reality? Is there any relationship? On what do I base my analysis? How do I forge my ideas? Would they be different within the Arab context? Have I learned anything from that context for my reality?

These questions should be answered regarding the experience of the CM activity and the Contemporary Arab thought course, eg.:

I have never stopped to think about my values or principles to place them in one ideology or another, although it is true that they are part of my thinking and influence my decisions and points of view. My values come from my experiences, education and family [...]. As I see it in Spain, or in the Arab world after taking this course, people seek through different forms [ideologies] to live well and live in a fair system. The ways to achieve that welfare status for each ideology are different and even the objectives may vary from one to another [...]. I think my way of thinking has not changed but my knowledge has [...]. Before the course, the information I had to “judge” events in the Arab world depended on the media, but now I feel I have enough resources to analyze the Arab reality from different points of view (Student 1).

Personally, I am shocked because having a Moroccan culture and having been born and lived here in Andalusia, I feel I am part of both the Arab culture and the West. Sometimes I have found similarities, but also great differences, especially in terms of social values and thinking. Since I started this degree and this course, I feel that this experience has put a little piece in the person I have become today [...]. In short, I wanted to go beyond the surface in terms of knowledge of the Arab world, somehow to find myself and fight for what I want to be (Student 2).

In general terms, I have questioned the emergence of several concepts and ideas throughout the activity, such as power and capitalism. From my point of view this is one of the key concepts, usually linked to the authoritarian regimes in the Arab world, but also in the rest of the world. Neoliberalism also plays a central role in our society, as in the Arab world. The study of this case has showed me how the authoritarian

powers of the Arab world are happy with the capitalist system, a fact that is also a reproduction of the Western balance of power, which I am radically against (Student 3).

b) Individual diary

The individual diary was also used to collect academic information regarding the tracking of the different phases of student activity, as well as to collect information about feelings and attitudes. As Badia states, “we need to get involved into emotions in education and learning because of three reasons”. Emotions are an essential part of the daily academic life; they are related to cognition and take part in the emotional reactions to values, attitudes and beliefs; and they are related to social and cultural influences (Badia, 2014: 62). This said, the proposed structure of the individual diary tried to link both academic content along with derived feelings and changing attitudes towards the activity throughout its whole learning process.

TABLE 4.

INDIVIDUAL DIARY DESIGN AND STRUCTURE

Phase	Date	Work	Knowledge	Difficulties	Feelings	Attitude
0						
I						
II						
III						

Source: Own elaboration.

The collected information proved to be very interesting for both parties and demonstrated the importance of actually involving feelings in academic work, not only to develop new capacities but also to develop new learning approaches for our students.

Here are some examples extracted from different diaries:

INDIVIDUAL DIARY 1

Phase 0

Date: 31/05/2021

Work: presentation of the case, information and guidelines to follow.

Knowledge: I did not know the shutdown of the newspaper before the presentation. I knew the name of the newspaper from a prior practice performed in this same course a month earlier.

Difficulties: There were no big difficulties. I understood the case and the reflection that we had to do about it.

Feelings: I felt encouraged regarding the presentation. It seemed interesting to look for the actual reasons for the shutdown of the newspaper.

Attitude: I was looking forward to working on the case and finding an answer for the case question.

INDIVIDUAL DIARY 2

Phase I

Date: 31/05/2021

Work: Individual reflection.

Knowledge: Looked for [the] complementary bibliography and read the material. New ideas came to my mind, and [I] wrote them to share them in the small-group discussion.

Difficulties: The articles in Arabic were easy to read. I experience some difficulties in understanding some concepts.

Feelings: I was worried about the linguistic level of the articles in Arabic, but I felt good when I could read them.

Attitude: Open to learning more and ready to analyze the collected data.

INDIVIDUAL DIARY 3

Phase II

Date: 01/06/2021

Work: Small-group discussion.

Knowledge: I learn new aspects regarding the case. The discussion brings new approaches, especially related to the relationship between ideology and power. Concepts of capitalism, socialism and secularism came out.

Difficulties: Difficulties to understand some concrete aspects that came out, like the role of Hamas in Syria, and to reach a clear idea on the direct ideological and political causes for the shutdown.

Feelings: I feel good when discussing some ideas with my partner, as I can express my ideas and understand other points of view. I feel interested in sharing and contrasting my own ideas.

Attitude: Attraction for the research.

INDIVIDUAL DIARY 4

Phase III

Date: 02/06/2021

Work: Large-group discussion. Final results.

Knowledge: There was a coincidence in the presentation of the final results. We reached the same basic conclusions and opened to new aspects of the case.

Difficulties: I found no difficulties in presenting the results, but some of the ideas were still weak.

Feelings: I feel confident in the final results as we have been working the case in deep.

Attitude: Positive attitude towards my presentation and ready to listen to the other group and their conclusions.

After collecting this information, the analysis of the diaries proves that a close relationship exists between feelings and attitudes in the development of the activity's different phases. The students seemed to grow more and more confident in themselves throughout the working process and to appreciate the new abilities they had developed during the activity.

c) The final questionnaire

The final questionnaire involved the last follow-up method used in the present activity. It was designed as a self-assessment method related to the evaluation rubrics. Following the spirit of the whole CM activity, the final questionnaire was designed and developed by using a very simple tool: in this case, Google Forms, due to its accessibility and simplicity, and to the institutional access provided by the University of Granada through Google GSuite UGR. The questionnaire, entitled “Final Evaluation Questionnaire: Case Method (*al-Ḥayāt*)”, was sent to the students by email. The questionnaire was divided into three main sections: 1) General questions; 2) Individual and collaborative work; and 3) Techniques and knowledge.

1. Regarding the general questions, the results of the questionnaire show that 100 % of the students find the case (the shutdown of *al-Ḥayāt*) relevant in relation to the general contents of the Contemporary Arab Thought course. The same percentage (100 %) agree with considering the presentation, objectives, proposed tasks and materials as adequate for the activity.
2. Regarding the individual and collective work, 100% of the students surveyed perceive their role in the activity as “active” and consider their work as “good” (being “very good” was also an option). Of these student responses, 66.7% consider their responsibility in the activity as a “shared responsibility”, compared to 33.3% who consider their responsibility in terms of “leadership”. The same percentage, 66.7 %, are satisfied with the final resolution of the case question, considering it as a “possible solution” among others; the other 33.3% consider their solution as “the correct one”. Again, 66.7% affirm that have learned “a lot” from their classmates, while 33.3% learned “something” from them. It is also interesting to see that 66.7% find the work of their classmates “very good”, while 33.3% found it “good”.

GRAPHIC 3.

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE. ASSESSMENT OF OWN WORK IN THE ACTIVITY (%)

In general terms, how would you rate your work in this activity?

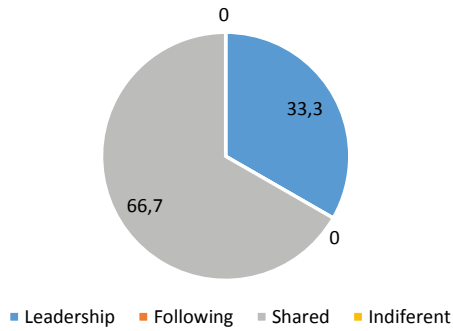


Source: Own elaboration based on responses to the questionnaire.

GRAPHIC 4.

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE. ASSESSMENT OF OWN RESPONSIBILITY IN THE ACTIVITY (%)

What do you consider your responsibility during the activity?

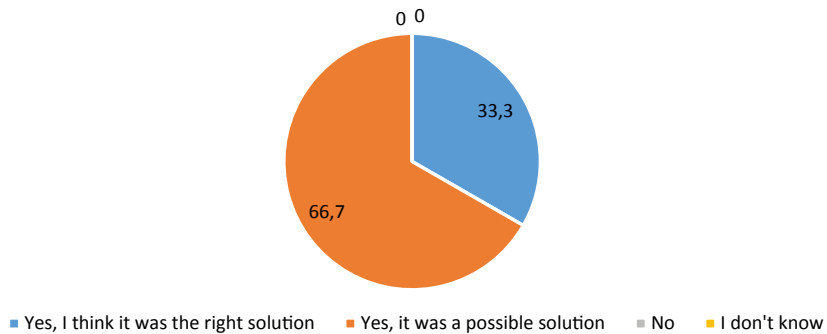


Source: Own elaboration based on responses to the questionnaire.

GRAPHIC 5.

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE. SATISFACTION WITH THE RESOLUTION OF THE CASE (%)

Are you satisfied with your proposed resolution of the case?

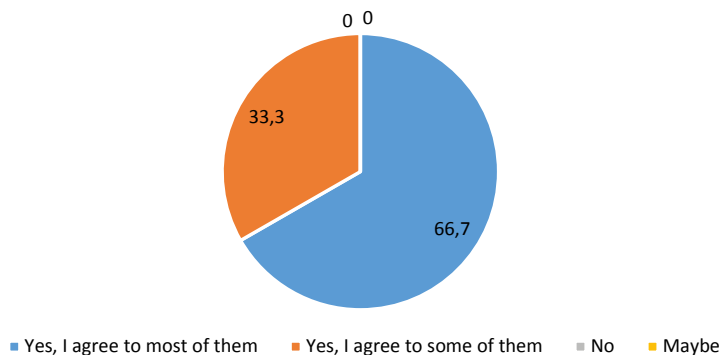


Source: Own elaboration based on responses to the questionnaire.

GRAPHIC 6.

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE. ASSESSMENT OF CLASSMATES' PROPOSED SOLUTIONS (%)

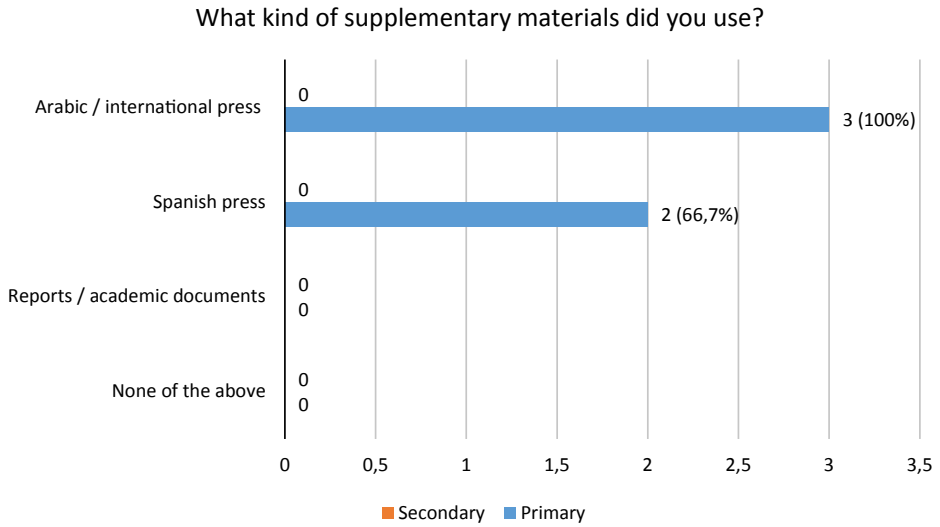
Have you found your classmates' proposed solutions convincing?



Source: Own elaboration based on responses to the questionnaire.

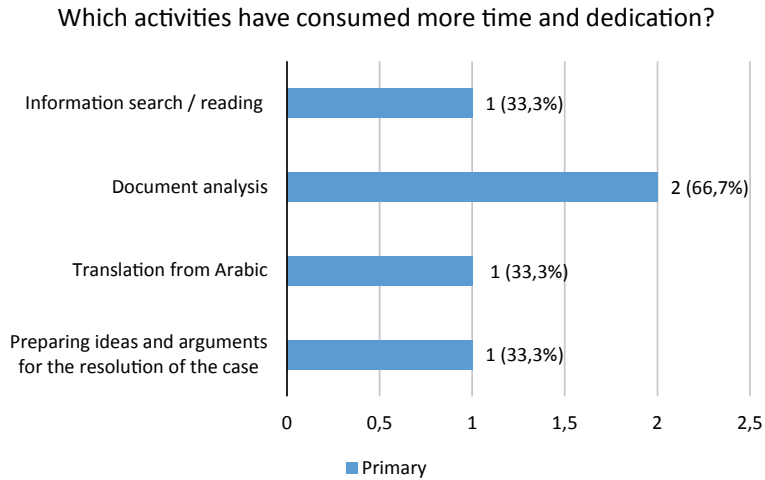
Finally, in terms of techniques and knowledge, 100 % of the students affirm that they have consulted the complementary bibliography in order to delve deeper into the knowledge about the case. All of them (100 %) have searched for pieces of news in Arabic, with another 33.3 % doing so in Spanish and other languages as well. The activities that took more time and dedication, according to the students, were analyzing the documents (66.7 %), searching for information and reading (33.3 %), translating from Arabic (33.3 %), and preparing ideas and arguments for the final resolution and debriefing (33.3 %). A majority of the students (66.7 %) perceive that their opinion changed “substantially” after studying this case, and that they now possess better technical ability to undertake political analyses of the contemporary Arab world. In contrast, a 33.3 % affirm that their opinions changed “slightly” and that they now “may have” a greater ability to do political analysis. Finally, all of them (100 %) agree that they know “a little better” the political and ideological context of the Arab world, and that working on this case has helped them “slightly” to assimilate the content of the course. Whenever possible, all of them (100 %) would recommend the case method as a learning methodology in this or other courses related to contemporary Arab world.

GRAPHIC 7.
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS USED (%)



Source: Own elaboration based on responses to the questionnaire.

GRAPHIC 8.
TIME DEVOTED TO THE VARIOUS TASKS (%)

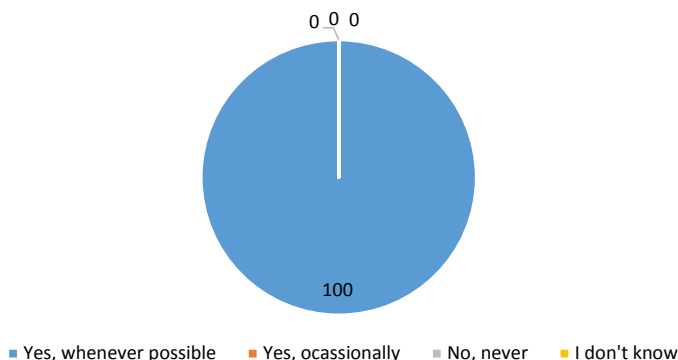


Source: Own elaboration based on responses to the questionnaire.

GRAPHIC 9.

PROBABILITY OF RECOMMENDING THE ACTIVITY (%)

Would you recommend using the case method as a learning method in this or other subjects on the contemporary Arab world?



Source: Own elaboration based on responses to the questionnaire.

CONCLUSION

After developing a real case method or CM activity in the classroom of Contemporary Arab Thought specifically related to contemporary political thought, we may well conclude that there are many reasons to adopt new learning methodologies as part of the teaching-learning process. Above all, the CM and its new learning methodologies contribute to realizing the general competences of this particular subject, such as the development of reflective attitudes and a critical spirit, as well as the appreciation of cross-cultural interconnection, curiosity and an open attitude towards other cultures, ideas and paradigms. Some of the elements related to the design and development of this CM activity are directly linked to these competences, as they use critical thinking and self-awareness as part of the learning process.

In the case of contemporary Arab political thought, this critical approach to the learning process through the use of the CM in the classroom contributes to the generation of new ideas and thoughts in a dynamic learning environment in which the students are the main actors. The results of the activity's follow-up show that the self-awareness of this role by students allow them to get involved more deeply in the content of the course and to commit personally to the learning process, enhancing their capacities to reach the general competences of the course. In this sense, questioning post-colonialities in the historical and political context of the Arab world should lead, through the performance of new learning methodologies such as the CM, to the questioning of the self, also in terms of feelings and attitudes.

Thus, this CM activity shows the great potential and possibilities of active methodologies, even in a micro level (thus very limited in terms of time, students and

academic infrastructures). The limitations are also evident, especially regarding the lack of epistemic traditions in some academic areas to perform such activities, and also the tightness of the academic calendars and contents, along with the students' concerns about the results of the final quantitative evaluation.

Finally, giving priority to the active subject (students) over the passive object (contents), as well as the praxis (through the synthetic dimension) over the traditional teaching process, contributes to social transformation and critical knowledge as important dimensions of the university learning process. This may eventually lead, in this case, to fighting islamophobia, racism, xenophobia and other forms of inequality and injustice.

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Deconstructing geopolitics in the classroom. Grasping geopolitical codes through active learning

*Deconstruyendo la geopolítica en el aula.
La comprensión de los códigos geopolíticos a través el aprendizaje activo*

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Abstract

This article describes an activity I designed to allow students to grasp critical approaches in Geopolitics better. The activity is focused on the deconstruction of the US' geopolitical code regarding the 2003 intervention in Iraq. The article describes the activity, and then evaluates students' learning through four different kinds of review and assessment. Overall, the different assessments show that students managed to achieve the main learning outcomes of the activity —i.e., being able to reflect on this geopolitical code as a social construction legitimizing military action. These assessments also show that students are able to apply what they learned in this specific activity to other geopolitical discourses —thus showing how the activity helps them develop critical thinking outside the classroom. In this sense, the article concludes that active learning can be helpful for instructors teaching critical approaches in International Relations or other similar fields. Having students working with their knowledge allows learners to understand better how to produce critical analyses and to grasp their political weight.

Keywords: active learning, Geopolitics, critical pedagogy, critical approaches in IR, geopolitical codes.

Resumen

Este artículo describe una actividad que diseñé para que los alumnos comprendieran mejor los enfoques críticos de la geopolítica. La actividad se centra en la deconstrucción del código geopolítico de Estados Unidos en relación con la intervención de 2003 en Irak. El artículo describe la actividad y, a continuación, evalúa el aprendizaje de los alumnos mediante cuatro tipos diferentes de revisión y evaluación. En general, las distintas evaluaciones muestran que los alumnos lograron alcanzar los principales resultados de aprendizaje de la actividad; es decir, ser

capaces de reflexionar sobre este código geopolítico como construcción social que legitima la acción militar. Estas evaluaciones también muestran que los estudiantes son capaces de aplicar lo aprendido en esta actividad específica a otros discursos geopolíticos, mostrando así cómo la actividad les ayuda a desarrollar un pensamiento crítico fuera del aula. En este sentido, el artículo concluye que el aprendizaje activo puede ser útil para los instructores que enseñan enfoques críticos en relaciones internacionales u otros campos similares. Hacer que los estudiantes trabajen con sus conocimientos permite a los alumnos comprender mejor cómo producir análisis críticos y captar su peso político.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje activo, geopolítica, pedagogía crítica, enfoques críticos en RRII, códigos geopolíticos.

INTRODUCTION

In International Relations (IR), Geopolitics, and other related fields of study, constructivist and critical approaches may be challenging to understand for students, because of the different ontologies and epistemologies that underpin them and their focus on ideational elements (Ishiyama *et al.*, 2015). Starting from this reflection, in this article, I argue that active learning may be a useful tool for instructors when teaching postpositivist approaches in IR, Geopolitics, or related fields. By leading students to work with their knowledge and apply it, active learning allows them to grasp ideational and discursive elements of politics and reflect on how they work together to shape international relations (Lamy, 2007). Therefore, this article describes an activity I conducted with my students and, by doing so, reflects and assesses students' learning through active learning methodologies.

Specifically, the participants were 4th year students of a double BA in International Relations and Global Communication at the Universidad Pontificia Comillas. Therefore, they had a solid background in IR and an interest for political discourses and communication. The activity I elaborated focused on the 2003 US' intervention in Iraq as a geopolitical code (Li, 2020). Through the activity, they were guided to reflect on the 2003 US' geopolitical code as an active discursive construction of Iraq and the Middle East at the bases of the legitimization of the military intervention. The activity was conducted in my module on Geopolitics, but, because of this intersection of different discourses, it may be suited for different IR modules that deal with constructivist and critical approaches to foreign policies, the WOT, or military interventions and international security (Campbell, 1998; Jackson, 2005).

Furthermore, the learning outcomes are in line with one that is usually included in many IR Syllabi —i.e., developing students' critical thinking (Khan and Gabriel, 2018). Broadly speaking, in IR and Geopolitics, developing students' critical thinking implies guiding students to questioning and challenging the main categories used to make sense of international politics (and reality) and to help them engage with what is presented as natural, neutral, and objective and question its political consequences

(*id.*). In this sense, the deconstruction of the discourses shaping the 2003 US' geopolitical code is in line with this broader objective.

The article is divided into a theoretical and a practical section. In the former, I start with a discussion of essentialist and critical approaches in Geopolitics and IR and a description of “geopolitical codes” as a theoretical tool. I then discuss critical pedagogy to illustrate the bottom-line pedagogical approach I adopt in my teaching. Here, I explain how Critical Pedagogy focuses on challenging students' naturalized views of the world and reality, and on giving them the tools to identify and problematize the power relations that structure politics (Díaz Sanz and Ferreiro Prado, 2021; Khan and Gabriel, 2018; Giroux, 2012). After some methodological remarks, the second part of the article illustrates the activity and the results obtained from the students. And, a last section offers some general conclusions.

APPROACHING THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY: ESSENTIALIST AND CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS EXPLAINING GEOPOLITICAL CODES

My module on Geopolitics is a ten sessions course —therefore, a very short one. Overall, I plan the module with the objective of bringing students to question naturalized geopolitical categories and reflect on their political consequences. To achieve this goal, each session raises, little by little, the critical engagement required. The module ends with the activity described because this allows students to apply the knowledge they acquired and consolidate it. Also, the activity allows me to assess whether they have acquired critical thinking skills and whether they are able to apply them independently from my guidance —and thus, outside the narrow context of the classroom. Therefore, throughout the module, I simplify and summarize scholarly debates and structure my teaching around the two main theoretical approaches that shape Geopolitics —i.e., essentialist and critical understandings of (geo-)politics (Dodds, 2019). To allow students to grasp these approaches better, I guide them to link them with their broad knowledge of IR theories —i.e., positivist and constructivist approaches in IR.

On the one hand, I explain that mainstream Geopolitics mostly understands that countries' international political behavior is shaped and molded by their geographical and territorial characteristics (Dodds, 2019; Ó Tuathail, 1998a, 1998b, 1996; Agnew, 1998). Geopolitically speaking, this means that its geographical characteristics influence its international behavior and shape it in a very specific way (Dodds, 2019; Díaz Sanz, 2019). From this perspective, resounding with mostly Neorealist understandings in IR, the state is considered a rational actor that rationally formulates its foreign policies and decides on its international political behavior —also influenced by its geopolitical position.

On the other hand, I present Critical Geopolitics as an approach that is closer to constructivism in IR. While not rejecting the importance of geography, this approach focuses on the social construction of reality and, in turn, on the social interpretations

of politics (Dodds, 2019; Ó Tuathail, 1998a, 1998b, 1996; Agnew, 1998). Among other things, Critical Geopolitics looks at geopolitics and its categories as social constructions that, among other elements, are produced, maintained, and legitimized through political discourses and practices (Díaz Sanz, 2019: 40). Geopolitics, therefore, can be understood as a discourse about the world that permits the exercise of power (Agnew, 1998). A part of Critical Geopolitics works, thus, focus on the deconstruction of political discourses and hegemonic geopolitical categories—that produce and reproduce relations of power (Dodds, 2019; Ó Tuathail, 1998a; 1998b; 1996; Agnew, 1998). To illustrate this theoretical reflection with a practical example, I invite students to collectively reflect on the geopolitical category of the “Middle East”.

Studying the Middle East from an essentialist and a critical perspective

Using the “Middle East” as an example, the students and I reflect together and try to pinpoint what could be the differences in approaching this area of the world from these two perspectives. Essentialist geopolitics would usually focus on the Middle East as a—not too problematic—existing geopolitical category (Bilgin, 2004). Overall, they would aim to produce regional analyses, formulate politics and policies toward the region and its future (Dodds, 2019).

On the other hand, Critical Geopolitics mostly focuses on deconstructing the category of the Middle East and problematizing its naturalization (Díaz Sanz, 2019; Cairo Carou, 2016; Culcasi, 2010; Bilgin, 2004). Critical geopolitics reflects on the political consequences of this social construct while destabilizing and denaturalizing it (Díaz Sanz, 2019; Cairo Carou, 2016). Here, critical geopolitics is interested in how these narratives allow the exercise of power relations and thus shape political practices. Linking it also to constructivist and postcolonial approaches in IR, my session focuses on how the category of the Middle East is a social construct with Eurocentric roots—thus embedded in geo-political relations of power from the very moment in which it was coined (Bilgin, 2004; Said, 1978). Scrutinizing it as a social construct allows the group to reflect on the homogenizing consequences this category has (Said, 1978)—i.e., on how it (re)produces a certain understanding of these countries and region (Cairo Carou, 2016; Culcasi, 2010).

Here, students reflect on how the discursive construction of the Middle East—e.g., as a dangerous, conflict-ridden region governed mostly by authoritarian rulers—allows and legitimizes certain political postures and practices towards the region (Li, 2020; Jackson, 2005; Campbell, 1998). At the same time, as constructivist and postcolonial approaches in IR remind us, they also reflect on how these discourses construct the Middle East as the “Other”, while also shaping the formation of the “Self”—i.e., in this case, the West (Culcasi, 2010; Said, 1978)—and reifying and legitimizing both categories. Therefore, this part of the module marks the beginning of the reflection on foreign policies as an active process of construction of the region. The session that follows deals with geopolitical codes.

Geopolitical codes

Taylor and Flint define geopolitical codes as “the manner in which a country orientates itself towards/in the world” (Flint and Taylor, 2018: 62; Flint, 2017: 52). Put it differently, “geopolitical codes” is a theoretical tool used to identify the geopolitical considerations at the basis of a country’s formulation of its foreign policies (id.). Flint and Taylor describe five calculations that are at the basis of each country’s foreign policy decision:

1. Who are our current and potential allies?
2. How can we maintain our allies and nurture potential allies?
3. Who are our current and potential enemies?
4. How can we counter enemies and emerging threats?
5. How do we justify the four calculations above to our public and to the global community?

Here, students learn that the essentialist-critical debate is reproduced (Flint and Taylor, 2018). Essentialists understand that the formulation of a country’s geopolitical code is a rational process based on specific calculations driven by political and strategic interests and, for example, alliances (Flint, 2017: 52). Geopolitical codes, thus, “reflect national interests” and can be analyzed as rational processes of decision-making (Flint and Taylor, 2018: 62; Flint, 2017: 52). Contrastingly, critical scholars understand them as social and discursive constructions. These are mostly produced by political leaders, military leaders, intellectuals and other social actors, but, as discourses, they also circulate in societies and intersect with other discourses in society —e.g., the ones constructing geopolitical categories (Agnew, 1998; Flint and Taylor, 2018).

Ó Tuathail argues that geopolitical codes are geopolitical practices, discourses, and narratives and, as such, they are “political and cultural ways of describing, representing, and writing geography and international politics” (Ó Tuathail, 1998a: 3). He adds that friends and enemies are never given, but they are the result of a discursive process of identification and construction, and it is this same process that legitimizes, justifies and proscribes the implementation of certain politics and policies over others (Ó Tuathail, 1998a: 3; 1998b). Furthermore, discourses are key gears of the geopolitical mechanisms of identity formation, and as such, they (re)articulate the categories of “I/we” vs “they/the Other” (Ó Tuathail, 1996: 14). Therefore, among other tasks, critical scholars analyze and deconstruct geopolitical discourses and the meanings these discourses (re)articulate to, for example, legitimize the designation of friends and enemies and the “political action plan” to follow. In this case, a critical approach to geopolitical codes would ask different questions that I have summed up for students in the following way:

1. How are friends described and represented? What adjectives are used to talk about friends? What are the categories used to discursively construct friends as friends?

2. What are the political consequences of these representations? What is the action plan to be adopted/that is legitimized here? What and how are politics and policies justified and legitimized through these representations?
3. How are enemies described and represented? What adjectives are used to talk about enemies? What are the categories used to discursively construct enemies as enemies?
4. What are the political consequences of these representations? What is the action plan to be adopted/that is legitimized here? What and how are politics and policies justified and legitimized through these representations?

Therefore, broadly speaking, critical approaches in IR and Geopolitics focus on deconstructing political discourses and their political consequences, also shedding light on the power relations they are embedded in but also reproduce. It is because of these reasons that I consider that critical approaches allow students to develop their critical thinking. It is also because of this reason that I position my pedagogical approach to education within the Critical Pedagogy framework, as I discuss below.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AS A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

Critical Pedagogy is a pedagogical approach that aims to develop students' critical thinking with the overall goal of social emancipation (Khan and Gabriel, 2018; Deardoff, 2013). In other words, instructors that understand that developing their students' critical thinking involves bringing them to question the naturalization of power relations in the social world may align themselves with the intellectual, practical, and political pedagogical approach proposed by Critical Pedagogy. Here, education is understood both as a locus of reproduction of these power relations and as a sphere where these can be countered and, overall, a locus where it is possible to work for societal transformation and emancipation (Khan and Gabriel, 2018; Giroux, 2012).

In order to achieve this, it is essential to understand the teacher-student role as horizontally as possible (Khan and Gabriel, 2018; Deardoff, 2013). In other words, the role of the instructor is understood mostly as a facilitator of the learning experience as Critical Pedagogy is an approach to learning that builds on Social Constructivism in Pedagogy —i.e., the comprehension that learning is a dynamic, active, and social process that happens in various ways through collaborations that are embedded in social contexts such as the classroom (Devlin, 2006; Bonwell and Eison, 1991). Learners construct their own knowledge through a wide variety of processes and interactions, and they are active masters in building their own knowledge. Therefore, lectures are decentered from the instructor to the students (*id.*), and learning methods are active —what the students do is key because it is by doing that they construct their own knowledge (McCarthy and Anderson, 2000).

Furthermore, Critical Pedagogy is based on emancipatory agenda of denaturalizing power relations (Devlin, 2006; Bonwell and Eison, 1991). This does not imply that the

teaching needs to focus on class, gender, and race or, as in this case, Orientalist constructions of the Other. Rather, the teaching needs to create the space for students to encounter these dynamics while focusing on the various topics that compose the module (Khan and Gabriel, 2018). Here, the instructor guides students through a process of mutual “coming to awareness” of power dynamics that students will be able to take away “from the classroom” into “the real world” (Giroux, 2020: 7).

It is with this in mind that I designed the specific activity described hereunder with the intention to guide students to challenge the construction of the geopolitical codes used to legitimize the intervention in Iraq in 2003 (Li, 2020) —an activity that led students to question and challenge hegemonic constructions that reproduce power relations in geopolitics.

DECONSTRUCTING GEOPOLITICS IN THE CLASSROOM: THE 2003 US GEOPOLITICAL CODE

This part focuses mostly on describing and evaluating the active learning session. The activity was carried out in the first semester of the academic year 2020/2021, therefore, it took place through a blended teaching modality because of the pandemic. This means that half of the group was present in the classroom, while the other half was following the lecture in streaming.

Whether the blended modality of teaching and had an impact on the development of the activity and students’ work is something that goes beyond the scope of this article. The activity was never carried out in a different format, so a real comparison is not possible. However, whether the blended or face-to-face modality affect its development and students’ learning could be an interesting line for future, comparative research in teaching innovation.

Overall, I was concerned about the impact the blended modality could have on students’ involvement and engagement —as online dynamics can be sometimes alienating for BA students and more challenging to manage for the instructor (Deardoff, 2013). Therefore, I decided to have the whole class working together in breakout rooms in Blackboard collaborate (interacting through the chat and video calls) and they shared the results on Moodle.

This dynamic was chosen to give the “feeling of the classroom” to students working from home and mitigate the alienation students following the lecture online may experience (Mills and Alexander, 2013). This solution seemed to work well as students in the classroom encouraged participation from the ones online —something that for the lecturer may reveal more challenging because of the power relations shaping the instructor-student relation. Here, students in the classroom took the lead on the technical aspects —e.g., in some cases, even managing the virtual room— and guided the discussion to include students online and, thus, returning very smooth groups’ work dynamics.

In this section, I detail the pedagogical reasoning beyond the structure of the activity and, in the second part, I evaluate whether the activity was effective. The

session was structured around the OPAR pillars —i.e., Orienting, Presenting, Activity, Review (Petty, 2022). See also Annex 1.

Aims of the session and intended learning outcomes

As said, throughout the module, my main aim is to guide students to question the main geopolitical categories and thinking present in politics nowadays and to reflect on their political weight. More specifically, the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for the activity build on Bloom's taxonomy as revised by Anderson (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001) and are:

1. ILO1: Identify and analyze the US' geopolitical code in relation to Iraq (2003) in Bush's political discourses from an essentialist and critical perspective.
2. ILO2: Understanding the differences between essentialist and critical analyses in Geopolitics.
3. ILO3: Evaluate the political consequences of the discourse.

Intended outcomes 1 and 2 are focused on the activity and, overall, the module. However, ILO 3 is ILO of a higher order (id.) —i.e., students are required not only to draw on what they learned in the lecture but to actively use their knowledge to make judgments beyond what they have been exposed to in the classroom. Therefore, ILO1 and ILO2 are mostly designed to assess learning. Contrastingly, ILO3 evaluates whether they are able to reflect on the political weight of specific construction and if they will be able to critically reflect on political discourses and constructions in general —beyond the immediacy of the activity (id.).

Orienting —Orienting students and activating prior knowledge

The session starts with the activation of students' prior knowledge so as to situate students within the broad —political and theoretical— debate (Ambrose *et al.*, 2010). I start the session by asking students, “What is the War on Terror? Where was it fought? Why? Who were the US' friends and enemies?”. The activity is brief because research suggests that “even small instructional interventions can activate students' relevant prior knowledge to positive effect” (*ibid.*: 16). I want students to be able to make the connection between what we will study and where these discourses are outside of the classroom; this will help the new knowledge to “stick” better (*ibid.*: 15) and, even after the activity, it will help students to see where these discourses are.

I chose the WOT as a case study focusing specifically on Bush's speeches because of its notoriety. I know that, at this stage of their studies, students will have both the declarative and the procedural knowledge (*ibid.*: 18) both on the theoretical debates

—which they have learned about in my module— and on the WOT —because of its notoriety. Both kinds of knowledge are activated through these questions (id.).

Presenting —Presenting information in a clear, engaging way

Before this specific session, students have already been presented with the theoretical tools of “geopolitical codes”, and they have been assigned readings on geopolitical codes for preparation (chapter 3, Flint, 2017). Now, the presenting part of the session is centered on the WOT. To engage students in the activity, I show them a short video of Bush’s speech launching the intervention in Iraq¹. I then introduce them to the two main speeches they need to analyze. These are his ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his speech on Iraq and the Middle East Peace Process². I then recall the five considerations composing a country’s geopolitical code and present the activity.

Activity —What will students be doing?

Students are asked to form small groups so as to encourage participative dynamics (Mills and Alexander, 2013). At this stage, they are asked to produce groups’ hand-in to submit on Moodle at the end of the session. They are invited, to first identify the US geopolitical code in Bush’s speeches —i.e., to apply an essentialist approach. After this, we proceed with the first round of results sharing. Though there is the risk that this may break the group dynamics, it is important to generate a space of collective formative feedback so that the instructor can correct issues that may have emerged and the whole class can be reassured of the work they are doing. Students are then asked to proceed with the critical analyses. Eventually, another collective sharing of the results is carried out (see annex for the structure of the activity).

Review of learning —How will you check students’ progress and understanding?

Assessments and reviews are a key part of the process of learning. They do not only give instructors the chance to monitor students’ learning but they also provide

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1. Bush, George W. 2003. “President Bush announces military operation in Iraq”. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zT-ZHBbOzM> [retrieved: October 10, 2020].
 2. Bush, George W. 2003. “President George W. Bush’s Speech on Iraq and the Middle East ‘Peace Process’”, *Global Policy Forum*, Available at: <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/167-attack/35431-president-george-w-bushs-speech-on-iraq.html> [retrieved October 27 2020]. Bush, George W. (2003), “President George W. Bush’s ultimatum to Saddam Hussein”, *The Guardian*, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/18/usa.iraq> [retrieved October 27 2020].

students with the opportunities to engage, review, and reflect on their learning (Woods, 2015; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Hutchings, 1993). Formative assessment usually takes different forms. On the one hand, there is what Clark names as “assessment for learning”, where instructors gather data to monitor on the competencies acquired by the students (Clark, 2012). On the other hand, there is what Rawlins and Leach call “assessment as learning” where students—and instructors—learn through the process of reflection and assessment of the learning process (Rawlins and Leach, 2014).

As Moon argued, real learning happens through reflection on experiences (Moon, 2005). Therefore, it is key to give the students enough space to monitor their own progress and reflect on their learning and to provide them with some activities that will help them to reflect and that will guide them through their own evaluation of their learning (Woods, 2015; Cleary and Zimmerman, 2004). After the concrete experience of encountering new material, students need to reflect critically on what they learned because it is by drawing conclusions that they will be able to develop the skills acquired for future applications inside and outside the classroom (Moon, 2005; Hutchings, 1993).

Therefore, my session closes with different kinds of reviews of their learning because the ILOs belong to different orders, and they are aimed at training different skills. The first two reviews are assessing mostly ILO 1 and they represent the evaluative assessment—and assessment for learning—phase. The second two activities assess mostly ILO 2 and 3 and they represent the formative assessment—and assessment for learning—phase. Clearly, this is an artificial division because students’ learning and achievement of the ILOs happens throughout the whole process simultaneously (Moon, 2005; Rawlins and Leach, 2014). Overall, the session will be successful if the review activities show that the ILOs have been, at least in part, achieved. To illustrate this, the next sections report students’ results. Methodologically, I have analyzed their hand-ins with Nvivo11 and coded results with similar meaning under the same node—i.e., following the percepts of Discourse Analysis (Dunn and Neumann, 2016) and Content Analysis.

a) Evaluative assessment 1. Students’ classroom work

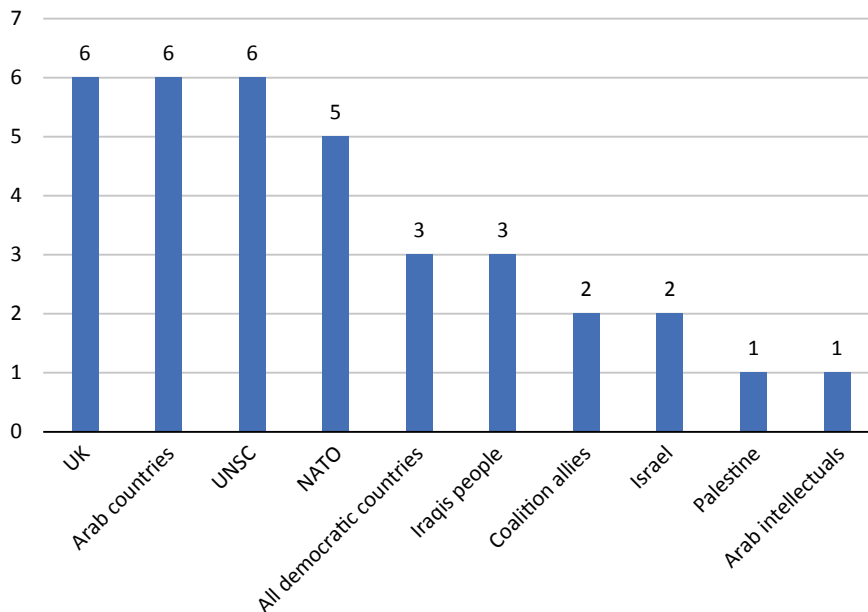
At the end of the activity, students were asked to upload on Moodle their analyses. Here, 28 students worked in groups of 4. Results for the essentialist and critical analyses are reported hereunder (see table 1 and 2 and figures 1, 2, and 3). Their analyses, overall, show that they achieved ILO1—i.e., they managed to “Identify and analyze the US’ geopolitical code in relation to Iraq (2003) in Bush’s political discourses from an essentialist and critical perspective”. Overall, they show that students were able to identify the 2003 US geopolitical code and, specifically, the designation of the friends and the enemies and the political justification provided in Bush’s speeches both from an essentialist and critical perspective.

TABLE 1.
STUDENTS' RESULTS FOR THE ESSENTIALIST ANALYSIS

Geopolitical code	Categories identified by the students
US' Friends	"UK", "NATO", "the Security Council", "the West", "democratic countries around the world", "Iraqi people that should join the fight against Hussein", "Arab intellectuals against Hussein"
Justifications for friendship	"the desire for peace and freedom allies share", "the desire to spread democratic values", "the common goal of eliminating Hussein and authoritarianism".
US' Enemies	"Iraq", "Saddam Hussein"; "WMDs"; "international terrorism", "Al-Qaeda"; "the UN Security Council (if the intervention is vetoed)"
Justifications for enmity	"these are threats" [sic.], "these are threats to the US and to the free world", "they are threats to international peace and security", "Saddam is a threat to the world"
Action plan	"preventive war", "war as last resort", "intervention", "finding allies in the Middle East", "the freeing of Iraq", "the avoiding of the emergence of potential enemies by preventing the insurgence of other authoritarian leaders, against the Wester leaders [sic.]".

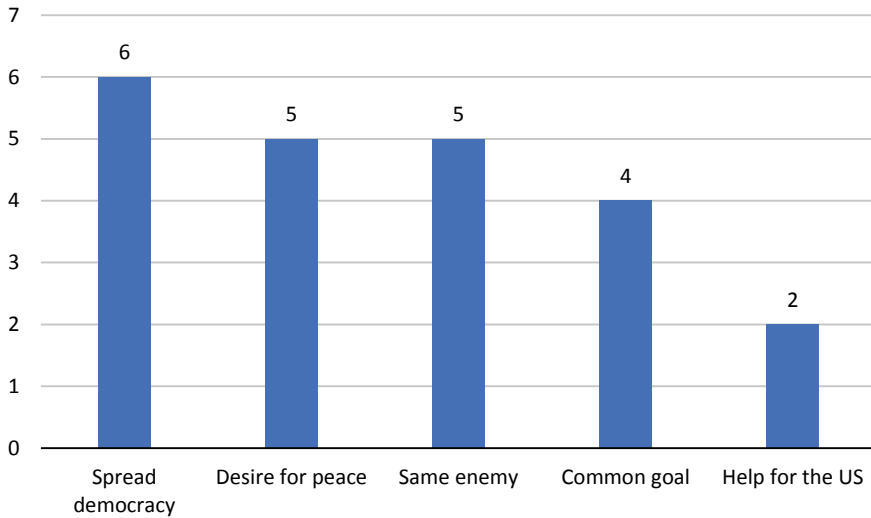
Source: Own elaboration.

FIGURE 1.
GROUPS' IDENTIFICATION OF FRIENDS



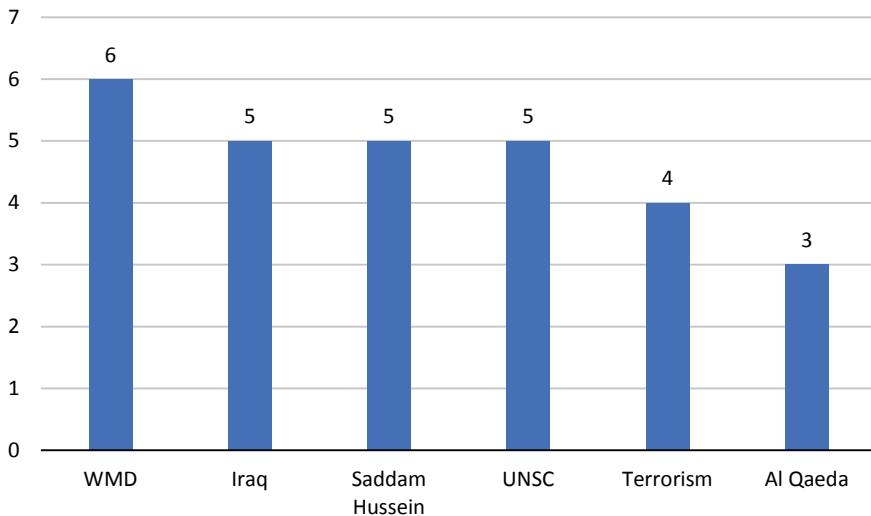
Source: Own elaboration.

FIGURE 2.
GROUPS' IDENTIFICATION OF REASONS FOR FRIENDSHIP



Source: Own elaboration.

FIGURE 3.
RESULTS FOR STUDENTS' IDENTIFICATION OF ENEMIES



Source: Own elaboration.

Students also managed to conduct a critical analysis, as they not only identified the US friends' and enemies' depictions and constructions but also their political consequences, as table 2 illustrates.

TABLE 2.
STUDENTS' RESULTS FOR THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Construction of the geopolitical code	Categories identified by the students
Adjectives and categories used to construct US' friends	<p>“democratic”, “peaceful”, “free/freedom”, “liberal or liberation”, “civilised world”, “just, and strongest and stable nations”, “better”, “moral”.</p> <p>“They are described, or more specifically self-described, as saviours and heroes. Risking their lives and their own security for the ‘greater good’”.</p> <p>“The vigilante that aims to fight for the ‘innocent’ and subjugated Iraqi people at the hands of dictator Saddam Hussein”.</p> <p>“They are also represented as saviours of democracy vs authoritarian regimes”.</p> <p>“Friends are represented ‘Democratic (then legitimate) and moral’”.</p> <p>“they have a common desire for peace”,</p>
Consequences of the construction of the friends	<p>“The US's friends are represented as charitable and as members who want to help the USA promote the democratic values and to ensure peace”.</p> <p>“They are described and represented as stable and free countries who will bring peace and security to the region”.</p> <p>“They are described as states that defend humanity and defend mankind”.</p> <p>“They are strong and capable to do so [intervene militarily]”, “they are described in an absolute way as the best option for Iraq, equalizing democracy and peace to the United States”.</p> <p>“These representations build a message of power”.</p> <p>“These positions express a role for the US of dominance and aggressiveness and put into context it looks like the ‘hero’ is here to save the day from the “bad guy”.</p> <p>“Hence, they [these representation] also acts as a moral shield where the result is justifying the means used. By doing this they are seeing themselves as ‘the good ones’”.</p> <p>“It is a Hero VS Villain rhetoric... where we also have the victims, the Iraqi population and the victims of terrorism Thus, the role of the US and its allies is to protect these victims (and must do whatever is necessary, even war)”.</p> <p>“By using these adjectives, Bush emphasizes the necessary alliance between the US and its friends”.</p>
Adjectives and categories used to construct US' enemies (Saddam Hussein)	<p>“Enemies of liberty and democracy”, “tyrant”, “dying regime”, “brutal dictator”, “lawless man”, “threatening and horrific”, “outlaws”, “violent and destructive”, “dangerous”, “aggressive”, “terrorist”, “authoritarian and immoral”, “barbarism, civilized vs uncivilized”, “irrational actor that doesn't know what he's doing”, “peaceful measures have not worked and that is why they are irrational and negotiation is not the best way to deal with them. They are so barbaric they attack their own population [Hussein and his forces]”, “Hussein represents the triumph of hatred and violence” and “[he] intimidates the civilized world”.</p>

Construction of the geopolitical code	Categories identified by the students
Consequences of the construction of the enemies	<p>“The consequences of representing enemies as such is that for example that they segregate making a distinction between ‘them’ and ‘us’ by consequence, as the enemy portrays all the negative features possible it justifies the intervention” [sic].</p> <p>“Through identifying themselves as guardians of democratic stability and balance, they accomplish their purpose of their enemies being perceived as enemies of mankind globally”.</p> <p>“Hero VS Villain rhetoric: Hussein is viewed as the villain and thus its actions are completely delegitimized”.</p>
Justification of the “action plan”	<p>“It [this representation] pushes for military intervention”.</p> <p>“They (the US) frame the intervention on the means of democracy, freedom and peace which is derived from the dichotomy of good and evil previously constructed hence, they justify their intervention by framing Iraq as the evil threat to the world and also to its own civil society”.</p> <p>“They (the US) frame Hussein as a threat, and not the population, and thus the invasion is legitimized because the mission is to protect the citizens from Hussein”.</p> <p>“(it) creates a division between ‘the morals’ (the US), which justifies every type of behavior from it, and ‘the immoral’, the uncivilized or the evil”, where these last ones need to be intervened in order to restore peace in the territory (not only in Iraq specifically but also all the other countries ‘Iraq has corrupted’) [sic.]”.</p> <p>“The only alternative is the use of force for the greater good”.</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

b) Evaluative assessment 2. Multiple-choice questionnaire

Evaluative assessment 2 and 3 were conducted autonomously, outside of the classroom in the two weeks following the activity. Assessing the knowledge acquired on critical understandings of Geopolitics and IR through a Multiple-choice questions (MCQ) survey is not easy. While MCQs are helpful in assessing “objective” knowledge on a matter, critical approaches aim to unpack “objectivity”. Nonetheless, I decided to start this part of the evaluation with a MCQs part because starting the evaluative assessment with a more structured activity gave students the sense of a “real” assessment (Rawlins and Leach 2014; Angelo and Cross 1993). I included questions that would help me observe if students were paying attention to the survey—or to the activity in class—and more general questions on the approaches and their application in Geopolitics. 28 students participated and grades oscillated between 7 and 10 (out of 10), with a

class average of 9,50 —thus returning a good result for this part of the activity. The questions can be found in next table:

TABLE 3.
MCQ QUESTIONS AND STUDENTS' RESULTS

Questions	Answer	ILOs	% of correct answers
Questions on the class activity			
The US intervention in Iraq took place in:			
A) 2001	2003	ILO1	100%
B) 2008			
C) 2003			
Who are the US' enemies in the intervention in Iraq in 2003 that Bush identifies in his speeches?			
A) Iraq and international terrorism	Iraq and international terrorism	ILO1	100%
B) Afghanistan and Iran			
C) The Soviet Union and Cuba			
Questions on the identification of the geopolitical codes			%
Who are the US' friends in the intervention in Iraq in 2003 that Bush identifies in his speeches?			
A) Allies in the military coalition	Allies in the military coalition	ILO1 (essentialist analysis)	100%
B) Other capitalist states			
C) The UK and France			
For Bush, Iraq is a threat because:			
A) It collaborates closely with Iran, the big US enemy in the MENA	It collaborates with international terrorism, and it has WMDs	ILO1 (essentialist analysis)	96%
B) It collaborates with international terrorism, and it has WMDs			
C) It has a long history of collaboration with Saudi Arabia			
Bush is legitimizing the intervention in Iraq using:			
A) Metaphors of civilization and democratization	Metaphors of civilization and democratization	ILO1 (critical analysis), ILO2, ILO3	81%
B) The reasoning that Iraq is blocking oil exportation			
C) The fact that, otherwise, Iraq will follow Iran and try to develop nuclear weapons			

Questions	Answer	ILOs	%
Questions on the understanding of the different approaches to geopolitical codes			
For critical scholars, it is important to study geopolitical codes:			
A) To see how they legitimize political action and (re)produce geographical understandings of international politics	To see how they legitimize political action and (re) produce geographical understandings of international politics	ILO2	85%
B) To understand how states fabricate lies about international politics			
C) So that states can formulate their foreign policies decisions			
For critical scholars, geopolitical codes:			
A) Reflect a country's national interests	Are social constructions that are shaped by more elements than just rational thinking	ILO2	96%
B) Are social constructions that are shaped by more elements than just rational thinking			
C) Should not be an object of study because they reflect and reify a state's interests in international politics			
Essentialists argue that geopolitical codes:			
A) Are a knowledge that is created and used in statesmen's and intellectuals' geopolitical reasonings to	Represent the straightforward designation of a state's international behavior, the identification of friends and enemies in international politics that each state needs to do	ILO2	100%
B) Do not exist, are not an object of study in mainstream geopolitics			
C) Represent the straightforward designation of a state's international behavior, the identification of friends and enemies in international politics that each state needs to do			

Source: Own elaboration.

c) Formative assessment 1. Students' formative reflections on the analysis

Formative assessment 1 is aimed at providing students with enough space to reflect on their learning process (Woods, 2015; Cleary and Zimmerman, 2004). Reflecting allows the knowledge acquired on the different approaches in geopolitics to settle in (ILO2), but also to achieve the higher order level of evaluating the political consequences of the discourse (ILO3). So, to conduct the first part of the formative assessment, I designed various questions to guide students through their personal reflection. At the very end, I added two extra questions on the Middle East representation to assess whether they were also able to tie together different topics we had dealt with through the module and think critically about geopolitics (Module aim). Students had approx. 2 weeks to hand in their reflections; 22 students participated.

TABLE 4.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Questions	ILOs
<i>Questions for the reflection on the consequences of the constructions</i>	
1. In the speeches analyzed, how are the US' enemies represented? What do you think are the political consequences of these representations?	ILO1 & ILO2
<i>Questions to assess the understanding of the different approaches</i>	
2. What is the difference between essentialist and critical analyses? How do you think they differ in their understandings of geopolitical codes?	ILO2
3. What does it mean that friends and enemies are social constructions? Do these representations of friends and enemies play a political role? And why and how do you think they do/don't?	ILO2 & ILO3
<i>Questions on the application of previous knowledge acquired to the deconstruction of the geopolitical codes analyzed</i>	
4. How does the way Bush talks about the Middle East recall the construction studied in class? And how does this construction matter politically, in your opinion?	ILO3 Module aim
5. Can you think of any way Bush's construction of Iraq recalls the construction of the MENA studied in class?	ILO3 Module aim

Source: Own elaboration.

Overall, students' answers confirmed that the ILOs were mostly achieved, as next table illustrates schematically.

TABLE 5.

STUDENTS' ANSWERS

Questions	Students' answers
<i>Questions for the reflection on the consequences of the constructions</i>	
1. In the speeches analyzed, how are the US' enemies represented? What do you think are the political consequences of these representations?	<p>"They [the US] are seen as heroes because of their peaceful goals".</p> <p>"This rhetoric provokes a gather around the flag effect whereby the US as well as their allies need work together to defeat the "common enemy".</p> <p>"...with the deployment of this rhetoric, you are setting the stage for a war/battle between two forces: the US and its allies against the enemies".</p> <p>"The main political consequence is the justification of the war on terror".</p> <p>"Pre-emptive action against Iraq because Iraq is an irredeemably bad actor that leaves no room for negotiations".</p> <p>"The consequence therefore is that the only way in which the west can act is by violent ways, as Iraq leaves them no alternatives".</p> <p>"The use of polysyndeton and juxtapositions in Bush's strategic rhetoric and the zoomorphism used implies that they are no longer considered humans, their moral character is discredited [sic.]".</p>

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Instructor's assessment:

Overall, ILO 2 was achieved. Students were able to reflect on the political consequences sought with Bush's speech and the depictions of the enemies.

Questions to assess the understanding of the different approaches

<p>2. What is the difference between essentialist and critical analyses? How do you think they differ in their understandings of geopolitical codes?</p>	<p>“Essentialists focus on the state as the main rational actor while the critical view focuses on the examination of —implicit and explicit —meanings, given to specific places to justify states' actions in relation to foreign policies actions”.</p> <p>“[...] On the other hand, the critical analyses establish that the geopolitical imaginations are representations of the world that provide legitimization for the political actions, and these are not objective but created based on the interest. The geopolitical codes are considered to be the basis of the political action, which are also constructed, created by the states and experts based on their interest and objectives. These codes permit to see the power-relations” [sic].</p> <p>“Critical geopolitics deconstruct codes and analyse the implicit and explicit meaning of specific actions. Geopolitical codes are not pre-given but a process of social construction”.</p> <p>“The representation of the world and politics from the mainstream analysis is far from objective and are limited depictions of world history and geography used to support policy prescriptions for states”.</p> <p>“Geopolitical codes frame the relations between powers according to subjective assumptions and stereotypical hypotheses”.</p> <p>“In the example of Iraq, an essentialist would say that Iraq poses an imminent threat because of the ideological differences, the use of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and that as a consequence, Iraq must be invaded (in the same way they have historically countered every authoritarian regime). However, from a critical perspective, the US uses a rhetoric of <i>us VS them/hero VS villain</i> in order to justify their invasion of Iraq. They would say the particular narrative they have created around Iraq is what legitimizes their invasion”.</p> <hr/>
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Instructor's assessment:

Overall, most students achieved ILO 2. Their reflections show they have understood the differences between the two approaches and can also explain the different understandings of reality behind the two approaches.

3. What does it mean that friends and enemies are social constructions? Do these representations of friends and enemies play a political role? And why and how do you think they do/don't?	<p>"The terms are social constructions because due to certain characteristics of the potential enemies or friends, alongside the nature and characteristics of ourselves we determine who is a friend and who is not".</p> <p>"These representations do play a very important political role as we as actors behave towards other actors in the bases [sic.] on what they mean for us, aka the way in which we portray different actors, as friends or enemies shapes the policies we implement towards them".</p> <p>"Of course, the representation plays a political role, firstly because it is not the same to be an ally than an enemy and the role of the country differs based on the construction that the other country has deployed into it. For example, the role of China in American politics has changed since Trump declared China as an enemy. Tariffs on exports have been increasing in the latter years so as to put obstacles in the Chinese American trade. [sic.]".</p> <p>"In other words, it does not follow objective or rational criteria, as explained that Iraq (enemy) and Saudi Arabia (friend) fulfil the same non-democratic characteristics, but one is a friend and the other one is not".</p> <p>"It means that the organization of space and alliances is not neutral or objective. Instead, it is built by the knowledge that is created and used in reasonings. They try to explain that enemies and friends are not geographically determined but that power relations are complex and need to be explained from several points of view such as security, geography, politics...".</p> <p>"These representations sure do play a political role since they have a direct relationship with power relationships between states and their political actions. By seeing friends and enemies as social constructions speeches are no longer descriptions of a geopolitical reality but a revelation of intentions, interests and alliances. Also, these constructions are frequently used to justify political actions or plans so they are intrinsically political".</p>
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.../...

Instructor's assessment

This question starts guiding students towards ILO3. Answers show that students managed to understand the political importance of geopolitical codes as social constructions. Some students expanded their reflection and used examples not directly linked with the activity —thus revealing that they have acquired knowledge that they are able to use outside the module (ILO3 & module aim).

However, only some students referred to power-relations rather than the sole “exercise of power” —thus showing how difficult it is for students to grasp power relations that shape politics such as Orientalist constructions.

Questions on the application of previous knowledge acquired to the deconstruction of the geopolitical codes analyzed

4. How does the way Bush talks about the Middle East recall the construction studied in class? And how does this construction matter politically, in your opinion?
- “He talks about the MENA as a homogenous region, arguing that prosperity and democracy could be established all around the region, ignoring the huge differences that exist”,
- “Bush mentions the chaos and the permanence of authoritarian regimes that exploit their populations. This coincides with the construction we studied in class about the ME: a region with a lack of leadership, lack of stability, and lack of organization”.
- “The way that bush talks about the MENA recalls the construction studied in class as many times he identifies Islam and terrorism as a homogeneous characteristic of the region. [...] It is a big error from Bush's narrative to homogenize the region”.
- “The construction that Bush offers have shaped the perception of the many about the Middle East and have influenced the material practices and political decisions that have been made. The negative and particular context of the Middle East has been a social construction due to the narratives that are normally in the news, social media and press. We have based our perception of this region in a context surrounded by terrorism, instability, violence, oppression and anti-Americanism”.
- “This construction matters politically because, if we just focus on the prevailing perception of a region, we get a misleading impression. This image will influence the way we make foreign policy. We have a negative view of the MENA just like Bush. We regard it as a region of instability and anti-western ideals. Enemies of our values become state enemies”.
- “In fact, the War on Terror narrative used by Bush administration can be recognized as one of the main sources for the social construction of MENA as intolerable towards liberal values, a threat to international security and highly repressive”.
- “By depicting it as a region of turmoil, crisis and anti-Americanism, Bush justified the political decision of launching the War on Terror. Hence, this proves that oversimplified representations and perceptions, in this case of the MENA region, can influence material practices and political decisions”.
-

.../...

Instructor's assessment

ILO3 & Module aim seemed to be achieved. Students were able to apply knowledge they acquired in other sessions to Bush's geopolitical code.

Some students reflect on the Orientalist rhetoric used by Bush and, some of them, even define the WOT as a "process of construction of the region" aimed at legitimizing military action —thus showing a broader comprehension of the module's content and ability to apply it.

<p>5. Can you think of any way Bush's construction of Iraq recalls the construction of the MENA studied in class?</p>	<p>"This question is linked to the question before as the Bush's construction of Iraq is homogenized, everyone from Iraq is a terrorist, they all belong to Islam, they all speak Arabic, there is a lack of democracy".</p> <p>"Bush construction of Iraq as a terrorist state corresponds to the generalized idea of construction of the MENA that we saw in class. Bush emphasizes how Iraq is an evil state that embraces terrorism and the end of the freedom in our countries, which continues with the erroneous idea of the MENA".</p> <p>"Iraq is constructed as a troubled state, an enemy of the US with no regard of conventions or war and morality, an outlaw regime. Bush's perception of Iraq is such because we have lumped the MENA under the same general label. When talking about Iraq and other states in the Middle East, negative connotations arise that are associated with Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism and crisis, a place where anti-Americanism reigns".</p> <p>"Bush's construction of the space recalls in many ways what we studied in class. As stated above, his construction holds negative and particularistic contexts that tend to stereotype the region. His tendency to portray them as terrorist and a violent threat recalls the relatively new idea of a region linked to fundamentalism that has been protagonist of many events like the hostage crisis or the oil crisis. Bush depicts the MENA as destructive and violent which perpetuates the common image of the region being a place of turmoil, crisis and anti-Americanism".</p>
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Instructor's assessment

Students managed to point out how the discursive construction resonates with geopolitical construction of the region —therefore, for many of them, ILO3 and the module aim seem to be achieved as they have been able to apply their knowledge in broader context —i.e., not the one strictly guided by the activity.

Source: Own elaboration.

d) Formative assessment 2. Debriefing and collective reflections on the activity

An effective reflection does not only involve students reflecting on what they did and what they learned but also thinking about why they did it and what it allowed them to understand (Bonwell and Eison, 1991). This was the aim of the second formative assessment: to engage students in a collective reflection on what the activity allowed them to see. The debriefing started with a discussion of the main results, so to

work as an evaluative assessment, too. Then, the rest of the debriefing was articulated around different questions. First, I asked them how they found the activity. Here, students stated that “It was helpful to understand the political situation in 2003”, that they “liked it and it was interesting”, or that “it was fine, it was useful. We have been studying political communication in the past, but this was different, it was a different kind of reflection”. One particular student remarked:

It took us a while to figure out what we were doing. I think that [...] once you have an activity going you need to push that threshold of laziness or “ufff, I don’t want to answer or whatever”. At first when you said that we had an activity we were like “uff” but then when you get into it you really start going and making sense of the analysis and enjoying the process. This is also why I think there is more (better) answers in our hand ins and then reflections than when you asked in class.

Then I asked students about the different activities they were asked to do. Here they emphasized that the reflection questions allowed them to grasp the broader meaning of the activity. Asked about how they found the 3 different tasks, they answered that: “The quiz was ok, but the other part was more interesting because you make us focus on reflect and think so I probably preferred the other (the reflection part)”.

Another student added that: “For me it was very clear (the activity) after I analyzed everything and finished the reflection too”.

Lastly, when asked about what they felt they had learned from the activity, they said that they thought “the activity helped with fully understanding the topic. It’s a practical example” and that “The activity gives you practition [sic.]. We study the theory but this exercise puts in practices what we study in class”. They also said that “It was useful to review some main concepts” and that “It shows what the difference between essentialists and critical geopolitics is”. Referring specifically to the critical perspective, one student added “here (in other modules on IR) this perspective is a bit lost so I think it is useful to talk about these perspectives that we don’t usually see”.

Overall, 28 students were present for the debriefing. However, only some of them shared their feelings about the activity. Furthermore, their comments in the debriefing would not support the idea that students managed to achieve ILO2 and ILO3, as they did not seem to show a broad awareness of what the activity allowed them to learn. However, their personal reflections point to a full achievement of ILO2 and ILO3—and mostly of the module aim. When asked about this gap in the debriefing, a student said that, in the classroom, it is more difficult for them to share their views, because there is always a “barrier of shyness”—thus, revealing the usefulness of conducting both kind of reflections— i.e., the written answers and oral debriefing.

CONCLUSION

Having reached this point, it is useful to recall the activity ILOs:

1. ILO1: Identify and analyze the US' geopolitical code in relation to Iraq (2003) in Bush's political discourses from an essentialist and critical perspective.
2. ILO2: Understanding the differences between essentialist and critical analyses in Geopolitics.
3. ILO3: Evaluate the political consequences of the discourse.

Overall, students' results illustrated above show they were able to produce both an essentialist and a critical analysis of the 2003 US geopolitical code —thus, achieving ILO1. Moreover, most of them were able to explain the differences between the two approaches in their own words, thus showing that they achieved ILO2. ILO3 was the most challenging aim for students to achieve —as it required them an abstraction and analytical effort to understand the political consequences of the discourse. Even so, the majority of the students were able to pinpoint the power relations and the instrumentalization of the discourse, revealing that they achieved a certain level of understanding of how to conduct a critical analysis. Furthermore, the last reflections linked to ILO3 and the own students' reflections on the activity show that the exercise helped students to achieve the three ILOs and, overall, to broaden and deepen their understandings of geopolitics.

Students' comments on how the Middle East was discursively constructed and this construction used to legitimize military operations reveal that they were able to link the knowledge acquired throughout the module and apply it in this specific case. Furthermore, they were able to explain this kind of exercise of power and its consequences in their own words, in some cases, even drawing comparisons with other countries. Therefore, it seems that the various tasks included in the activity allowed them to think of geopolitics in a broader way and outside the classroom —as they drew from their own knowledge of politics. This was also confirmed by the students in the final debriefing where some of them highlighted the added value they found in the activity and, overall, in the tasks where they had more space to explain political processes in their own words —thus confirming students' acquisition of knowledge and their ability in applying it outside of the instructor's supervision.

Therefore, I consider that the activity was successful and that it could be helpful for instructors of Geopolitics but also, more broadly, IR. Overall, critical and post-positivist approaches to politics are always challenging for students to grasp. Therefore, the activity —and active learning in general— could be a useful tool to bring students to grasp the “intangibility” of political discourses.

All in all, there are ways students could have been pushed further in their encounter with power relations in these constructions. Overall, there are other relations of power —e.g., gender, race, religion, and class— that remain untouched by the activity and the module in general. There are, however, some restraints on an instructor's choices

—disciplinary frameworks, threshold concepts, institutional and policy frameworks, shared modules and shared syllabi. Therefore, instructors may not have the desired context within their classroom and, in this case, the activity had to fit within some of these frames.

I hope, however, that it will serve as an example for some instructors dealing with similar approaches to security, the war on terror, and/or the Middle East region and, more broadly, in the study of critical approaches in International Relations, Geopolitics, and similar fields. Furthermore, it should be taken into account that active learning may imply some logistics and preparatory challenges both for the instructor and for students. However, research has shown that it can be very beneficial for students' learning (McCarthy and Anderson, 2000) and that it can be particularly useful to challenge hegemonic paradigms and practices in International Relations (Lamy, 2007). The results obtained through the activity presented and students' own assessment of the activity seem to confirm that active learning can be very beneficial for students' learning and, overall, the development of critical thinking.

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ANNEX

Topic: Geopolitical codes

ILO1: Identify and analyze the mainstream discursive formulation of the US geopolitical code in relation to Iraq (2003) in Bush's political discourses.

ILO2: Understanding the differences between essentialist and critical analyses in Geopolitics.

ILO3: Evaluate the political consequences of the discourse.

Sequence	Timing	Activity	Tools/Notes
Pre-class	Async	Read	Flint, C, 2018, <i>Introduction to Geopolitics</i>. London: Routledge. (chapter 3, Geopolitical Codes, uploaded on Moodle)
Class	00-05	Welcome	Slide 1 Presentation of the session (geopolitical codes of the US in 2003 war in Iraq)
	05-10	Prior knowledge activity	Questions on conceptualization of geopolitical codes and geopolitical approaches

Sequence	Timing	Activity	Tools/Notes
Class	10-12	Definition	Debate on students' answers and main conceptualizations of geopolitical codes (mainstream and critical approach)
	13-20	Presentation of the activity	Brief video (5 minutes) of Bush's speech launching the intervention in Iraq Presentation of the activity: Studying the US' geopolitical code for the intervention in Iraq (2003)
	20-30	Reading of Bush's speeches	Students reading Bush's speeches (Instructor, allocating groups on Moodle and BlackBoard Collaborate)
	30-70	Small groups' work	Students producing the mainstream analysis of geopolitical codes (Instructor, working with students)
	70-75	Report back (10 min)	Report back from groups' analysis instructor checking on analyses produced and giving feedback
	75-90	Break	
	90-130	Small groups' work	Students producing the critical analysis of geopolitical codes (Instructor, working with students)
	130-140	Report back	Report back from groups' analysis Tutor checking on analyses produced and giving feedback
	140-150	Wrap-Up	Instructor's conclusions based on the analyses Final students' questions
Post-class	Async + sync	Moodle	Evaluative assessment: quiz/Multiple choice questions Formative assessment: written reflections & debriefing in class (sync)

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Using popular culture to make sense of the 2011 antiauthoritarian popular revolts in the MENA region: Theory and practice of the use of graphic novels and comics in classrooms

*El uso de la cultura popular para darle sentido a las revueltas populares
contra el autoritarismo en Oriente Medio y el Norte de África: teoría
y praxis del uso de la novela gráfica y el cómic en el aula*

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Abstract

This article reflects on the relevance of popular culture in teaching IR and political science. Specifically, we present an active learning activity which includes the collective discussion of two comic strips —“The battle of the packets” and “Sharia Japanese style” (*Tok Tok Anthology*, 2018)—. Our first aim was for students to learn about North African and specifically about the 2011 antiauthoritarian popular protests (or the so-called “Arab Spring”) as well as the main factors that caused them. Beyond this acquisition of basic knowledge, the designed activity aimed to enable students to “make sense” of the fact by using social theory movements’ key concepts. Finally, the activity was intended to encourage students to reflect on the impact of (mainstream and non-mainstream) representations in their learning process and to engage them with the region by promoting higher levels of empathy with local actors. Preliminary result show that students increased their knowledge about the region. While only one student (out of 14) was able to establish the causes of the 2011 regional event before the activity, almost all of them (13/14) were able to explain the factors behind the mobilizations after the activity took place. Moreover, many students referred specifically to concepts such as “window of opportunity”, “example” or “cleavages” after the activity. Finally, during the post-activity

class discussions, students showed a higher sense of empathy and pointed out how relevant the comic was to better understand the actors working within the region.

Keywords: MENA region, collaborative learning, comics, graphic novels, popular culture material, active learning, international relations.

Resumen

Este artículo reflexiona sobre la relevancia de la cultura popular en la enseñanza de las relaciones internacionales y la ciencia política. Específicamente, presentamos una actividad de aprendizaje activo que incluye la discusión colectiva de dos tiras cómicas: “La batalla de los panfletos” y “Sharía a la japonesa” (*Antología Tok Tok*, 2018). Nuestro primer objetivo fue que los estudiantes aprendieran sobre el norte de África y, específicamente, sobre las protestas populares antiautoritarias de 2011 (conocidas como Primavera Árabe) y sus principales factores. Además de este objetivo referido a la adquisición de conocimiento básico, la actividad pretendía que los estudiantes *dieran sentido* a los hechos usando conceptos de la teoría de movimientos sociales. Finalmente, la actividad buscaba animar a los estudiantes a reflexionar sobre el impacto de las representaciones (mayoritarias y no mayoritarias) en su proceso de aprendizaje y atraer su interés hacia la región promoviendo mayores niveles de empatía con actores locales. Los resultados preliminares muestran que los estudiantes aumentan su conocimiento del norte de África. Mientras solo un estudiante entre catorce fue capaz de establecer las causas de las revueltas de 2011 antes de la actividad, después de la misma la mayoría (trece de catorce) pudieron desarrollar los factores explicativos de las movilizaciones. Además, la mayoría de los estudiantes se refería a cuestiones como “ventana de oportunidad”, “ejemplo” o “clivajes”. Finalmente, durante la discusión que se produjo en clase después de la actividad, los estudiantes mostraron mayor sentido de la empatía y señalaron cómo el cómic había sido relevante para entender mejor a los actores de la región.

Palabras clave: Oriente Medio, Norte de África, aprendizaje colaborativo, novela gráfica, cómic, cultura popular, aprendizaje activo, relaciones internacionales.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching Middle East and North African (MENA) politics and international relations can be particularly challenging, not only because it is a complex region but also because students often have negative attitudes towards it (Baylouny, 2009). Many students have previously held stereotypes and perceive the region as emotionally and culturally distant and uniform. As stated by Sørli *et al.*, “[r]eference is frequently made to ‘Middle Eastern exceptionalism’ —that is, that there is something unique about the Middle East that makes the region prone to conflict, autocracy, and economic misery” (2005: 152). Indeed, Western cultural (and often academic) products tend to reproduce Orientalist discourses on the region and portray the Muslim and/or Arab “Other” as violent and nonrational (Cardeira da Silva, 2016; Said, 1997, 2014; Algaba *et al.*, 2021). As summarized by Baylouny:

Middle East politics represents one of comparative politics' most challenging tasks. Students have difficulty viewing the conflict from the actors' point of view. They commonly place actors in a black box of irrationality or lack of intelligence, investigating their motivations no further. Students fail to comprehend why the parties do not just compromise and get on with the business of living and developing economically. The problem of identification with the actors is particularly acute in [the] student population (2009: 216).

In this context of "distorted beliefs" about the region (Díaz Sanz and Ferreiro Prado, 2021), the use of popular culture material can be a powerful tool to challenge stereotypes and to help students develop critical engagement with the region. Popular culture has the potential to make "think and imagine and see 'differently'" (Holland, 2012: 105). Many popular culture products allow the public to engage critically to complex social and political issues. There are many examples referred to the MENA region itself, such as Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Ari Folman and David Polonsky's *Vals with Bashir*, and Joe Sacco's *Palestine*. These works not only incorporate endogenous voices and concerns but also the idea of *subjectivity* itself. As stated by Holland, "these narrative practices make possible oppositional reading of dominant geopolitical scripts" and allow the readers "to formulate distinct, counter-hegemonic readings of geopolitical events and outcomes" (*ibid.*: 108).

This article presents the impact of a pilot project of educational innovation designed to integrate graphic novel and comic material in the classroom. While there is a large literature on the use of films in a Political science/International relations classroom, there are not so many studies which analyze the impact of graphic novels and comics. As explained below, the advantages of this popular culture material are many. This is why we designed and developed a project of education innovation entitled "Learning with graphic novels: subjectivity, discourse and representation". The project has been implemented among third-year students of the Bachelor of International Relations at the University Loyola during the 2021-2022 academic year. Students were required to read and analyze two common comics to draw analytical conclusions and to reflect on the role of different actors involved in the antiauthoritarian revolts in the MENA region in 2011. Our first aim was to show how comics or graphic novels can be used to teach (and learn) international relations and political science topics, specifically the 2011 popular antiauthoritarian revolts (or the so-called Arab Spring). As stated by Juneau and Sucharov (2010: 172), "by pairing spare text with often powerful visual imagery, graphic novels offer a highly intimate look at real-world issues" and "like movies, graphic novels are sensory and immersive, but like books they require a degree of 'activeness' in the consumer's position".

Although the Middle East politics course was only offered in the second semester, we decided to implement the learning activity among third-year students enrolled in the African politics course (first semester). This fact allowed us to analyze how the project itself affected students without previous knowledge of the MENA region (since in the African politics course only Sub-Saharan countries are studied). We

designed a three-hours activity (one session) which was organized as follows. Since the students did not have previous references to the 2011 popular antiauthoritarian revolts in the MENA region, they received a short lecture (one hour) about the so-called Arab Spring and how the social movements theory could explain it. After a short break, students interacted in small groups (3-4 people) for 45 minutes and read the two short comics presented: “The battle of the packages” (by Andeel) and “Sharia Japanese style” (by Hicham Rahma and Mohammed Ismail Amine), both sketches published in the *Tok Tok Anthology* (2018)¹. Finally, the two comic sketches were projected for the class, read and commented in common during the last hour of the activity.

The use of graphic novels/comics can help to advance two major learning goals. First, students learn about social mobilizations and the role of different actors and factors in the region. Furthermore, students are encouraged to reflect on the construction of knowledge and cultural exceptionalism of peripheral areas as well as the role played by actors who are usually out of the mainstream focus. As stated by Hansen, “[a] reason for bringing comics into IR draws on the capacity of comics to offer critique of established political discourses or bring into analytical focus those who are not represented if international relations are defined exclusively as intergovernmental” (2016: 582).

Active learning has some advantages. For example, some works highlight its effectiveness “with regard to increasing student performance and satisfaction, as well as helping them better assimilate theoretical knowledge” (Van Driel *et al.*, 2016; Bijsmans and Schakel, 2018, quoted by Suárez-Collado and Sierra, 2021: 3).

The article is organized as follows. First, we present a theoretical discussion of how both the use of graphic novels and comics and active learning methodologies can improve students’ performance in the classroom. After presenting their advantages, we explain how we integrated popular cultural material and the collaborative learning method and how we designed the activity to be implemented. Finally, we discuss the main findings before presenting our conclusions.

GRAPHIC NOVELS AND ACTIVE LEARNING: WHY THIS PAIRING CAN WORK

Graphic novels: main advantages (... and a postcolonial approach)

As pointed out by Gibert (2015), the international relations and politics academia is increasingly aware of the relevance of popular culture to understand, explain and teach wider political phenomena. Popular culture can not only be used to observe, describe and analyse the “world-out-there”, but it can also be seen as “a cultural narrative of the self” (Engert and Spencer, 2009). Fiction and nonfiction materials help us

1. The titles in French are “La Bataille des Paquets” and “Charia Japonaise” (titles translated into English by the authors from the French version).

“to get a sense of the everyday connections between *the popular* and *the political*” and allow us to see “how IR myths become everyday myths —because they are circulated, received, and criticized in and through everyday popular forms” (Weber, 2005: 9).

As stated by some authors, graphic novels —like other popular cultural materials— are an easy and entertaining way to approach complex ideas, debates, and issues. As noted by Gibert (2016: 499), the “approachable and familiar dimension of popular culture and the opportunity it gives us to break away with the usual lecture and seminar discussions of academic readings’ model” can be “very helpful”. By creating an emotional link with the topic, students are more likely to better understand actors’ rationales and motivations. In addition, it has been shown that the rational and emotional “halves of the brain” become involved in the learning process, which in turn makes “learning easier” (Engert and Spencer, 2009: 99). By connecting the “object of study” (the topic), the space where it is debated (the classroom) and the “subjects who study” (the students), graphic novel language makes it easier to understand IR concepts, actors and processes (Correa da Silva y Tomé-Alonso, 2021).

Another advantage of using graphic novels is that this material has the capacity to bring regional actors’ personal experiences into the classroom. In Juneau and Sucharov’s (2010) article, they reflect on the fact that “a narrative approach —meaning one that focuses on the experience of political actors in understanding and framing their actions— helps unpack the sometimes-elusive concept of identity” (*ibid.*: 173). By highlighting actors’ experiences from a subjective and personal perspective, graphic novels focus on micropolitics rather than on intergovernmental relations and macropolitics. They open therefore a window to understand others’ experiences and motivations, which in turn reminds students that they might experience similar life experiences. As stated by Stover, this can lead to a “greater sense of empathy with people far beyond the borders of a nation state” (2005: 208).

Finally, graphic novels can be considered “cultural artifacts” (Algeo, 2007: 133) that deserve greater reflection. By encouraging critical thinking about the importance of representation, the relation between representation and knowledge, and the politics of identity to understand global affairs (Campbell, 2013: 225), students are called on to seek out the underlying power and its real-life consequences (Tomé-Alonso y Ferreiro Prado, 2020). By presenting a personal narrative about often well-known events, graphic novels allow us to question what has been presented as the “absolute truth”. As stated by Juneau and Sucharov, “working with the assumption that each collective actor under analysis has a certain version of events —stories that that group tells about itself and about the other— reminds students they too might enter the classroom with particular frames, biases, or assumptions, and that it is legitimate to acknowledge subjectivity [...]” (2010: 173).

The emphasis on the narrative is congruent with a postcolonial teaching approach. Postcolonialism rejects the idea of neutrality. Rather, knowledge “is always situated and, therefore, political” (Díaz Sanz and Ferreiro Prado, 2021: 3) and “can never be formulated outside the influence of social and political context” (Kurki and Wight, 2013: 30). This perspective highlights the relation between knowledge and power. As stated by

Grovogui, mainstream narratives often claim “universal ‘truths’ about themselves and native peoples” which are “neither constitutively native knowledge nor based on native concerns” (2013: 250). Rather, the “facts” and “events” presented by institutional media and social scientists “reflect their own ‘castes of mind’” (Dirks, 2011, cited by Grovogui, 2013: 250). Said put forward this idea in his seminal work *Orientalism*: as a “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and “the Occident” which has to be understood as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (1978: 2-3). Orientalism assumes “an unchanging Orient, absolutely different from the West” and describes “Oriental’ ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality)” (*ibid.*: 96).

One of the main arguments of postcolonialism is “its challenge to establish modes of thinking” (Darby and Paolini, 1994: 373). From this critical approach, mainstream narratives, and their ways of homogenizing and essentializing, can be interrogated and different (and preferably endogenous) discourses and experiences can be included. Thus, postcolonialism allows to bring to the surface “the racialized, gendered, and class processes that underwrite global hierarchies” (Chowdhry and Nair, 2002: 1). From the postcolonial perspective, therefore, an effort is made to “to participate in the creation of ‘truths’, based on distinct modes of signification and forms of knowledge (or the manners of representations) that advance justice, peace, and political pluralism” (Grovogui, 2013: 248).

Popular cultural materials and innovative practices

Popular culture materials are integrated into the classroom to conduct active learning activities. As pointed out by some authors, active learning “promotes greater student learning than reading and lecture alone” (McCarthy, 2014: 401). While “standard classroom lectures may not capture the imagination of students new to the subject of international relations”, role-playing simulations and the use of Twitter or popular culture material tend to more highly engage students (Newmann and Twigg, 2000: 835).

Among active learning activities, collaborative learning implies that “students interact and collaborate to construct their own knowledge [...] while the professor has a less active role than in his or her conventional status” (Wolfe, 2012, quoted by Martínez-Cousinou *et al.*, 2021). In addition to being an interactive and creative method, “collaborative work offers students opportunities to take clearer charge of their projects as coproducers of knowledge” (Burcu, 2019: 143). “Working in groups to *construct* common knowledge requires each of the members in a group to perform successfully to achieve the required objectives that are expected from them, as the output of each participant’s effort is an essential piece of the ‘puzzle’ that they seek to solve together” (Suárez-Collado and Sierra, 2021). This is why collaborative learning is stated to “improve the educational experience not only by fostering knowledge acquisition, but also because it helps students develop key supplementary such as interpersonal skills, team management, research and inquiry, conflict resolution, and communication and presentation skills” (Eshuis *et al.*, 2019, quoted in Suárez-Collado and Sierra, 2021: 5).

The combined use of comics/graphic novels and the collaborative learning method makes sense in the context of the postpositivist turn in political science and international relations. This postpositivist turn “has led educators to advocate for the value of allowing students to find their own truths through a rigorously developed analytic framework that gives them the tools to evaluate both, evidences received in the course and the impact of their own biases in how they process it” (Malet, 2015: 247). Drawing on analytical tools and theoretical reflections presented during lectures, the students can use the comic to construct their knowledge. In this way, they can “move from a theoretical and narrative discussion to a more specific empirical arena” (Tomé-Alonso and Ferreiro Prado, 2020), analyze a cultural product and reflect on narratives.

INTEGRATING GRAPHIC NOVELS INTO AN IR UNDERGRADUATE CLASSROOM

Having reflected on the pertinence of the use of comics/graphic novels and collaborative learning methods in the classroom, this section presents our teaching activity, the learning objectives of our innovative action using graphic material, objectives are measured.

Learning objectives

As stated by Ferreiro Prado (2020), active learning activities need to be carefully planned to be effective. What are the learning objectives we plan to meet? How can these learning objectives be explained? Are all these learning objectives equally relevant?

The first aim is that students learn about the North African (sub)region (since they are enrolled in an African politics course) and specifically about the antiauthoritarian popular protests that took place in 2011 (often known as the Arab Spring) as well as the main factors that caused them. Beyond this objective, referred to as the factual dimension (acquisition of basic knowledge), this session aims to enable students to “make sense” of the knowledge they are acquiring and to establish relations between basic elements (conceptual dimension of knowledge). According to Kratwohl, knowledge can be classified into different types, two of which are factual knowledge and conceptual knowledge (Kratwohl, 2002: 201-216, cited in Ferreiro Prado, 2020: 21). While factual knowledge “refers to the terminologies, specific details, and basic elements within any domain”, conceptual knowledge “includes (1) knowing information classification and categorization, (2) knowing principles and generalizations, and (3) knowing theories, models, and structures” (Tapia, 2018). We want students to know what happened in 2011 and afterwards but also to be able to establish connections between, for example, the presence of different cleavages within MENA societies.

In addition to these two main objectives, the planned activity is a great opportunity to encourage students to reflect about their own learning process. We intend to deconstruct the stereotyped visions of the region. While recent academic literature tends to highlight the role that political, social and economic factors play in the region and its development, students are still prone to use simplistic explanations when referring to MENA affairs. In this sense, our objective is to replace culturalist arguments (which emphasize the role of culture and religion when making sense of complex phenomena) with theoretically informed ones (which are widely used to explain similar phenomena in different regional contexts). This is why we use the social movement theory toolbox to explain protest dynamics in 2011.

Finally, our objective is to engage students with the region. Religion and cultural MENA particularities are often presented as foreign to Western societies. By avoiding these culturalist explanations, we intend to create a greater connection with the region among students. As pointed out by Juneau and Sucharov, “focusing on narratives can help students to set aside questions of right and wrong—debates that can easily create a brittle classroom atmosphere—and instead focus on the explanatory questions essential to understanding how world politics unfold” (2010: 173). By emphasizing the construction of the knowledge based on images and theoretical explanations, we want to overcome monolithic, essentialist and moral explanations and to focus on political processes. As explained by Mills, “these processes come to have power through their spatiality, through the ways in which identities become territorialized, in the linking between state power, boundaries, and ethnically grounded definitions of nations, or through the ways in which local citizens interact in daily life” (2012: 783).

Case selection and method

The 3-hour activity is part of an educational innovation project entitled “Using graphic novels in the classroom”, which was implemented among students of the Bachelor of International Relations program at University Loyola during the first semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. The participants were students enrolled in the third-year African politics course. Although 17 students were initially enrolled in the course, 14 were present in the classroom the day the activity took place. While presenting a single case experience may be restrictive to generalize conclusions, it nonetheless allows us to identify some trends.

At this point, it is useful to note that the students were not familiar with critical international relations approaches or with regional issues. This was for the majority not only their first academic contact with postcolonial arguments and with MENA questions but also the first time they used graphic material in the classroom. They were, however, used to participating in active learning activities, such as role-play simulations. The novelty of the activity has at least two main advantages. It allowed the students to break from their daily routine. Also, since it was the first time they learned about the region, it allowed us to better assess the impact of the activity.

To evaluate the activity, the students were asked to answer a pre-activity questionnaire and a post-activity questionnaire. After the activity, a debriefing session took place so they could expose their impressions and opinions about how it was, its main advantages and what to change or improve in the future. The fact that the group was relatively small allowed for a more in-depth discussion.

TABLE 1.
POSTACTIVITY QUESTIONNAIRE

<i>Try to answer the following questions (remember that it is not an evaluable activity)</i>	
Why did the 2011 antiauthoritarian revolts take place? What were the main causes?	
Who were the main actors that participated in the revolts?	
How can we explain the international influence on the revolts?	
<i>For the following questions say if you: Strongly Disagree (0) Moderately Disagree (1) Slightly Disagree (2) Slightly Agree (3) Moderately Agree (4) Strongly Agree (5)</i>	
To explain North Africa, religious issues are the most relevant ones	
To explain North Africa, cultural issues are the most relevant ones	
To explain North Africa, political issues are the most relevant ones.	
To explain North Africa, social issues are the most relevant ones	
North African societies are homogeneous	
North Africa is a nondynamic region	
North African societies are completely different from our societies	
I am interested in North African politics and international relations	
<i>For the following questions say if you: Strongly Disagree (0) Moderately Disagree (1) Slightly Disagree (2) Slightly Agree (3) Moderately Agree (4) Strongly Agree (5)</i>	
The comic has helped me to see questions from a different perspective.	The comic has helped me to see questions from a different perspective.
The comic has helped me to understand social movement theory.	The comic has helped me to understand social movement theory.
The comic has helped me to better understand the narrative subjectivity.	The comic has helped me to better understand the narrative subjectivity.
To explain North Africa, social issues are the most relevant ones.	To explain North Africa, social issues are the most relevant ones.
I liked the activity.	I liked the activity.

Source: Own elaboration.

The activity

When designing the activity, there are some questions that need to be addressed: How can popular cultural material be integrated? When should it be integrated? How many comics or graphic novel sketches should be included? How can we link theoretical explanation, collaborative learning and the use of comics in a unique activity?

As stated, the first step was to choose how to integrate the material in the classroom. There were two possibilities. The first was to introduce the students directly to the proposed material. The idea is to allow students to put together their own analysis and to share their conclusions in the classroom (Gibert, 2016). This can be defined as a type of *inductive* collaborative learning activity. The second possibility was to read and discuss the graphic novel or comic material after the lecture. This can be a sort of *deductive* collaborative activity. We opted for this second option for two main reasons. First, we have the conviction that active learning activities are more useful when combined with lectures. Second, since it was the first time students were invited to read graphic novels in the classroom, we thought they might need some training and tutoring during the process. As stated by Grayson *et al.*, “as lectures it is important to provide students with skills that help them to see—as well as read—politics, so that they can appreciate the visual text and will possess the tools for considered analysis of it” (2009: 160). Thus, after attending the theoretical explanation in the classroom, the students were asked to form small groups (of 3 or 4 people), to read the proposed comic together and to reflect on the following aspects:

- (a) How does the comic reflect the elements explained by social movement theory (such as “window of opportunity”, “alliances”, “regime’s response”, etc)?
- (b) How is the story told? What are the elements that are explicitly present in the drawing? What are the absent elements? Why? From which perspective is the story told?

What are the elements that attract their attention? Why? During the collaborative activity, the students can share their ideas, illustrated by examples from the comic to explain theoretical concepts and reflect on the narrative style. After their group reading, the students were asked to share (and explain) their conclusions in front of the others while the comic sketches are being projected in the classroom. Since the group was relatively small (14 students), we reread the comic together and used the opportunity to draw consensual conclusions. Our role during the activity was mainly to encourage students’ participation and to call their attention to some issues mainly related to the comic itself (for example, how are the faces and their expressions drawn?).

The second decision was to choose the graphic novel or comic material. We opted to introduce Tok Tok into the classroom. Tok Tok is an Egyptian graphic novel anthology that collects shorter comics in the same book. We chose it for specific reasons. First, it is an endogenous product. Not only does it “talk” about Egypt, but

it is also created by Egyptians. Second, Tok Tok's first volume was published during the Egyptian revolution (January 2011), so it can be understood as a sort of diary on the Egyptian political revolution and its subsequent developments. Third, it does present short stories that are easy to read in the classroom and that do not require much effort from students. We chose two concrete comics: "The battle of the packages" (on the role of the army in the revolution of January 25, 2011, and its relationship with the protesters) and "Sharia Japanese style" (on the application of the sharia and the secular Islamist division in Egypt; it is also a parody of those who want to apply the sharia). Although we considered including other comics or graphic novels, we finally decided to integrate only these Tok Tok comic strips. On the one hand, Egypt is a central country not only in the region but also in terms of the developments of the so-called Arab Spring. Although it is a geographically North African country, it geopolitically integrates the two sub-MENA areas, Southwest Asia and North Africa. Additionally, we did not want to overload the students with many readings. Rather, we preferred to give them enough time to carefully read the proposed material (15 pages in total). As argued by Gibert, "[w]hat students are rarely aware of, and what [...] we need to teach them, is that it takes some effort, and solid research and analytical skills, to make sense of popular culture material and draw political meaning from it. Rather than simply warning students against nonacademic sources, it may be more realistic and useful to invite them to think about how to best read and use them" (2016: 3).

To summarize, the activity unfolds as follows. The first part of the 3-hour seminar is where professors have a more active role. Drawing on social movements' theory, we explain the most relevant aspects of the so-called Arab Spring. We introduce classical concepts such as "political opportunity", "social alliances" and "regime's survival strategies". We also explain the role of international actors and international influences and how these can be theoretically analyzed. In the second part, we present the two comics, explain their relevance and introduce the proposed activity. We give some time for students to form groups and discuss the formulated questions. Finally, the different groups present their main conclusions. While projecting the comics for the whole classroom, we reread it all together, highlighting their main conclusions and some other aspects not mentioned.

HOW HAS THE PLANNED ACTIVITY WORKED? AN EXPLORATORY ASSESSMENT

As explained, to assess the impact of the activity, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire and to attend a debriefing session where they could express their impressions on the comic and how it contributed (or not) to their learning process. In general, students reacted positively to the activity. The formal student feedback questionnaire, which gathered a total of 14 answers, achieved a score of 4.2/5. Most students liked the activity and found it useful to their learning process.

The qualitative feedback pointed in the same direction. Students highlighted the fact that the comic helped them revise their stereotypes and connect with the region in a different way.

The written questionnaire allowed us to assess both the acquisition of factual and conceptual knowledge and issues related to the perception of the region. First, factual knowledge, which refers to basic knowledge about regional events and facts, considerably increased. After the session, not only were all the students able to answer the question “What happened in the region in 2011?” but also almost all of them were able to point out at least two causes of it. Some of them gave a complete answer to the question “Do you know why the 2011 revolts happened?”:

- “The riots were the result of various economic, social and political factors. Civil society took to the streets to demand social justice and dignity”.
- “Due to multiple factors. They started from social protests, which united Islamists and secularists, who called for social justice and dignity”.

Before the session, 10 students (of 14) referred to the so-called Arab Spring when asked about the events that happened in 2011, and only one was able to say the causes of it.

TABLE 2.
FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE

	Before the session	After the session
What happened in the region in 2011?	10/14	14/14
What were the main causes of it?	1/14	13/14

Source: Own elaboration.

The students also increased their conceptual knowledge related to the region. There were no references to social cleavages or the international factor in the questionnaire prior to the activity. After the session, 13 students referred specifically to the union of Islamists and secularists during the 2011 protests, despite their deep differences. Most of them were also capable of establishing the relevance of the international factor as a “window of opportunity”, “example” or the role of third countries in the region.

TABLE 3.
RELATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

	Before the session	After the session
Role of cleavages in the region	1/14	13/14
Role of international factors	0/14	13/14

Source: Own elaboration.

Multicausal explanations

While in the first questionnaire students showed a complete lack of knowledge of the region, many later said that religious or cultural factors were relevant to explain the region. When asked to evaluate on a scale their agreement with the affirmation “[i]n order to explain the region, religious factors are more important than other factors”, 9 of 14 (9/14) students responded with “agree” and 3/14 with “strongly agree”. The same trend can be identified regarding cultural factors. Half of the students “agree” and 6/14 “strongly agree” with the sentence “[i]n order to explain the region, cultural factors are more important than other factors”. On the other hand, the trend is not so marked when referring to political and social factors. Six students “strongly agree” and five “agree” with the affirmation “[i]n order to explain the region, political factors are more important than other factors”. Seven students “strongly agree” and four “agree” with the affirmation “[i]n order to explain the region, social factors are more important than other factors”.

Although after the session explanations linked to religion and culture do not completely disappear, they become less prevalent. Before the activity, no student indicated any value below “agree slightly” when referred to the affirmation(s) “[i]n order to explain the region, religious/cultural factors are more important than other factors”. When asked to reply to the same question after the session, some students “strongly” or “moderately” disagree with the same affirmation. Although some preconceptions persist, we can speak of a changing trend.

The results are consistent with the content of the comic and with the professor’s short lecture. Although the comic deals to a certain extent with issues related to Islam, it does so from a satiric point of view and presents religion as a factor of divergence rather than as a factor of homogenization. Also, social movement theory tends to highlight the role of actors, context, action, ideology, and mobilization rather than religion itself as a main explanatory element.

How useful was the comic?

Students’ feedback on the second part of the questionnaire, referred to as subjective opinions about their own learning process, was also positive. When asked to evaluate in a scale their agreement with the affirmation “[t]he comic has helped me to see problems from a different point of view”, three of them “strongly agree”, four “moderately agree” and six “slightly agree”. These results are consistent with the insights of the qualitative discussion carried out at the end of the session. One student stated that: “I had never thought about the protests from this perspective, about how young people like us live there” (Male student, 20 years old). Another said: “Everything seemed very different to me. I had never seen it from the point of view of those who participate in the protests” (Female student, 21 years old).

These statements are consistent with the data obtained by the questionnaire. When asked to evaluate their agreement with the affirmation “I have nothing to do with the

youth of the region”, four students, “strongly disagree”, two “moderately disagree”, and six “slightly disagree”. This sense of empathy is also highlighted during the final discussion in the classroom. One student said: “One realizes that we are very much like them. I hadn’t thought of it like that before” (Male, 21 years old).

Ultimately, students responded positively to the challenge of subjectivity. When asked to evaluate on a scale their agreement with the affirmation “[t]he comic allowed me to better understand the subjectivity inherent to every narrative”, six “strongly agree”, two “moderately disagree”, and two “slightly disagree”.

During post-activity class discussions, students tended to emphasize how relevant the comic was to better understand the actors *working* within the Arab region. According to some of them, the comic was key to *see* what Egyptian youth thought, felt and did. When explaining this (intended) result, students were not referring to the previous lecture, although some of them were using theoretical concepts introduced by the professor.

Class discussion and other issues

Questions related to narratives and subjectivities were at the center of the debriefing session. In general, students agreed with the fact that narratives are always subjective and “situated”. As explained by one student: “I had never realized that the Truth does not exist. I mean, it does exist, but the story is always told from a particular perspective” (Female student, 23 years old). Another stated: “They always tell us the story according to Western criteria, but they are not the only criteria” (Male student, 23 years old).

Beyond questions related to identity, subjectivity, and narratives, other relevant issues emerged during the last discussion. Some students realized that some of the girls portrayed in the comics were not wearing a veil. Indeed, the main character of one of the comics has long black hair. The question of the Muslim headscarf lies at the core of the Orientalist approach. The representation of characters, especially women, is a “key form of Orientalism because the ‘Oriental’ is created as a contrast to the West” (Tomé-Alonso and Ferreiro Prado, 2020). Women wearing hijabs are often portrayed as “submissive” to male figures. Sometimes this image is generalized to every woman living in a Muslim majority country.

It was not our intention to delve into the debate on the veil and its possible (many) meanings but to highlight the plurality of female prototypes in the region. In this sense, the feedback was positive. As explained by one student, “I have realized that not all women wear a headscarf and also that women do things” (Female student, 22 years old).

Finally, one of the issues that captured the students’ attention was the question of regime repression. According to their own explanations, students *imagined* that repression was total (rather than selective) and that there was no space for any form of cooptation, liberalization or renegotiation of spaces. When thinking about the region, students (did) tend to highlight the authoritarian, and violent “nature” of local

regimes. They did follow an Orientalist argument which does not only emphasize an Oriental/Arab “despotic” political authority, but which also establish a North-South division. This is not a minor question. As stated by Shapiro, “violent cartographies are thus constituted as an articulation of geographic imaginaries and antagonisms, based on models of identity–difference” (2009: 18). Since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), a point at which the horizontal, geopolitical world of nation-states emerged as a more salient geographic imaginary than the theologically oriented vertical world (which was imaginatively structured as a separation between divine and secular space), maps of enmity have been framed by differences in geopolitical location, and (with notable exceptions) state leaders have supplanted religious authorities. Moreover, geopolitical location has since been a more significant identity marker than spiritual commitment” (id.). After the activity, students realized that spaces and authorities have nuances that deserve to be exposed.

CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING FORWARD

The students’ feedback supported our own perception of the activity. The material used allowed a more dynamic and collaborative session. The fact that comics have a playful nature engaged many students in the discussions. Furthermore, the use of the comic and the group discussion allowed students to strengthen the knowledge gained from the lecture and to develop new skills. The activity allowed the emergence of some debates brought by the students themselves. Some students, for example, noted that the main female character in the comic did not wear a veil. The answers of various students were congruent with the arguments exposed during the session: North African societies are not homogenous, and many women do not wear a veil. The fact that these “controversial issues” are brought and discussed in common and are not directly defined by the teachers can have “potential benefits” (Malet, 2015). As stated by Malet, “engaging students in controversial debates with their peers also teaches them that arguments are won by evidence and effective presentation”, and it avoids the risk that students have “impressions of instructor bias”, which “can also be accentuated if the professor is seen to have a personal or ideological stake in persuading students to adopt a particular viewpoint” (*ibid.*: 248).

The activity and the students’ feedback are congruent with the postpositivist turn (*ibid.*: 247). However, there remain some challenges that need to be addressed. The first question to answer is related to the number of comics or popular culture material to be included in the classroom: Should there be many, or are one or two enough? As stated by Gibert, it may be “an issue specifically linked to using different (types of) documents for every class, making depth more difficult to achieve” (*ibid.*: 10). Indeed, all the proposed material must be connected to both the lecture and the discussion. While increasing the number of discussed comics may have some benefits, such as the introduction of a variety of themes and advanced training of students in critically reading and analyzing popular culture material, it also reduces the attractiveness and

novelty of the activity. Our contention is that three class sessions that integrate comics can be useful. It would allow the professor to observe the evolution of the students' thinking. It is also relevant to pay attention to the group size. A group of 14 students allowed a discussion to emerge and made it possible for most of them to participate.

Ultimately, postcolonial learning may be understood as a process. Orientalist narratives are part of everyday politics, and it is not easy to challenge them. They are common in mainstream media and among academic discourses. Although the results of the present teaching activity are not conclusive and need to be further tested in different groups, the introduction of graphic novel material and endogenous voices in the classroom may help to unveil stereotypical conceptions about the region and to understand the Arab scenario as a more nuanced one.

Although the innovation activity and project are pilots and their results need to be consolidated, the evaluation by the students is overall positive. In particular, it has been noted that the comic-based activity increased the knowledge about the 2011 popular antiauthoritarian revolts among the students. After the session, the students had less stereotypes about the MENA region.

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Aprendizaje basado en proyectos: una metodología para activar el compromiso, la motivación y el interés en las aulas de Ciencia Política

Project-based learning: A methodology aimed at activating commitment, motivation and interest in Political Science classrooms

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Resumen

Este artículo se interroga sobre la posibilidad de que las metodologías activas y cooperativas, concretamente el aprendizaje basado en proyectos, puedan aumentar el compromiso del alumnado en su proceso de aprendizaje. Una vez identificados los fundamentos del aprendizaje cooperativo, asentados en los principios de la interdependencia positiva, la exigibilidad individual, la interacción cara a cara, la reflexión permanente y la gestión de las habilidades interpersonales, el artículo describe una experiencia docente implementada en el primer curso de una asignatura introductoria de Ciencia Política que aplica el aprendizaje basado en proyectos. Tras presentar la secuencia metodológica, el sistema de evaluación y la metodología de trabajo grupal, se ejemplifican los cambios que este tipo de aprendizaje exige en el rol docente, en el alumnado, en la evaluación y en la forma de transmisión de los conocimientos. Apoyado en el análisis de indicadores cuantitativos de evaluación institucional y en el análisis cualitativo de ochenta y tres reflexiones del alumnado sobre la metodología, mostramos cómo el aprendizaje basado en proyectos aumenta el compromiso del alumnado en su itinerario formativo al activar el interés y la motivación extrínseca como consecuencia de su carácter aplicado, cooperativo y autorregulado.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje basado en proyectos, educación superior, innovación docente, aprendizaje cooperativo, enseñanza innovadora, aprendizaje activo, compromiso en el aprendizaje, interés en el aprendizaje.

Abstract

This article questions the possibility that active and cooperative methodologies, specifically Project-based learning, can increase students' commitment to their own learning process. After

presenting the fundamentals of cooperative learning, based on the principles of positive interdependence, individual responsibility, face-to-face interaction, permanent reflection and the management of interpersonal skills, this article describes a teaching experience founded on Project-based learning implemented in a first-year subject of the degree in Political Science. After presenting the methodological sequence, the evaluation system and the group work methodology, the focus shifts to the changes this type of learning requires in the role of the instructor, the students, the evaluation and the way of transmitting knowledge. Supported by the analysis of quantitative indicators derived from institutional evaluation and the qualitative analysis of 83 students' reflections about the methodology, this article shows how Project-based learning increases the commitment of students in their formative itinerary inasmuch as it activates interest and extrinsic motivation as a consequence of its applied, cooperative and self-regulated nature.

Keywords: project-based learning, higher education, teaching innovation, cooperative learning, innovative teaching, active learning, commitment to learning, interest in learning.

INTRODUCCIÓN

La redefinición del modelo de aprendizaje está asumiendo una centralidad creciente en el actual contexto de reforma de la Educación Superior en España (ANECA, 2021; Ministerio de Universidades, 2021, 2022). Así, las autoridades están estableciendo nuevos marcos de acción docente para las Universidades. En concreto, tanto el Anteproyecto de Ley Orgánica del Sistema Universitario (Ministerio de Universidades, 2022) como el Decreto de Ordenación de Enseñanzas (Ministerio de Universidades, 2021) apuestan por la incorporación de metodologías activas en el proceso de aprendizaje. Por su parte, en el desarrollo del programa Docencia de la ANECA (2021) se subraya el carácter «excelente» de metodologías activas que respondan a las necesidades del estudiantado, asentadas en la motivación y la autodirección de su progreso. Ello está alineado con una literatura que muestra que el cambio de perspectiva apoyado en metodologías activas y cooperativas, además de posibilitar la autorregulación (Russell *et al.*, 2020), la autodirección (Condliffe, 2017; Loyens, *et al.*, 2008) y el autoaprendizaje (Russell *et al.*, 2007; Taylor *et al.*, 2012), permite sentar las bases para superar acercamientos superficiales y orientarlos hacia modelos estratégicos y profundos de adquisición de competencias a partir del interés y motivación del alumnado (Vesikivi *et al.*, 2020; Swanson *et al.*, 2019; Johnson y Johnson 2009; Goikoetxea y Pascual, 2012).

Más allá de la mera transmisión vertical del conocimiento, las metodologías innovadoras, y más concretamente las cooperativas, se asientan sobre el compromiso activo del alumnado. Estas propuestas se caracterizan por varios aspectos. En primer lugar, la centralidad deja de estar en la docencia para situarse en el aprendizaje (Condliffe, 2017; Prince y Felder, 2006), siendo clave la adquisición de competencias curriculares y procedimentales. En segundo lugar, esta adquisición de competencias (y no solo contenidos) se vale de la capacidad de estas metodologías para transitar de la pasividad

a la actividad (Almulla, 2020; Hanney, 2018; Stefanou *et al.*, 2013); de la clase magistral a la aplicación (Condliffe, 2017; Wolff *et al.*, 2015; Barron *et al.*, 1998); de la memorización a la experimentación (Condliffe, 2017; Russell *et al.*, 2007; Barron *et al.*, 1998), y de la deducción a la inducción (Prince y Felder, 2006; Michalski, 1983). En tercer lugar, estas metodologías buscan superar una adquisición individual de competencias apostando por el trabajo grupal, que en su orientación cooperativa (Johnson y Johnson, 2009; Kagan, 1994) aspira a alcanzar una interdependencia recíproca entre el alumnado que haga del aprendizaje un proceso colectivo.

En este texto sostenemos que la incorporación a las aulas de Ciencia Política de metodologías innovadoras, especialmente las cooperativas, incrementan el compromiso activo del alumnado con su aprendizaje. Con ese objetivo, presentamos una experiencia desplegada en un curso introductorio de Ciencia Política que, apoyada en el aprendizaje basado en proyectos (de ahora en adelante ABPJ), combina clases magistrales activas con el trabajo grupal cooperativo. A lo largo de las siguientes páginas sostendremos que la capacidad de este modelo para aumentar el compromiso del alumnado en su proceso educativo se apoya en tres elementos: la orientación experimental y aplicada en la adquisición de conocimientos; la vocación cooperativa que hace de la interiorización y experimentación de las competencias un proceso colectivo de suma positiva, y la activación de una motivación intrínseca del desarrollo curricular que activa el compromiso y el deseo de aprender en el alumnado. En consecuencia, como trataremos de evidenciar, las metodologías cooperativas incrementan el interés y compromiso de un alumnado en el que se activa el deseo de *aprender a aprender*, siendo sujeto y no objeto de su desarrollo.

Con vistas a encarar este objetivo, en primer lugar identificaremos en la literatura los principios y la estructura de las estrategias de aprendizaje que permiten el mayor nivel de autonomía, autorregulación y autodirección del alumnado, una de las cuales es el aprendizaje basado en proyectos. A continuación, mostraremos la secuencia docente implementada en la asignatura Fundamentos de Análisis Político impartida en el primer curso de los grados de Sociología y Ciencia Política de la Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (UPV/EHU) a fin de visualizar las transformaciones que implica desde el punto de vista docente, del alumnado, de los contenidos y la evaluación. Sobre esta atalaya, para evidenciar cómo este modelo aumenta el interés por el aprendizaje, nos detendremos, de la mano de evaluaciones cuantitativas y cualitativas del alumnado de esta asignatura, en la identificación de las claves sobre las que se sostiene este incremento de la motivación intrínseca que activa el compromiso. Finalizamos discutiendo los hallazgos con la literatura existente y concluimos relacionando este modelo con la lógica de lo político.

FUNDAMENTOS DEL APRENDIZAJE BASADO EN PROYECTOS

Las estrategias innovadoras, especialmente las cooperativas, se apoyan en cuatro claves: inducción, emoción, lógica constructivista y perspectiva relacional (Prince y

Felder, 2006). La apuesta inductiva subyace a todo acercamiento que se oriente hacia el alumnado: la instrucción necesita de una realidad que aprehender, frente al modelo tradicional en el que la aplicación es posterior a la comprensión. Así, los problemas que resolver (en el aprendizaje basado en problemas), los casos para analizar (en el basado en casos) o los proyectos que ejecutar cooperativamente (en el basado en proyectos) buscan motivar al alumnado para activar la necesidad de conocer (Biggs *et al.*, 2001). Efectivamente, las emociones, claves en cualquier comportamiento humano, se están mostrando esenciales en educación (Larruzea *et al.*, 2020; Immordino y Damasio, 2011). Más aún, la actividad neural frente a escenarios contradictorios y complejos que obligan a buscar respuestas de forma autónoma, permiten al alumnado salir de su «zona de confort» modificando preconcepciones curriculares y comportamentales (Prince y Felder, 2006).

Todo ello encaja con los principios constructivistas que consideran que la realidad es captada y construida a partir de nuestras posiciones de partida: la información se filtra a través de esquemas previos, de forma que, si encaja, es interiorizada. Ahora bien, cuando esta no se acopla a lo previamente acomodado, esta fractura o se resuelve con la memorización (que no significa siempre aprendizaje) o con la experimentación: precisamente por ello, en los modelos cooperativos el horizonte es la resolución de un caso o un problema o la ejecución de un proyecto, siempre de carácter aplicado.

Apoiado en lógicas constructivistas y relacionales, uno de los modelos cooperativos más acabados, el aprendizaje basado en proyectos (ABPJ), orienta el proceso educativo a la adquisición de los contenidos mediado por la consecución de un resultado colectivo: el proyecto sitúa la esencia del aprendizaje en la aplicabilidad de unos conocimientos adquiridos cooperativamente (Condliffe, 2017; Stefanou *et al.*, 2013). Ello hace de esta metodología una herramienta imprescindible en disciplinas como la Ciencia Política, en las que es necesario trascender la lógica finalista de la mera acreditación curricular para formar profesionales que puedan trabajar colaborativamente en la gestión de lo público (Goldsmith y Goldsmith, 2010). Para ello, el diseño del proyecto debe satisfacer una serie de requisitos: 1) una clara identificación de objetivos apropiados de aprendizaje ajustados al contenido de la asignatura; 2) la articulación de una lógica de andamiaje que permita el avance escalonado de la adquisición de los contenidos; 3) oportunidades frecuentes de revisión formativa, y 4) una organización escrupulosa del trabajo en grupo aportando al alumnado herramientas de gestión y dirección del aprendizaje (Condliffe, 2017; Barron *et al.*, 1998).

Considerando estos elementos, el ABPJ vertebrará la adquisición de competencias a través de un reto, el proyecto, entendido como un producto colaborativo que necesita de la contribución de participantes organizados en grupos de entre cuatro y seis personas (Monson, 2017). El resultado en forma de proyecto (tarea concretada en prototipos —por ejemplo, en ingeniería— o informe ejecutivo que integre los contenidos de la disciplina, como es el caso que presentaremos) es la excusa para la adquisición de las competencias y conocimientos en los que la aplicabilidad, así como la reflexión activa, es fundamental para lograr el compromiso de las personas participantes (Kokotsaki *et al.*, 2016; Barron *et al.*, 1998). En este sentido, Blumenfeld *et al.*

(1991) y Stolck y Harari (2014) señalan la importancia que la motivación juega en este modelo; algo fuertemente condicionado por el tipo de tarea seleccionada, que debe ser interpretada por el alumnado en base a su interés y valor profesional y vivencial.

Más en concreto, el Buck Institute for Education (2005) ha delimitado las claves de un proyecto motivador sobre tres elementos: 1) objetivos de aprendizaje claros orientados a la comprensión, el conocimiento y la adquisición de competencias; 2) delimitación de una problemática significativa, pública y auténtica que motive la investigación desde la agencia del alumnado, asentada en la voz, la revisión y la reflexión, y 3) prácticas organizativas de enseñanza, que definan las estrategias transversales en la aplicación los elementos anteriores.

Este tercer elemento se comprende mejor si se explicitan los cinco principios rectores del trabajo cooperativo. De acuerdo con Johnson y Johnson (2009), una práctica docente es cooperativa cuando 1) la interdependencia positiva hace pivotar el éxito en la tarea en la participación obligatoria de todas las personas, al no poder ser abordada individualmente. Este principio se acompaña del de la 2) exigibilidad individual, que remite a la rendición de cuentas entre los componentes del grupo, siendo cada persona corresponsable no solo de su propio avance, sino de los resultados del resto. Otras tres claves del trabajo cooperativo son 3) la interacción cara a cara, que obliga a modificar la estructura tradicional, facilitando tiempo para el trabajo grupal; 4) las habilidades interpersonales y de trabajo en grupo, que exigen al docente establecer herramientas para vertebrar y organizar los grupos, maximizando las potencialidades de sus componentes y limitando las amenazas y obligando a identificar mecanismos grupales de resolución de conflictos, y 5) la reflexión, facilitando una constante evaluación del grupo, la dinámica, los contenidos y el docente.

DISEÑO METODOLÓGICO: UNA EXPERIENCIA DE APRENDIZAJE BASADO EN PROYECTOS EN CIENCIA POLÍTICA

Los contenidos de la asignatura Fundamentos de Análisis Político impartida en la UPV/EHU se orientan a la adquisición de una serie de resultados de aprendizaje. El primero de ellos establece como horizonte que el alumnado sea capaz de «interpretar la actualidad política y construir un marco de interpretación y análisis de los fenómenos políticos actuales». Para ello debe «conocer las distintas estructuras del sistema político e interpretar en clave politológica su funcionamiento», «distinguir los rasgos de los tipos de sistemas políticos y formas de gobierno» e «identificar los principales actores, dinámicas, interacciones y formas de gobierno». Precisamente, estos resultados de aprendizaje son los que vertebran el proyecto que debe elaborar en grupo el alumnado.

De acuerdo con estos objetivos, los contenidos de la asignatura se vertebran sobre cuatro temas que vinculan dimensiones estructurales, agenciales y de la conciencia en el análisis de los fenómenos políticos.

- *Tema 1.* Introducción en la que se abordan los elementos cognitivos que influyen en los fenómenos políticos, de la mano de aportaciones de autores como Damasio (2018), Fromm (2000) y Bauman (2010).
- *Tema 2.* Análisis de los elementos estructurales que explican los fenómenos políticos. De una parte, se presta atención a miradas de largo y medio alcance, vertebradas por las lógicas estructurales de la sociedad tradicional, moderna y actual de la mano de Sztompka (1995), Giddens (1993) y Castells (2004). De otra parte, se analiza la forma en la que se expresa la acción colectiva en función del tipo de régimen y su capacidad, apoyados en los trabajos de Tilly (2007).
- *Tema 3.* Análisis de la agencia, prestando atención a los rasgos de los movimientos sociales, grupos de interés y partidos políticos a partir de las aportaciones del *Manual de ciencia política* de Caminal (1996).
- *Tema 4.* Análisis del ambiente de la conciencia, identificando los rasgos delimitadores de los valores, identidades e ideologías sobre la base de los textos de Castells (2004) y Bauman (2010), entre otros.

Esta asignatura obligatoria de seis créditos se imparte durante el segundo cuatrimestre del primer curso de los grados de Sociología y Ciencia Política en grupos de entre sesenta y setenta alumnos. El modelo de aprendizaje activo vertebrado el 100 % de la evaluación continua, de la que el proyecto representa el 50 % de la nota. Los dos días de docencia semanales se alternan entre clases magistrales acompañadas de tareas cooperativas presenciales durante la sesión de los jueves (2h), de una parte, y el trabajo en grupo en el proyecto los viernes (2h), de otra parte. No se controla la asistencia ni hay examen: el proceso y los resultados están en manos del alumnado a través de un sistema de evaluación continua conformado por tres actividades obligatorias no calificables, cuatro entregables relacionados con el proyecto (40 % de la nota), dos resúmenes teóricos individuales vinculados al proyecto (20 %), cuatro tareas presenciales grupales realizadas en el horario de las clases magistrales (20 %) y tres ejercicios aplicados individuales (20 %).

A la hora de encarar el proyecto, el alumnado debe simular la pertenencia a una organización denominada Mobilization. Se les anima a asumir el rol de expertos en procesos de democratización y se simula que han recibido un encargo de parte de un actor implicado en un determinado conflicto o fenómeno político acotado temporal y territorialmente (fenómeno que el propio grupo debe escoger según sus intereses y de acuerdo con las recomendaciones del docente). Para abordar el proyecto, el alumnado, autoorganizado en grupos de conformación libre, debe realizar tres informes en una lógica de andamiaje inductiva que permite un avance incremental del conocimiento sobre el caso y los contenidos de la asignatura.

- El punto de partida, clave, es el proceso de conformación del grupo, asentado en la redacción de un contrato grupal (5 % de la nota) como primer acercamiento a los citados principios de reflexión y gestión de las habilidades interpersonales. Este contrato debe mostrar identidad grupal, así como identificar

herramientas de gestión del proceso de aprendizaje y de los potenciales conflictos que surjan en el desarrollo del proyecto. Además, debe explicitar compromisos individuales y grupales, así como las potencialidades y debilidades de cada componente.

- En el primer informe (10 % de la nota), deben proponer autónomamente las variables explicativas del objeto de estudio. Temáticas recurrentes estos últimos años son el ascenso de la extrema derecha, la Primavera Árabe, la victoria de Trump, el conflicto en Cataluña, los chalecos amarillos... Para realizar el primer acercamiento, como paso previo e ineludible, cada miembro del grupo debe resumir cinco aportaciones sobre el caso (artículos periodísticos o de revistas, vídeos...) en un *padlet* grupal. Si alguien no cumple, el resto no puede avanzar, en coherencia con los principios de interdependencia y exigibilidad. El docente, acompañando el trabajo grupal en el proyecto con las clases magistrales, guía al alumnado para garantizar que este primer acercamiento se oriente a la identificación de las claves estructurales del fenómeno (tema 2) sin perjuicio de que se comiencen a delimitar las dimensiones agenciales (tema 3) y de la conciencia (tema 4). El informe debe entregarse en la séptima semana.
- Tras el *feedback* del docente, el alumnado avanza en la redacción de un segundo informe que hay que entregar en la undécima semana, en el que deben redirigir el estudio enfocándolo ahora desde la perspectiva del ambiente de la conciencia (tema 4) describiendo los valores, identidades e ideologías presentes en su caso. Para garantizar la autodirección y autorregulación, el grupo prepara autónomamente el marco teórico. A tal efecto, el cronograma docente se ordena para que las clases magistrales se centren en el tema 3 (Actores). De esta forma, se obliga a un aprendizaje autodirigido en la comprensión de los valores, identidades e ideologías, al objeto de que se autorregulen para elaborar autónomamente el marco interpretativo que deben aplicar en este segundo informe. Para ello, deben buscar un artículo teórico sobre el tema 4 en bases de datos académicas (lo que permite introducirles en la búsqueda de literatura especializada), resumirlo individualmente y proponer cómo aplicarlo (10 % de la nota individual). A este resumen individual se añade otro a partir de unos textos aportados por el docente (10 % de la nota), de forma que cada componente debe trabajar uno de ellos. La interdependencia se establece obligando al alumnado a que el marco teórico incorpore al menos una referencia de todos y cada uno de los textos que trabajan los miembros del grupo. Con estos resúmenes, que de acuerdo con las lógicas de exigibilidad e interdependencia, todo el mundo debe entregar en plazo, elaboran el segundo documento (10 % de la nota), que debe contener un marco teórico y su aplicación al caso. Solo tras la presentación, corrección y realización del *feedback* de este segundo informe (realizado a través de audios), el docente aborda esta temática (tema 4) en las sesiones magistrales, incidiendo a través de varios ejercicios en elementos clave que pudieran haber sido erróneamente interpretados u obviados en el proceso autodirigido.

- El tercer informe (15 % de la nota), entendido como proyecto definitivo, debe integrar todos los objetivos de aprendizaje (presentados en una rúbrica), especialmente los que se han trabajado en ejercicios individuales. Se presenta el día de la prueba obligatoria.

En concreto, los tres ejercicios individuales (20 % de la nota) buscan la adquisición aplicada de los elementos centrales del tema 1 (cognición y marcos interpretativos), tema 2 (capacidad estructural) y tema 4 (identidades de legitimación, resistencia y proyecto). El primero de los ejercicios también busca mostrar de forma práctica al alumnado el sentido del trabajo cooperativo; para ello se aplica la técnica del puzzle, considerada una de las más adecuadas para evidenciar los principios de la interdependencia positiva y la exigibilidad individual (Sánchez-Muñoz *et al.* 2020). Así, el alumnado debe aplicar los contenidos del tema 1 relacionando cuatro textos teóricos con cuatro vídeos que ejemplifican fenómenos políticos. En concreto, los textos hacen referencia al principio homeostático y la búsqueda del bienestar en los seres vivos (Damasio, 2018), la categorización asociada a la violencia y la exclusión (Bauman, 2010), el papel del miedo en la legitimación política (*id.*) y las lógicas del pensamiento binario y el dialéctico (Fromm, 2000). Estos textos deben ser aplicados a vídeos de ejecuciones del Estado Islámico, movilizaciones del 15M y sendos cuentos de Eduardo Galeano (*El miedo manda* y la *Historia de los otros*). Tras sugerir la lectura de los textos y la visualización los vídeos en casa, en la sesión presencial se divide al alumnado en grupos de cuatro personas, cada una de las cuales debe volver a leer uno de los textos. Después de un tiempo para realizar un resumen individual, cada «grupo base» se redistribuye en «grupos expertos» que trabajan el mismo texto, consensuando un esquema común que se amplía en una segunda ronda, ahora de ocho personas. Finalmente, cada persona «experta» vuelve al «grupo base» explicando a sus compañeros el esquema, trabajado primero individualmente y en grupos expertos después. Tras la sesión, cada alumno debe realizar el ejercicio de aplicación de las teorías a los vídeos. Esta dinámica, conocida como puzzle o *jiwsaw* (Sánchez-Muñoz *et al.*, 2020), ejemplifica cómo todos los participantes son imprescindibles para poder comprender y aplicar varios textos que han sido leídos individualmente. Sin interdependencia positiva que permita conocer el contenido de los textos, todos fallan.

A este ejercicio se suman otros dos trabajos individuales. En concreto, para abordar las singularidades de la acción colectiva en base al doble eje democracia/no democracia y capacidad alta/capacidad baja, el alumnado, guiado por la descripción teórica de Tilly (2007), debe identificar a qué tipo de régimen pertenece cada una de las figuras que se observan en la imagen 1, de la que se han borrado los descriptores que las asocian a las cuatro posibilidades: dictadura de alta o baja capacidad, democracia de alta o baja capacidad. Este acercamiento inductivo ayuda al alumnado a asimilar conceptos claves: que una diferencia de la protesta en los regímenes dictatoriales y democráticos es la ausencia de acción contenciosa ante los mandatos del régimen; que la contienda aumenta en los contextos de baja capacidad, etc. Tras este ejercicio grupal, en el que el docente guía a los grupos para que adjudiquen correctamente a

cada figura el tipo de régimen que corresponde, el alumnado debe realizar un ejercicio individual identificando en un documental las formas de control de los símbolos, el territorio y las personas que caracterizan a la Libia de Gadafi como un régimen de alta capacidad.

IMAGEN 1.

EJERCICIO SOBRE TIPOS DE REGÍMENES

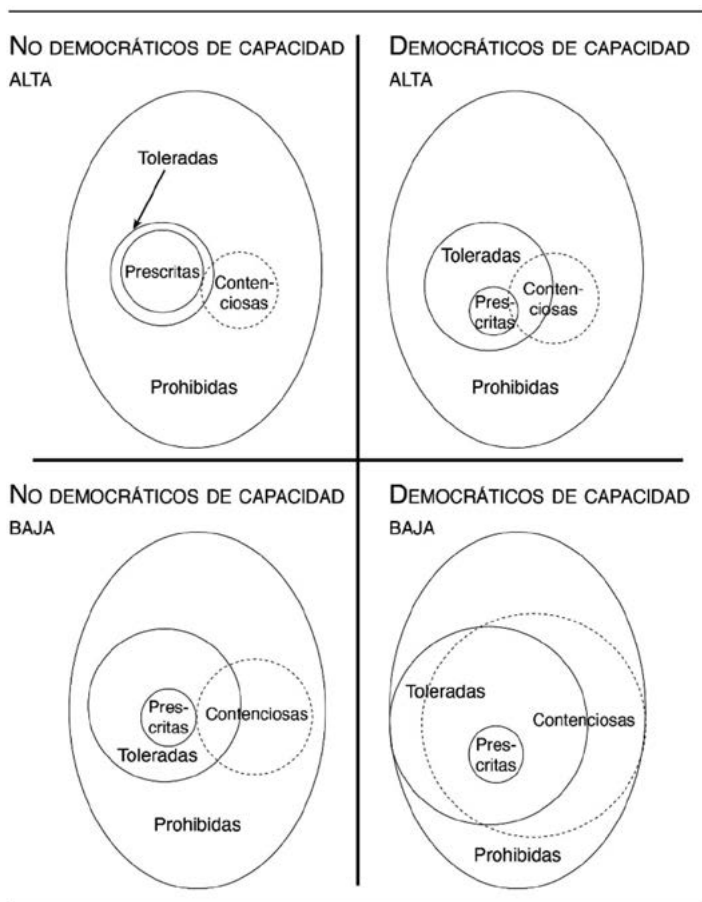


Figura 2.2 Configuración de la interacción política según actitudes en diversos tipos de régimen

Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de una imagen de la obra de Tilly (2007).

Finalmente, en el tercero de los ejercicios individuales el alumnado debe localizar y explicar cómo se expresan en los diversos protagonistas de un vídeo los tres tipos de identidades definidas por Castells (2004). Concretamente, tras visualizar el documental *Hijos de la guerra* sobre la Mara Salvatrucha, deben relacionar la identidad de

los elementos definitorios de las ideologías modernas y actuales en la estética del arte soviético y en otras imágenes icónicas (imagen 3).

IMAGEN 3.

EJERCICIO SOBRE IDEOLOGÍAS



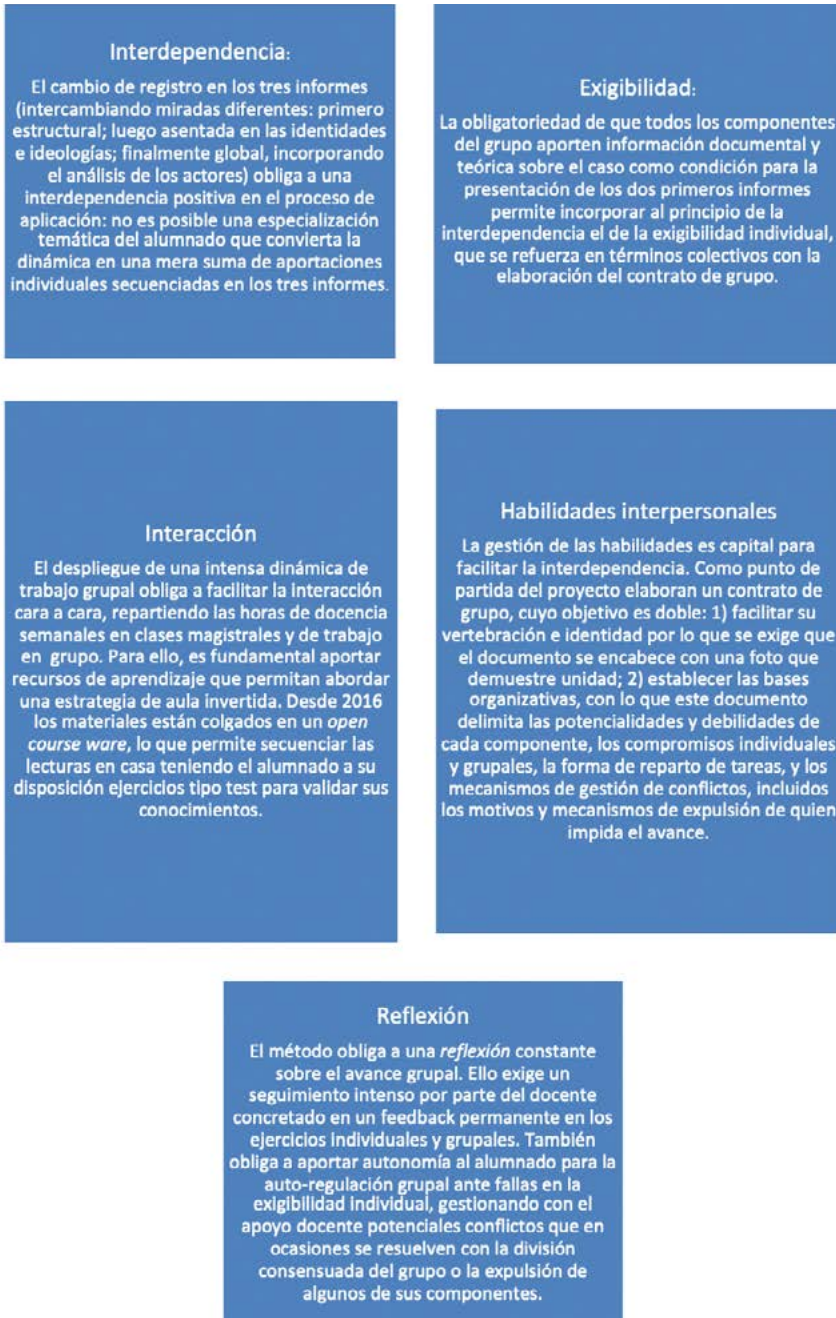
Fuente: elaboración propia.

Como se ve, el método articula un proceso sistemático de andamiaje (Condliffe, 2017), de forma que cada avance (en forma de informe en las sesiones dedicadas al proyecto o trabajos individuales o grupales en las clases magistrales) permite escalar el conocimiento: el tercer informe incorpora versiones sintetizadas, perfeccionadas y mejoradas de los elementos clave de los documentos anteriores, además de los aspectos abordados en dinámicas individuales o asociadas a prácticas en las sesiones magistrales. De la misma forma, la evaluación continua permite que el alumnado haya realizado el 80 % del trabajo evaluable para la duodécima semana, lo que facilita que toda la energía del grupo se dedique al final del curso a la elaboración del tercer informe.

A modo de resumen, la imagen 4 sintetiza la forma en la que el diseño metodológico satisface los cinco principios claves del aprendizaje cooperativo.

IMAGEN 4.

CONCRECIÓN DE LOS PRINCIPIOS DEL TRABAJO COOPERATIVO



Fuente: elaboración propia.

ANÁLISIS DE LOS RESULTADOS

La evaluación y la obtención de indicadores de éxito es una premisa fundamental de las innovaciones docentes. En las siguientes líneas buscamos evidenciar cómo este método incrementa el compromiso, mediado por la motivación y el interés del alumnado, en su proceso educativo. Para ello, en primer lugar nos apoyaremos en indicadores cuantitativos. A tal efecto, nos servimos de la encuesta institucional del Servicio de Evaluación Docente (SED) de la UPV/EHU, disponible para los cursos 2014-2020 (los datos de 2019 no son comparables, ya que la encuesta institucional se adaptó al confinamiento). Esta consta de veintiocho ítems en los que se pide al alumnado valorar aspectos como la planificación (5 ítems), la metodología (9), el desarrollo de la docencia (6), la interacción (4), la autoevaluación (4) y la valoración general del docente (1). A ello se suman una serie de preguntas de control (edad, género...) entre las que destaca el interés inicial e interés final tras cursar la asignatura. La encuesta anónima se entrega un único día de las tres semanas previas al final del curso y solo la contesta el alumnado presente (razón por la cual la tasa de respuesta casi siempre es menor al total de matriculados). Se recoge por los delegados en un sobre sellado y se entrega por el docente y el delegado ese mismo día a los servicios de evaluación. El procedimiento es de obligado cumplimiento y es uno de los elementos clave del programa de evaluación del profesorado de la UPV/EHU. Los resultados de las encuestas están a disposición del profesorado, que puede analizar sus resultados comparándolos con los del grado, la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación o la UPV/EHU. Para contrastar el interés inicial y el final con otros entornos, se han solicitado al SED los datos globales del grado de Ciencia Política y del primer curso de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación. Ello permite un doble contraste respecto de la disciplina y el curso. Como veremos a continuación, los datos cuantitativos confirman el aumento del interés del alumnado tras cursar la asignatura, y muestran indicadores significativamente más altos en comparación con la media del grado en aspectos claves como la relevancia que la asignatura juega en la potenciación del trabajo en grupo, el aprendizaje autónomo o la motivación.

Desde esta atalaya, en un segundo momento nos apoyamos en testimonios del alumnado para mostrar con sus palabras la forma en que este modelo aumenta el compromiso en el proceso educativo como consecuencia de: a) su la orientación experimental y aplicada; b) la lógica cooperativa que permite que la interiorización de las competencias se apoye en un proceso colectivo de suma positiva, y c) la capacidad del modelo para desplegar una motivación intrínseca que activa el deseo de aprender. A tal efecto, hemos analizado los resultados de las evaluaciones escritas presentadas por el alumnado de los cursos 2020/2021 y 2021/2022 (42 de un total de 67 alumnos en 2020/2021 y 41 de un total de 63 en 2021/2022). Esta evaluación, anónima y voluntaria, se asienta sobre tres elementos: la valoración de la metodología del trabajo, del funcionamiento del grupo y de los contenidos asimilados. Para la identificación de testimonios referenciales, se han procesado todas las respuestas a través del programa NVivo. Sobre la base de los nodos emergentes se han seleccionado las citas

más significativas que permiten evidenciar en palabras del alumnado las potencialidades de esta metodología. Las citas están anonimizadas y se cuenta con autorización del alumnado para su utilización en investigaciones y publicaciones relacionadas con la innovación docente. Como veremos, el análisis cualitativo evidencia la capacidad del método implementado para motivar, aumentar el interés por su carácter aplicado, gracias a la lógica cooperativa que permite desplegar la autonomía, la capacidad de autodirección y autorregulación del proceso de aprendizaje.

Análisis cuantitativo

Como se ha señalado, la encuesta institucional se reparte entre el alumnado presente en el aula un único día durante las semanas de finalización del curso, por lo que los datos aportados no corresponden al total del alumnado. A pesar de todo, son cumplimentados por un número significativo de alumnos y alumnas. *De facto*, se debe considerar que entre un 10% y un 12% del alumnado abandona la carrera en el primer cuatrimestre de primero, de forma que no participa activamente en una asignatura que se desarrolla el segundo cuatrimestre. La tabla 1 identifica el alumnado matriculado oficialmente y el alumnado que *de facto* cursa la asignatura; esto es, forma parte de grupos que elaboran un proyecto y, en consecuencia, son evaluados. A efectos prácticos a la hora de determinar la validez de las encuestas, debería ser considerado el dato de la última de las columnas. Aunque en términos estadísticos los resultados pudieran carecer de validez empírica, creemos que desde un punto de vista descriptivo y comparativo, acompañados del análisis cualitativo, en conjunto nos permiten responder afirmativamente a la pregunta que guía esta investigación: esto es, la capacidad de este método para activar el compromiso en el aprendizaje.

TABLA 1.
TASA DE PARTICIPACIÓN EN LAS ENCUESTAS

Encuesta del SED	Alumnado matriculado	Alumnado participante	% respuestas válidas
2020-2021	51/67	51/60	85 %
2019-2021	COVID	55	
2018-2019	42/72	42/65	64 %
2017-2018	42/69	42/58	72 %
2016-2017	46/79	46/67	68 %
2015-2016	36/79	36/66	54 %
2014-2015	54/78	54/61	88 %

Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de los datos de la encuesta institucional (alumnado matriculado) y las actas de evaluación de la asignatura (alumnado participante).

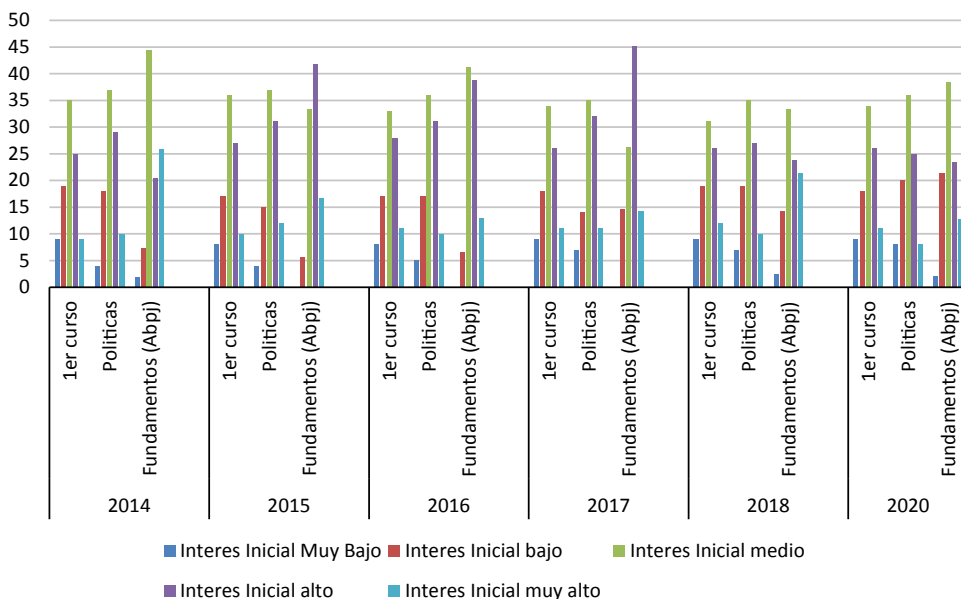
La encuesta institucional pide al alumnado que identifique el interés inicial que tenía al comienzo de la asignatura y el interés final tras cursarla. Los gráficos 1 y 2

muestran los datos de la asignatura en comparación con la media de las del Grado de Ciencia Política y la media de las del primer curso de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación (que también incluye Sociología, Periodismo, Publicidad y Comunicación Audiovisual).

En el gráfico 1 se observa que al comienzo de la asignatura hay pocas personas con un interés muy bajo o bajo, en contraste con las medias del grado y primer curso de la facultad. También evidencia que la mayor parte del alumnado muestra unas expectativas de interés medias o altas, siendo las muy altas superiores a las del resto de escenarios comparables. Ello denota una predisposición favorable del alumnado que, como veremos en las citas que siguen, puede venir mediado por valoraciones de compañeros que han cursado ya la asignatura.

GRÁFICO 1.

INTERÉS DEL ALUMNADO AL COMIENZO DE LA ASIGNATURA



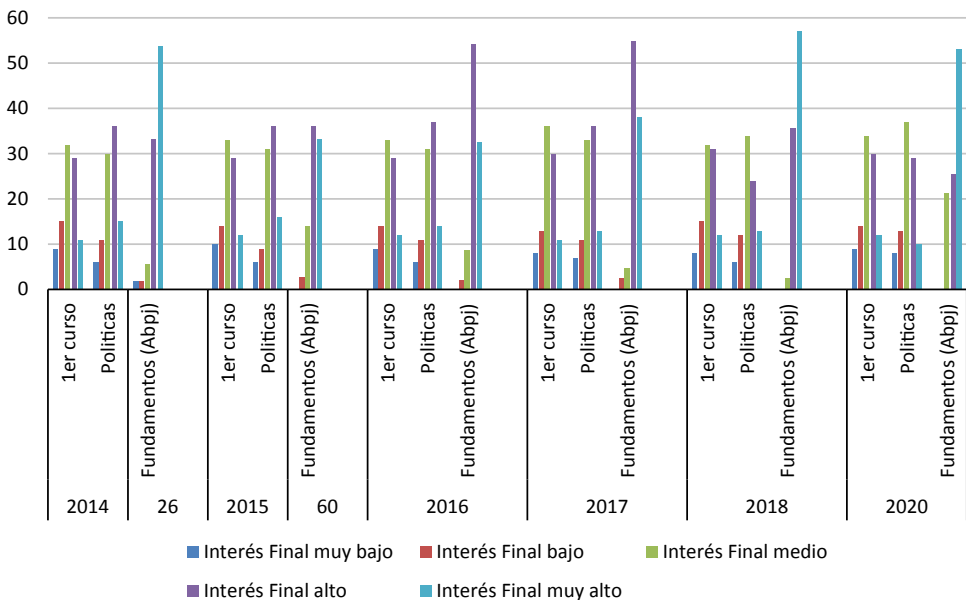
Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de la encuesta del Servicio de Evaluación Docente de la UPV/EHU.

Por su parte, el gráfico 2 muestra cómo los limitados porcentajes de alumnado que manifestaban un interés muy bajo o bajo al inicio desaparecen tras cursar la asignatura. Más aún, el interés medio desciende hasta un máximo en torno al 20 % de respuestas en 2020 y un mínimo del 2,4 % en 2018. Ello explica que el interés alto y muy alto se dispare. En consecuencia, la media del interés final alto y muy alto se sitúa entre el 87 y el 93 % del alumnado (excepto en el curso 2015 que baja al 70 %) al final de la asignatura. Finalmente, los datos contrastan con las medias del grado y el primer curso de la facultad. Si en esta asignatura desaparecen valoraciones que muestran un interés

final muy bajo o bajo, estas oscilan entre el 6% y el 9% en el grado y primer curso, respectivamente, para un interés muy bajo, y el 10% y el 15% para un interés bajo. Por su parte, la suma del interés alto y muy alto se sitúa en torno al 40% en el grado y el 45% en el primer curso de la facultad, entre 30 y 40 puntos menos, dependiendo del año, que los datos aportados por el alumnado de *Fundamentos*.

GRÁFICO 2.

INTERÉS DEL ALUMNADO AL FINALIZAR LA ASIGNATURA



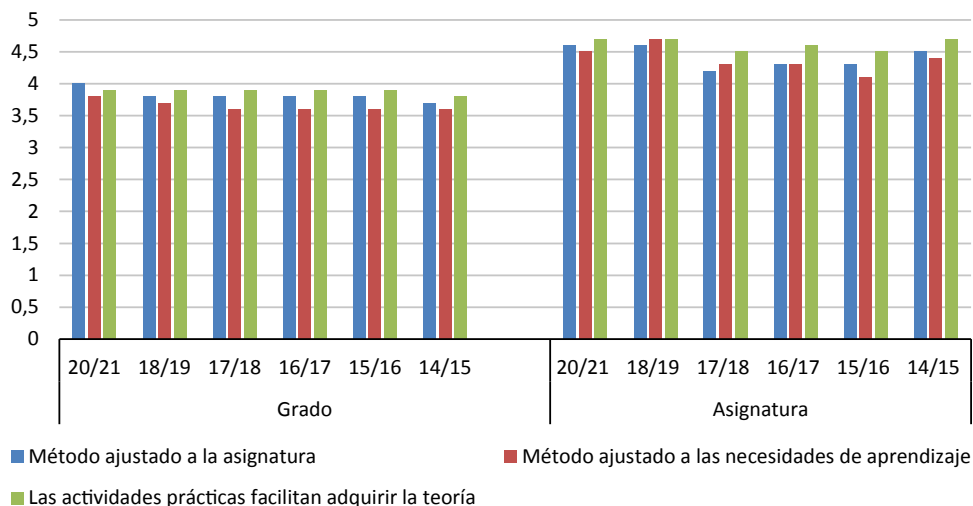
Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de la encuesta del Servicio de Evaluación Docente de la UPV/EHU.

Los gráficos 3 y 4 afinan más la opinión del alumnado respecto a la asignatura. Como se observa en el gráfico 3, las valoraciones sobre la capacidad de las actividades prácticas para integrar la teoría son significativamente más altas que las del conjunto del grado de Ciencia Política (con medias sostenidas superiores a 4,5 sobre 5, frente al máximo de 3,9 del grado). De la misma forma, la valoración respecto a la adecuación del método a la asignatura y a las necesidades del aprendizaje es claramente mayor que la media del grado y se observa una estabilización de las puntuaciones más altas desde 2018.

Por su parte, el gráfico 4 mide la valoración del alumnado respecto de la capacidad docente para favorecer el trabajo en equipo, el autónomo y motivar al alumnado. Precisamente estos indicadores, junto con el mencionado de la aplicabilidad, se relacionan directamente con pregunta de investigación a la que responde este texto que, recordamos, se interroga sobre si este tipo de metodologías permiten aumentar compromiso del alumnado gracias a su capacidad para despertar el interés (algo que ya hemos visto que sucede) como consecuencia de su aplicabilidad, su carácter cooperativo y su capacidad de desplegar

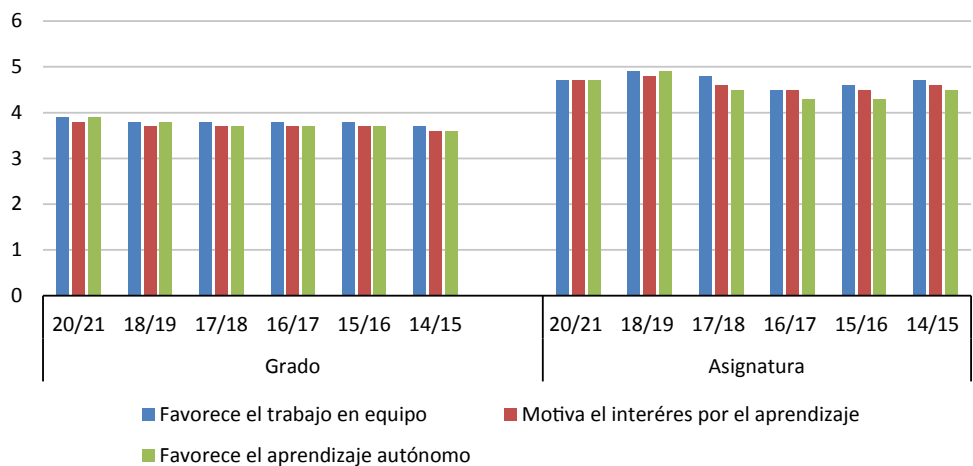
la autonomía. En este sentido, vemos cómo se valora con puntuaciones entre el 4,5 y el 4,9 la capacidad de potenciación del trabajo en equipo, muy lejos de una media del grado que en ningún curso pasa del 3,8. Lo mismo sucede con la valoración respecto de la capacidad del método y del docente para desplegar un trabajo autónomo y aumentar la motivación.

GRÁFICO 3.
VALORACIÓN DE LA METODOLOGÍA (1)



Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de la encuesta del Servicio de Evaluación Docente de la UPV/EHU.

GRÁFICO 4.
VALORACIÓN DE LA METODOLOGÍA (2)



Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de la encuesta del Servicio de Evaluación Docente de la UPV/EHU.

Análisis cualitativo

Más allá de las evidencias cuantitativas, interesa conocer la opinión del alumnado respecto de esta metodología. A fin de evaluar el proceso de aprendizaje, al final de la asignatura se solicita al alumnado que voluntariamente realice una valoración cualitativa sobre diversos aspectos de la asignatura. Las 83 aportaciones recogidas en los cursos 2020/2021 y 2021/2022 se concretan en escritos de entre 1500 y 3000 palabras, en los que se pide al alumnado reflexionar sobre la metodología, el desarrollo del trabajo grupal e individual y los conceptos trabajados en el curso. La imagen 5 muestra las preguntas que debe responder el alumnado.

IMAGEN 5.

FICHA DE (AUTO)EVALUACIÓN

Ficha de autoevaluación de la asignatura

Primer Aspecto: Reflexión sobre la metodología

- Interesan reflexiones que reflejen las oportunidades, fortalezas o debilidades de la metodología
- Interesan ejemplos de actividades realizadas que se pueden definir como "buena práctica docente" o, por el contrario, dinámicas que "no se pueden considerar exitosas"
- Interesa valorar la forma de presentar y aplicar los contenidos
- Interesa valorar si la metodología favorece o no la implicación, el auto-aprendizaje, la motivación y el control sobre la materia por parte del alumnado
- Interesa valorar si la dinámica de los primeros días ha tenido efecto a la hora de motivaros y si esta motivación, en caso de haber existido, se ha mantenido a lo largo del curso

Segundo aspecto: reflexión sobre el grupo y el papel personal jugado a título individual

- Interesa la reflexión sobre cómo ha funcionado el grupo, especialmente en lo relativo al reparto de tareas, la coordinación, la realización de los trabajos
- Interesa la reflexión sobre las desigualdades que se hayan podido dar en el grupo, en términos de género o en base a cualquier otra variable
- Interesa la reflexión sobre cómo te has sentido, cómo te has implicado, qué te ha ilusionado y desilusionado
- Interesa saber qué nota te podrías en base a tu aportación en el proyecto y qué nota podrías de media al resto del grupo (sin citar nombres)

Tercer aspecto: Reflexión sobre los contenidos asimilados a lo largo de la asignatura

- Qué conceptos se te han quedado grabados
- Qué conceptos no has logrado asimilar
- Qué ideas y aspectos novedosos has descubierto
- Qué te gustaría haber profundizado

Fuente: elaboración propia.

En el análisis que sigue hemos dejado de lado los comentarios relacionados con el tercero de los aspectos abordados, con las desigualdades de género (a este respecto ver Ahedo *et al.*, 2022a, 2022b) y con la dinámica del primer día de clase (a este respecto ver Ahedo, 2023). Considerando el resto de material escrito, se han procesado los 83 documentos con el programa NVivo, codificando las referencias explícitas en las que se liga el compromiso con la motivación intrínseca (89 referencias en 65 evaluaciones), el carácter aplicado del aprendizaje (123 referencias en 75 evaluaciones), la lógica cooperativa (182 referencias en 83 evaluaciones) y la capacidad de gestión autónoma y autorregulación del aprendizaje (92 referencias en 80 evaluaciones). En la práctica totalidad de los casos, el compromiso es variable dependiente del resto. Reproducimos a continuación la literalidad de dos de las evaluaciones que reflejan esta correlación. La primera corresponde a un alumno varón del curso 2020/2021 y la segunda a una alumna del curso 2021/2022. Primera evaluación:

Llevar a cabo la simple metodología de realizar un examen no solo no está adaptada a los tiempos, sino que también me parece, en cierto modo, discriminatoria. Una persona puede tener un gran potencial y no ser capaz de mostrarlo en un examen. Además, para mí, los exámenes son una forma de perder la oportunidad de aprender conceptos de forma interiorizada. Es decir, es muy fácil aprender algo de memoria, escupirlo en el examen y olvidarnos al día siguiente. De esta forma, no habría ni aprendizaje ni reflexión. Sin embargo, realizar trabajos, tanto grupales como individuales, es una forma dinámica de interiorizar nuevos conceptos y de poder reflexionar. Asimismo, me parece una forma más justa de poder evaluar a las personas. Si realmente tienes la capacidad de entender lo que te gusta, el hecho de reflexionar sobre ello puede ser hasta motivador.

Mi experiencia con esta asignatura ha sido plenamente motivante. Tengo que admitir que recibí muy buenas opiniones por parte de alumnos/as de otros años y eso me ayudó a empezar con ganas e intriga. Durante el desarrollo, he disfrutado realizando trabajos individuales de temas que me interesan o que al principio no lo hacían y al final lo acabaron haciendo.

Realizar un trabajo de gran peso, hablando en porcentaje de nota, de forma grupal fue otro hecho que me motivó en esta asignatura. Poder realizar un trabajo acerca de un tema escogido por ti (dando esa oportunidad de preferencia personal) con un grupo nos enseña unas capacidades de cooperación imprescindibles en el mundo laboral actual.

La mayoría de las prácticas me han permitido realizar un gran autoaprendizaje y poder desarrollar, también, capacidades para mi futuro. No obstante, el análisis que hicimos acerca de Libia fue con el que más reflexioné y más disfruté haciendo. Nunca me había parado a analizar un país de una forma tan completa. Además, nunca había escuchado hablar sobre la alta capacidad alta ni sobre las consecuencias que este tipo de capacidad conlleva. Me ayudó a visibilizar la política fuera de Europa y a tener en cuenta aspectos que marcan la historia política de un país.

En definitiva, la metodología no solo me ha parecido motivadora, sino que también ha sido innovadora. Una nueva forma de aprender sin tener que saber todo de memoria. Reflexionar, entender y rompernos la cabeza sobre aspectos actuales (Evaluación 36, 2022).

Segunda evaluación:

La metodología de la asignatura es probablemente la más acertada debido a que se mezclan varios procedimientos de aprendizaje útiles. Así como: trabajos en grupo, investigaciones personales, discusiones realizadas en clase sobre los temas a estudiar... Una de las principales fortalezas es la libertad que nos ofrece el profesor de cara a dar la materia y entenderla. La participación y el estudio general que se realiza en clase hace de esta una dinámica más interesante. En lo personal, al tener un espacio de opinión y desarrollo personal pudiendo contar con la ayuda del profesor me ha hecho que la dinámica de la clase sea más amena y que la retención de materia sea más satisfactoria. El tener que buscar información y documentarnos acerca de nuestros temas favorece el autoaprendizaje y hace que, al ver que podemos crear documentos con calidad basándonos en búsquedas que hemos ido haciendo nosotros, incrementemos nuestra confianza. La mayoría de clases, más que teóricas han sido clases en las que hemos realizado actividades en relación con teoría que posteriormente nos ha explicado. Esto ha hecho que trabajemos sobre contenidos que realmente no conocemos del todo para que luego, tras una breve introducción, se nos presente el tema de manera más clara y explicada por el profesor. Esto ha favorecido en gran medida la implicación de la clase debido a que en todo momento había que estar atento para poder llevar a cabo la actividad.

El hecho de realizar un trabajo grupal con posibilidades infinitas en el desarrollo ha favorecido la motivación de nuestro grupo y la mía propia. La dinámica de trabajo ha sido muy buena porque desde mi perspectiva ayuda en el aprendizaje de verdad, despierta un interés de aprendizaje más allá de lo imperativo; es decir, que yo, por ejemplo, ante ciertos temas que hemos trabajado a lo largo del curso me he sentido menos obligada a aprenderlos, pero más interesada por aprenderlos. El primer trabajo que tuvimos que realizar fue el contrato de grupo, y no encontré ninguna dificultad a la hora de hacerlo, es más, creo que fue de gran ayuda para mí y para el grupo en general y nos motivó bastante a poder cumplir lo que habíamos puesto en él, debido a que en algunos casos habíamos marcado verdaderos retos por cumplir.

También me ha resultado de gran ayuda la constancia con la que se han realizado prácticas para entregar. Aunque en ocasiones me he podido sentir sobrecargada por la suma de todos los trabajos, me parece que permite hacer un seguimiento del trabajo que potencia las correcciones de errores en próximos entregables. Asimismo, realizar un trabajo práctico por aproximadamente cada concepto aportado resulta útil para comprender, no solo el concepto en sí, sino también su aplicación a la realidad. Además, en lugar de repetir «como un loro» las ideas concretas que aporta el profesor, ayuda a desarrollar un pensamiento crítico (Evaluación 12, 2021).

Con estas palabras toman cuerpo, en la voz del alumnado, los aspectos cuantitativos analizados. Se evidencia cómo el compromiso por el aprendizaje viene mediado por un sustancial incremento de la motivación intrínseca (que en los testimonios contrasta con la extrínseca asociada al examen) y el interés, muy vinculado a la aplicabilidad del método de trabajo. Este interés, motivación y, finalmente, compromiso se asocia también a la capacidad de autorregulación individual, vinculada a la evaluación continua y grupal, y relacionada con la corresponsabilidad y la interdependencia en la

elaboración del proyecto. De la misma forma, la autonomía asociada a la elección del tema y la búsqueda de información, concretada en un trabajo escalonado que en su redacción final el alumnado identifica como un reto satisfecho con éxito, se conjuga en el incremento del compromiso. Finalizamos con una última cita (alumna del curso 2021/2022) que resume de forma gráfica la relación entre compromiso y motivación con el método implementado:

Por experiencia sé que esa metodología que aplican la mayoría de profesores no ayuda en nada en cuanto al aprendizaje porque nosotras lo que queremos es aprobar la asignatura, por lo que tras haber realizado el examen echamos la vista hacia atrás y realmente no hemos aprendido nada y a duras penas nos acordamos de los materiales enseñados. Esta metodología propuesta en la asignatura me parece muy acertada, ya que, desde el primer día, comenzando con la primera dinámica, la asignatura captó mi atención y me dejó pensando en cómo sería la siguiente clase y si esta sería igual de entretenida. He de reconocer que mi interés por la asignatura en un principio no era muy alto, pero al final ha sido una de las materias donde más he aprendido, más he trabajado y mejor me lo he pasado (Evaluación 24, 2022).

DISCUSIÓN

La creciente relevancia que está asumiendo la innovación en los marcos normativos de la educación superior en España no es más que la expresión de un proceso de largo alcance que atraviesa todas las disciplinas. En el caso de la ciencia política, a las revistas especializadas *Journal of Political Science Education* y *Journal of Public Affairs Education* se añade la creciente presencia de estudios sobre innovación docente en revistas como *European Political Science* o la *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*.

En un número monográfico de *European Political Science*, Goldsmith y Goldsmith (2010) hacen un repaso a la historia reciente de la docencia en Ciencia Política en Europa, señalando cómo frente al modelo tradicional, basado en clases magistrales o seminarios, se está avanzando, con diversos niveles de despliegue, en nuevas metodologías entre las que destacan, por su importancia para la disciplina, el aprendizaje aplicado basado en casos, problemas o proyectos. Concluyen señalando que estas metodologías necesitan de una mayor implicación del alumnado para que el interés por el aprendizaje se apoye en la reflexión y en la búsqueda autónoma de respuestas. Por su parte, Ishiyama (2013), tras refrendar los efectos positivos de las metodologías activas, propone superar un acercamiento demasiado centrado en la realización de simulaciones (muy presentes en el estudio de las Relaciones Internacionales), apostando por metodologías como el aprendizaje basado en problemas y proyectos. En línea con Goldsmith y Goldsmith (2010), apunta tres ventajas de estas metodologías: un nivel más profundo de comprensión, una vocación aplicada y una lógica cooperativa. Por su parte, Saavedra (2018) señala que el aprendizaje basado en proyectos aumenta la motivación del alumnado, permite desarrollar habilidades profesionales y

activa su autorregulación. Concluye confirmando la evidencia empírica de la influencia positiva del aprendizaje cooperativo en el rendimiento y el desarrollo de competencias del alumnado.

Centrando la mirada en el alumnado, Gil-Galván *et al.* (2021) evidencian una evaluación positiva de los estudiantes respecto del aprendizaje basado en problemas (siendo los resultados extensibles al basado en proyectos). Y apuntan que «la valoración positiva en la adquisición de competencias [...] se sustenta en que se sienten más capaces de aprender por ellos mismos, a la vez que despiertan en ellos la necesidad de llevar a cabo los aprendizajes desarrollando capacidades creativas e intelectuales» (*ibid.*: 287). De acuerdo con Goldsmith y Goldsmith (2010) e Ishiyama (2013), concluye que estas metodologías generan una mayor motivación del alumnado, que se concreta en la asistencia clase, la implicación en las tareas y la retención durante un mayor tiempo de los aprendizajes. Estas intuiciones son corroboradas por Almulla (2020), quien en un metaanálisis que estudia la práctica de 124 docentes, destaca que la utilización del aprendizaje basado en proyectos tiene efectos directos sobre el compromiso de los estudiantes. En consecuencia, vemos cómo los resultados cuantitativos y cualitativos de la experiencia presentada están en línea con las evidencias de la literatura académica.

Como hemos mostrado a través de una metodología mixta cuantitativa y cualitativa, el compromiso está asociado a la motivación. Esta motivación, de acuerdo con Blumenfeld (1991), se asienta en la posibilidad que este modelo genera para que el alumnado se sienta sujeto activo de su aprendizaje, en nuestro caso optando por trabajar autónomamente y de forma autodirigida un tema de su interés. En paralelo, el hecho de que se autorregule al ver cómo va mejorando a través del proceso de andamiaje y la evaluación continua (Condliffe, 2017) es clave para comprenderse a sí mismo como agentes, fundamento sobre el que se sostiene el compromiso que está en la base del aprendizaje individual (Almulla, 2020; Monson, 2017). Ciertamente, este modelo exige del personal docente un esfuerzo en la articulación de herramientas procesuales y formativas (Condliffe, 2017) que posibiliten la interdependencia, la exigibilidad, la reflexión y la gestión de las habilidades intergrupales como forma de lograr la *accountability* del alumnado en el trabajo en grupos (Stein *et al.*, 2015). En consecuencia, creemos que la descripción de la metodología y de los resultados puede ayudar a otros docentes a implementar este tipo de dinámicas en las aulas de Ciencia Política.

Un aspecto clave en este tipo de dinámicas es la necesidad de medir el impacto sobre el aprendizaje. En un metaanálisis que incorpora grupos de control, Swanson *et al.* (2019) identifican un efecto moderado positivo en el conocimiento adquirido por grupos que trabajan metodologías cooperativas en comparación con los grupos de control. Apunta la dificultad de desagregar los efectos de cada uno de los elementos sobre los que pivotan a la hora de medir los efectos sobre el aprendizaje, pero subraya, apoyado en un estudio de 177 casos, la pertinencia de combinar la motivación extrínseca asociada a la nota con la intrínseca asentada en la corresponsabilidad para con el grupo. Este estudio va en la misma línea que el de Stolk y Harari (2014), quienes

correlacionan la motivación con el desarrollo de habilidades cognitivas de alto nivel. En una línea similar, Monson (2017) analiza para el caso de la Sociología la relación entre el aprendizaje individual y el aprendizaje basado en proyectos, concluyendo que hay una relación directa entre el compromiso del grupo y el aprendizaje individual. Señala que, si bien aspectos como el género (a este respecto ver Ahedo *et al.*, 2022a, 2022b), la raza, la edad u otros elementos pueden tener consecuencias, en líneas generales hay una relación directa entre la evaluación del trabajo grupal y los resultados individuales. Por su parte, Vesikivi *et al.* (2020), en un análisis con cerca de 300 estudiantes y apoyados en metodologías cuantitativas y cualitativas, señalan que el aprendizaje basado en proyectos aumenta la retención de los contenidos adquiridos en el primer curso y tiene efectos sobre la continuidad de los estudios del alumnado (algo señalado en cuatro de las evaluaciones realizadas en el curso 2021/2022).

Si bien en este texto no hemos abordado la calidad y profundidad de la adquisición de contenidos, creemos que los resultados de aprendizaje individuales del alumnado de nuestra asignatura (con notas sustancialmente superiores a las de la misma asignatura impartida en euskera, y mantenidas en el tiempo) responden a los mismos parámetros que los recién aludidos. En cualquier caso, una de las tareas que encarar es precisamente lograr evidencias respecto de la capacidad de esta metodología para lograr mejores resultados en términos de aprendizaje profundo. Para ello planteamos a corto plazo realizar comparativas con grupos de control y desplegar un proceso externo de evaluación ciego con profesorado de Ciencia Política de la UPV/EHU para contrastar la calidad de los trabajos con otros del modelo convencional. De la misma forma, la pregunta de la evaluación en la que se pide al alumnado que identifique aquellos conceptos que más ha interiorizado busca sentar las bases para análisis longitudinales que desarrollar cuando el alumnado haya avanzado en el grado.

CONCLUSIONES

De acuerdo con Kokotsaki *et al.* (2016), las claves del éxito del aprendizaje basado en proyectos están en la capacidad docente para escalar el aprendizaje, motivar, guiar y apoyar al alumnado en una estrategia compartida asentada en la corresponsabilidad y en el establecimiento de mecanismos de gestión del proceso. Estos dos principios de interdependencia positiva y exigibilidad individual se añaden a los de la gestión de las habilidades en la interacción cara a cara asentada en una constante reflexión, lo que convierte el aprendizaje en una dinámica pública. Creemos que en este texto, además de presentar una experiencia que puede servir al profesorado de Ciencia Política para conocer la esencia de esta metodología, hemos evidenciado su capacidad para incrementar el compromiso en el aprendizaje a partir de un interés intrínseco que se alimenta de la lógica aplicada, cooperativa y autodirigida y autorregulada del modelo. Las evidencias cuantitativas permiten mostrar cómo el modelo aumenta el interés en comparación con el conjunto del grado o el primer curso de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación. Por su parte, el análisis de las referencias cualitativas

codificadas muestra la dependencia de esta motivación con los aspectos aludidos. Finalmente, las citas seleccionadas de las evaluaciones del alumnado ponen cuerpo a las potencialidades de esta metodología y confirman su capacidad para aumentar el compromiso por el aprendizaje.

Finalizamos señalando el carácter político de esta forma de aprendizaje. Si lo político emerge del tránsito de la consideración privada a la consideración pública de problemas que deben ser resueltos a través de sistemas de regulación, creemos que el modelo cooperativo permite que el aprendizaje deje de ser una cacofonía de *qué hay de lo mío* para convertirse en una estrategia en la que lo que prima es el *qué hay de lo nuestro*. Para ello, como sucede con otros aspectos de la gestión de lo político, es necesaria una interdependencia positiva asentada en mecanismos de rendición de cuentas. Esta metodología permite que ambas lógicas se combinen con el despliegue de estrategias para regular habilidades sociales y reflexión colectiva, generando un alto compromiso del alumnado para que se sienta sujeto y no objeto del aprendizaje, en la medida en que se autorregula y autodirige en un aprendizaje aplicado. Y todo ello se produce gracias a la activación de un interés generador de motivación intrínseca para aprender, lo que hace del ABPJ una pedagogía crítica para el siglo XXI (Maida, 2011)

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¿Una oportunidad para qué? Los grupos de interés del turismo ante el impacto de la COVID-19 en el sector

An opportunity for what? Interest groups facing the impact of COVID 19 on the tourism sector

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Resumen

El crecimiento sostenido de la actividad turística durante más de siete décadas y su resistencia a las crisis propició la consolidación de una arena de política turística en la que participaban, de manera estable, los decisores públicos y algunos grupos de interés del sector turístico. En esta arena política la narrativa sobre el turismo y la política turística también respondía a un discurso compacto que, no obstante, ya lidiaba con críticas que señalaban diferentes problemas de sostenibilidad del modelo, como la saturación turística o la mala calidad del empleo turístico, entre otros. Las consecuencias de la crisis sanitaria que provoca la COVID en el sector turístico fueron especialmente graves, debido fundamentalmente a las restricciones a la movilidad. El nuevo escenario demandó posiciones mucho más activas tanto de los Gobiernos como de los grupos de interés. El artículo analiza el impacto en el mapa de grupos de interés, así como los posibles cambios en las estrategias utilizadas por los actores. Los resultados demuestran que los grupos de interés continúan ejerciendo sus funciones sin que existan cambios significativos, aunque se les demanda un papel más activo en un momento de crisis como el vivido, lo que les está obligando a asumir posiciones más propositivas y más abiertas a la interlocución.

Palabras clave: turismo, grupos de interés, asociaciones de empresarios, política turística, pandemia, COVID-19.

Abstract

The sustained growth of tourism activity for more than seven decades and its resilience to crisis led to the consolidation of a tourism policy arena in which public decision-makers and some

interest groups from the tourism sector participated on a regular basis. In the context of this policy domain, the narrative on tourism and tourism policy also responded to a robust rhetoric which, regardless the circumstances, was already dealing with negative feedback that pointed out different problems related to the sustainability of the model such as overcrowded destinations or poor quality of jobs in the tourism sector among others. The effects of the health crisis caused by COVID-19 in the tourism sector were particularly significant mainly due to mobility restrictions. In order to cope with this situation much more active positions from both governments and interest groups were required. The article examines the impact on the stakeholder map as well as possible changes in the strategies adopted by the players involved. The research conclusions support the idea that stakeholders continue to perform their duties without any significant change, although a more relevant contribution is demanded during the difficult moments we are currently experiencing. This situation is pushing them to assume more proactive and open to dialogue positions.

Keywords: tourism sector, interest groups, business associations, public policy, pandemic, COVID-19.

INTRODUCCIÓN

El presente trabajo se centra en comprender quiénes son y cuáles son las dinámicas de los grupos de interés que se desenvuelven en la arena política del turismo en el Gobierno central de España. El crecimiento sostenido de la actividad turística durante más de siete décadas y su resistencia a las crisis ha propiciado la consolidación de una narrativa estable sobre cuál debería ser la acción pública en materia de turismo, defendida tanto por el empresariado turístico como por todos los Gobiernos del país durante las últimas décadas. Este discurso compacto, no obstante, estaba lidiando con críticas que señalaban diferentes problemas de sostenibilidad del modelo, como la saturación turística o la mala calidad del empleo turístico, entre otros. Se trata de un discurso crítico de grupos minoritarios, tanto de activistas como pertenecientes a pequeñas empresas turísticas, desligados del modelo tradicional, que trataban de articularse para influir en la definición del problema y las propuestas de intervención, aunque hasta el momento no hayan conseguido romper la narrativa imperante. En este contexto, la irrupción de la COVID-19 y su impacto en el sector han provocado la primera crisis profunda del sector en décadas.

Los objetivos del artículo son conocer el mapa de actores y la situación de cada grupo de interés en ese mapa de acuerdo con la clasificación recogida en el marco teórico y observar hasta qué punto la crisis de la COVID-19 ha tenido repercusión en el mismo y, en caso afirmativo, cómo cambian las formas de interacción de los grupos con las instituciones.

Las conclusiones muestran cómo los grupos de interés ligados al sector económico del turismo a nivel de país mantienen su posición hegemónica y, en diferente grado, su capacidad de propuesta e interlocución. En cambio, otros grupos de interés

han tenido que dedicarse a cuestiones más urgentes causadas por la crisis. Lo prolongado de la crisis permite concluir que los decisores públicos no son los únicos que solo pueden acabar sufriendo una crisis institucional si no son capaces de interpretar el momento y generar respuestas adecuadas; los grupos de interés también ven depender su legitimidad de las acciones que sean capaces de impulsar en los momentos difíciles.

El artículo comienza con una reflexión sobre la relación entre el marco teórico de los grupos de presión y el centrado en el cambio en políticas públicas. En la tercera sección se describe la trayectoria de la política turística del Gobierno central de España y el impacto que la crisis sanitaria supuso para el sector. La cuarta sección presenta los resultados del análisis, y en la sección final se exponen las conclusiones generales sobre el posible impacto de la COVID-19 en el mapa de grupos de interés, sus repertorios de acción y forma de asumir su papel en la arena de la política turística.

MARCO TEÓRICO: IDEAS, SUBSISTEMAS DE POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS Y FACTORES DE CAMBIO

Entre los elaboradores de políticas públicas y los grupos de interés existen relaciones estables y duraderas construidas sobre la confianza mutua y sobre una visión común de cuál es el problema que trata de enfrentar la política pública y cómo debe ser abordado (Freeman, 1985; Klijn, 1998). El marco teórico del presente trabajo combina reflexiones que provienen del concepto de *grupos de interés* con otras que lo hacen del concepto de subsistemas de *políticas públicas*. La pregunta básica es si el impacto de una crisis como la provocada por la COVID-19 ha supuesto algún cambio en las dinámicas relativamente estables que caracterizaban la relación de los grupos de interés con los decisores públicos en el subsistema de política turística del Gobierno central en España.

Los actores son un elemento central de las políticas públicas y su análisis forma parte de la disciplina desde su origen. En este trabajo nos interesa un tipo concreto de actores, los grupos de interés, organizaciones cuyo objetivo central es incidir en las decisiones públicas, en especial en las políticas públicas, con el objetivo de que sus principios y valores y, por tanto, sus demandas sean incorporadas al proceso de diseño e implantación de acciones públicas.

La caracterización de los grupos de interés y su definición es objeto de debate desde hace décadas (Berry, 1977; Jordan y Maloney, 2007). Una de las principales dificultades analíticas es distinguir este tipo de agrupaciones de otras que también participan en el espacio político (Jordan *et al.*, 2004). Con este fin, se han elaborado diferentes propuestas teóricas (Baroni *et al.*, 2014). Unas proponen considerar las acciones y comportamiento de los grupos como elemento distintivo (Lindblom, 1977), lo que permite incorporar a grupos muy diversos que tratarían de influir en las políticas públicas (Baumgartner *et al.*, 2009). Pero, como contrapartida, si el elemento clave es la actividad política observable, es posible dejar fuera grupos importantes cuyas

actividades sean menos visibles o, al contrario, que sean percibidos como influyentes algunos otros que no lo son (Baroni *et al.*, 2014). Para evitar esto, otras propuestas concentran la atención en las características organizativas del propio grupo, señalando como elemento especialmente significativo la membresía voluntaria (Jordan *et al.*, 2004; Binderkratz y Krøyer, 2012). A partir de Berry (1984), el concepto se ha ido ampliando hasta considerar que la delimitación no debe ser el eje del debate (INTEREURO, 2021; INTERARENA, 2021). En este trabajo, se entiende que son grupos de interés los que cuentan con una estructura estable, realizan presión política por medios no violentos y no quieren responsabilidades gubernamentales (Beyers *et al.*, 2008; Solís Delgadillo, 2017).

Otras dimensiones abordadas por la investigación son el carácter del interés que defienden, propio o general (Halpin, 2006), la posición que los grupos ocupan respecto del sistema decisorio, el tipo de objetivos que persiguen (Dür y Mateo, 2016) o las estrategias que despliegan, orientadas a llamar la atención de la opinión pública o a ganar la legitimidad para ser considerado un grupo *insider* en alguna de las arenas (Beyers *et al.*, 2014, Halpin *et al.*, 2012): burocrática (Binderkrantz *et al.*, 2015); parlamentaria (Chaqués-Bonafont y Muñoz Márquez, 2016) o de los medios de comunicación (McCombs y Shaw, 1972).

El análisis de los grupos puede hacerse de manera individual —considerando cualquiera de estos elementos— o de manera coral —teniendo en cuenta el conjunto de grupos que se sitúan y articulan alrededor de un asunto o política pública concreta, asumiendo posiciones distintas (Halpin y Fraussen, 2017)—. Algunos grupos asumen una posición activa e intentan establecer contactos con los decisores y las instituciones, aunque para ello dependen de los recursos propios de su organización. Otros tienen una posición de partida que les permite el acceso, ya que los decisores consideran que tienen algo que aportar. Por último, unos pocos tendrán el reconocimiento general de que deben participar en los procesos de elaboración de políticas (*prominence*), posición que se explica más por la posición que el propio grupo ocupa en el *issue* sobre el que trabaja la política pública.

El hecho de que los grupos se articulen alrededor de un tema concreto que es objeto de la acción pública ha sido también objeto de un rico debate teórico. Estos espacios, o *policy domains*, ponen en el centro el problema de la política pública, alrededor del cual los participantes en los procesos de decisión actúan y se comprometen (Burstein, 1991). En la literatura, estas relaciones de actores en torno a una problemática se conciben como espacios más o menos rígidos. Para Richardson y Jordan (1979), los *policy community* se caracterizan por contener un limitado grupo de miembros que mantienen relaciones estables con los decisores, con quienes comparten los mismos valores y la misma definición del problema de política pública. Por su parte, Hecló (1978) habla de *issue network* como un espacio mucho más flexible, en el que participan muchos actores con grados variables de compromiso mutuo y que entran y salen constantemente de redes que son fluidas y relativamente inestables.

En cualquier caso, en estos subsistemas la convivencia entre decisores y grupos se ve sometida a momentos de estabilidad y cambio. Para Baumgartner y Jones

(1993) los momentos de estabilidad se explican porque existe una comunidad de políticas estable, lo que significa que existe una comunidad de actores, tanto decisores como grupos de interés, que son capaces de proteger el *monopolio* de la política pública mediante un enmarque del tema que limita su definición y los objetivos que deben perseguirse y que genera un consenso suficiente como para excluir a muchos otros actores. Pero la dinámica también enfrenta etapas de inestabilidad y cambios, momentos en donde algunos acontecimientos permiten que otros grupos de interés se movilicen y traten de ganar acceso y trasladar sus ideas a los decisores públicos o, incluso, del público en general a través de los medios. En estos momentos se cuestiona la estabilidad que domina la arena política y se abren oportunidades a demandas nuevas, apareciendo ventanas de oportunidad para los actores (Zohlnhöfer *et al.* 2016).

La COVID-19 es un acontecimiento externo al subsistema de la política turística que en términos teóricos habría provocado una crisis similar a un desastre natural (Faulkner, 2001; Birkland, 2006), aunque con diferencias evidentes: la intensidad de sus efectos es menor, pero en cambio se sostiene por un periodo de tiempo mucho más largo durante el cual se han ido tomando decisiones. Por ello, aunque inicialmente no era posible utilizar el concepto de *crisis institucional* (Alink *et al.*, 2001), probablemente nos encontremos ya en una fase de cuestionamiento de la eficacia, eficiencia y pertinencia de los procedimientos, las acciones o los objetivos de la política pública que está siendo implantada (Boin *et al.*, 2009).

El presente trabajo se limita al nivel del Gobierno central. Siendo el turismo una competencia exclusiva de las comunidades autónomas, el Gobierno central mantiene un nivel de acción relevante a través de las competencias de coordinación de la economía y de comercio exterior. Desde ellas, ha impulsado varios planes que han tenido un impacto simbólico muy significativo en la política turística del país (Velasco, 2004).

Para poder responder a la pregunta de si la crisis de la COVID-19 ha impactado en el marco de relación de los grupos de interés con los decisores públicos en el subsistema de política turística del Gobierno central en España, se han realizado entrevistas semiestructuradas a diversos actores que representan a los grupos de interés del sector. En la selección inicial se incluyeron los grupos con una mayor representación en el sector (número de empresas o trabajadores afiliados) y los reconocidos por los poderes públicos (por ejemplo, con participación en las comparecencias parlamentarias). A partir de ahí, se utilizó una estrategia de bola de nieve, que permitió elaborar la lista de actores para ser entrevistados, añadiendo también los señalados por los decisores previamente entrevistados. Aunque se contactó con un número superior, las entrevistas finalmente realizadas son las que se señalan en la siguiente tabla, que se llevaron a cabo en los meses de mayo y junio de 2021.

Las entrevistas estaban orientadas a reflexionar sobre objetivos, estrategias o repertorios de acción básicos y sobre el impacto que el COVID-19 había supuesto en su dinámica interna y externa. En anexo se incorpora el guion utilizado.

TABLA 1.
RELACIÓN DE ENTREVISTAS

Ámbito	Entrevistas
SECTOR EMPRESARIAL TURÍSTICO (grupos de interés empresarial)	<p>Exceltur: asociación sin ánimo de lucro, formada por 33 de las más relevantes empresas de toda la cadena de valor turística.</p> <p>Instituto Tecnológico hotelero (ITH): perteneciente a la Confederación Española de Hoteles y Alojamientos Turísticos (CEHAT), patronal que agrupa y representa al sector alojativo nacional en su conjunto.</p> <p>Hostelería de España: organización empresarial que representa a los restaurantes, bares, cafeterías y pubs.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Iberia</p>
REPRESENTANTES TRABAJADORES (grupos de interés sindicales)	<p>CC. OO. (sección turismo)</p> <p>UGT (sección turismo)</p>
ASOCIACIONES DE INVESTIGADORES (expertos)	<p>Albasud: asociación especializada en investigación y comunicación para el desarrollo que trabaja sobre turismo responsable, trabajo justo y bienes comunes de la tierra.</p>
GRUPOS DE ACCIÓN CIUDADANA (grupos de interés causales)	<p>TurismoReset: espacio para la colaboración y el diálogo de profesionales de turismo que trabajan de manera colectiva en la búsqueda de soluciones regenerativas para el sector.</p> <p>Cactus: Colectivo-Asamblea contra la Turistización de Sevilla.</p> <p>Asamblea de Barris per un Turisme Sostenible: conjunto de entidades y colectivos que desde los barrios de Barcelona para la denuncia, crítica y movilización contra el discurso imperante del turismo en la ciudad.</p> <p>Entrebarris de València: red de colectivos y asociaciones vecinales que se oponen a la turistificación de la ciudad.</p>
DECISORES PÚBLICOS	<p style="text-align: center;">Secretaría de Estado de Turismo</p> <p>Segittur: Sociedad Mercantil Estatal para la Gestión de la Innovación y las Tecnologías Turísticas. Responsable de impulsar la innovación (I+D+i) en el sector turístico español.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Responsable de destino de sol y playa</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Responsable de destino cultural</p>

Fuente: elaboración propia.

EL TURISMO Y LA POLÍTICA TURÍSTICA: PRINCIPIOS Y PROBLEMAS

España es uno de los tres primeros destinos turísticos del planeta en llegada de visitantes internacionales (WTO, 2019), lo que otorga al sector una posición política y

simbólica destacada. En el año 2019 supuso el 12,4 % del PIB del país y el 12,9 % de los empleos (INE, 2019). El crecimiento sostenido de la actividad turística durante más de siete décadas y su resistencia a las crisis había propiciado la consolidación de una narrativa estable sobre la acción pública en materia de turismo, defendida tanto por el empresariado turístico como por los Gobiernos que sucesivamente han tomado decisiones sobre el país (Velasco, 2004).

En la arena política del turismo en España era posible reconocer algunos problemas clásicos que aparecen desde los primeros años, unos principios y valores estables que articulan la acción pública diseñada e implementada y algunas líneas de acción que se integraban en todos los planes y políticas impulsados (Velasco, 2004, 2014). Este pasado consolidado conformaba una trayectoria difícil de obviar (Pollit, 2008). Los problemas y las respuestas en forma de políticas turísticas sobre los que se estructura el discurso de la acción pública del Gobierno central ha girado siempre en torno a algunas ideas.

La primera, la *cuádruple concentración del modelo turístico español*: concentración de la oferta, muy orientada al producto sol y playa; concentración temporal, puesto que el producto básico requiere un clima que se da en los meses de verano, que es también cuando se concentran los periodos de vacaciones; concentración espacial, ligada a algunos destinos turísticos y territorios de costa, y concentración de la demanda, con una muy alta dependencia de dos mercados emisores concretos, el inglés y el alemán¹. Esta concentración explica también el modelo de desarrollo turístico del país: modelo intensivo, muy dependiente de la intermediación o turoperación, concentrado espacial y temporalmente, lo que implica una estructura de empleo discontinuo y con una preminencia de una tipología concreta, el sol y playa.

La segunda idea es la centralidad del objetivo de *potenciar el crecimiento del turismo en el país*, siempre medido en cifras absolutas: número de llegadas de turistas internacionales, número de pernoctaciones, contribución del sector al PIB, etc. Esta idea de crecimiento persiste y se completa, a partir de la década de los ochenta del pasado siglo, con la idea de competitividad. Más tarde, entrará en el discurso la idea de mejora la calidad y, ya en la década del 2000, la sostenibilidad, pero entendida como sostenibilidad económica del propio sector y, en los márgenes de un enfoque limitado, impulsando algunas —pocas— acciones de protección del medio ambiente (Velasco, 2010). A estos valores se ha sumado —más en un plano discursivo que en la articulación de acciones reales— la apuesta por la transformación tecnológica o las acciones para mejorar la investigación y conocimiento del fenómeno, la producción de datos y su análisis; ámbitos, de hecho, muy desatendidos.

La tercera idea es la necesidad de *apoyar al sector empresarial turístico*, un sector muy fragmentado en dos grupos muy diferenciados: por un lado, pocas empresas grandes, muy competitivas e internacionalizadas; y por otro, una multitud de pequeñas o microempresas que en 2018 representaban el 92,2% del sector (Exceltur, 2018). Este tejido de

1. III Plan de Desarrollo. Comisaría del Plan de Desarrollo (1973), p. 16.

pymes, intensivo en mano de obra y en uso de recursos naturales, no tiene capacidad para abordar de manera autónoma innovación tecnológica y presenta niveles de productividad muy inferiores al de las empresas homólogas europeas (Gordo *et al.*, 2006).

En este contexto se explica una cuarta idea, que aparece de manera repetida: la *problemática alrededor del empleo turístico*. La política turística siempre ha abordado esta problemática desde la dimensión de la formación: durante más de siete décadas, se ha invertido en mejorar la formación de los y las trabajadoras del sector, pero es un objetivo difícil de lograr por la huida del personal formado hacia sectores con mejores condiciones laborales o mejor percepción social.

Un último asunto que aparece repetidamente en todos los planes de política turística tiene que ver con los *problemas de coordinación horizontal y multinivel*: coordinación intersectorial, ya que el turista no deja de ser un ciudadano ocasional; y coordinación multinivel, ya que el turismo es una competencia de las comunidades autónomas, en la que tienen un enorme protagonismo los Gobiernos locales y en la que también participa el Gobierno central.

Este discurso de «éxito a pesar de algunos desajustes» ha recibido críticas académicas profundas que señalaban problemas de sostenibilidad del modelo (Gossling *et al.*, 2009; Higgins-Desbiolles y Whyte, 2013; Hall *et al.*, 2015; Huijbens y Gren, 2016; Saarinen, 2018), proponían abordar estrategias de decrecimiento (Fletcher *et al.*, 2019), trabajaban sobre la relación del turismo con los procesos de mercantilización de los espacios (Buscher y Fletcher, 2017; Devine, 2017; Young y Markham, 2019), construían críticas a la calidad del empleo (Cañada, 2018, 2019), analizaban las complejas relaciones entre el turismo y los procesos urbanos (Judd y Fanstein, 1999; Sequera y Nofre, 2018) o reflexionaban sobre los problemas de saturación turística —u *overtourism*— (WTO, 2018 y 2019; Peeters *et al.*, 2018), entre otros asuntos. Pero estas posiciones críticas, compartidas en ocasiones por pequeños empresarios y empresarias turísticas desligadas del modelo tradicional, no habían conseguido llamar la atención de la opinión pública.

Esto cambia en el verano de 2017, cuando algunas acciones de protesta contra las consecuencias negativas del turismo urbano provocaron un debate abierto en los medios de comunicación españoles. Aparece el término *turismofobia* y se publican casi 12 000 noticias en el país sobre el asunto (Velasco y Carrillo, 2021), que fue modificándose hasta atenuarse paulatinamente.

Ese nuevo enfoque, que no consigue romper la narrativa dominante, tuvo algunas consecuencias importantes. Aparece por primera vez en la arena pública el cuestionamiento abierto del turismo, que nunca había sido objeto de un debate tan profundo en los medios de comunicación. De este modo, se expande el rango de lo que se consideran problemas políticos del modelo turístico y se modifica la visión sobre el asunto. La nueva problematización del turismo rompe con la imagen de bondad absoluta del modelo turístico y con la idea de eficacia de la política turística que la acompaña. Esto posibilita que se abran oportunidades para que se acepten nuevas políticas o acciones ligadas a una visión del fenómeno más compleja (Velasco y Ruano, 2021) y también que se incorporen nuevos actores.

Esta era, en resumen, la lógica que presidía el subsistema de la política cuando irrumpe la crisis. En marzo de 2020 apareció el virus de la COVID-19 y se paralizaron todas las actividades. Algunas empresas pudieron adaptarse, utilizando la tecnología para suprimir la movilidad y respetar el distanciamiento. Pero el turismo implica necesariamente movilidad y supone contacto interpersonal con no convivientes en espacios comunes.

Las cifras del impacto en el sector son esclarecedoras (Turespaña, 2021):

- El PIB turístico pasó del 12 % en 2019 a menos del 5 % en 2020.
- Las llegadas de turistas en 2019 fueron de 83,7 millones, y de 19 millones en 2020, lo que supuso una caída del 77 %.
- El gasto turístico en el país en 2019 fue de 91 912 millones, mientras que en 2020 fue de 19 740 millones, lo que supuso un retroceso del 78,5 %.
- La caída de la facturación en agencias de viajes en 2022 fue del 75%, en alojamientos del 68% y en transporte aéreo del 60,1 %.
- Respecto del empleo, en el subsector de alojamientos se perdieron 251 758 puestos de trabajo (el 81% en los servicios de comidas y bebidas y el 19% en los servicios de alojamiento); en las agencias de viajes, 9003 trabajadores, y en «otras actividades turísticas» 66 580 afiliados.

No es el objetivo de este artículo observar qué ha ocurrido en la política turística en este contexto, sino indagar si todo ello ha tenido algún impacto en la acción de los grupos de interés de la política turística.

ANÁLISIS DEL IMPACTO DE LA CRISIS DE LA COVID-19 EN LOS GRUPOS DE INTERÉS DEL TURISMO

Aproximación al mapa de grupos de interés en turismo y su problemática antes de la llegada de la crisis de la COVID-19

a) Mapa de los grupos de interés en la política turística

Un posible mapa de los grupos de interés que interactuaban con el subsistema de política turística del Gobierno central hasta el año 2020 tendría diferentes actores que describimos en los siguientes párrafos.

Los grupos de interés profesional a nivel nacional reflejan la fragmentación del sector y el alto grado de pymes ya comentado. En el *subsector de alojamientos* encontramos a la Confederación Española de Hoteles y Alojamientos Turísticos (CEHAT) y a la Federación Española de Asociaciones de Viviendas y Apartamentos Turísticos (FEVITUR). Aquí también podríamos encuadrar a la Federación Española de Empresarios de Camping y Parques de Vacaciones (FEEC) y una asociación profesional clásica, la Asociación Española de Directores de Hotel.

En el *subsector de agencias y turoperadores* se encuentran la Federación Empresarial de Asociaciones Territoriales de Agencias de Viajes Españolas (FETAVE), la Asociación Corporativa de Agencias de Viajes Especializadas (ACAVE), la Unión Empresarial de Agencias de Viajes (UNAV) y la Confederación Española de Agencias de Viajes (CEAV).

En el *subsector de la restauración* está la Hostelería de España, que es una federación de asociaciones que agrupa a más de 315 000 establecimientos.

En el *subsector del transporte* conviven las siguientes entidades: Asociación Internacional de Líneas de Cruceros (CLIA-Spain), Asociación Provincial de Empresarios de Vehículos de Alquiler sin Conductor (AVAES), Federación Nacional Empresarial de Alquiler de Vehículos con y sin Conductor (FENEVAL), Asociación de Líneas Aéreas (ALA) y Asociación de Navieros Españoles (ANAVE).

También existen diversos grupos que trabajan en *productos turísticos o tipologías concretas*: Asociación Española de Turismo Rural (ASETUR), Asociación de Ecoturismo en España (AEE), Asociación Nacional de Empresas de Turismo Activo (ANETA), Federación Española de Empresas Organizadoras Profesionales de Congreso (OPC-España), ANEN (Asociación Nacional de Empresas Náuticas), Asociación Española de Parques temáticos (AEPT), Asociación de Operadores de Turismo Industrial (AOTI), Asociación Española de Campos de Golf (AECG), Asociación Nacional de Balnearios (ANBAL), Federación Nacional de Empresarios de Ocio y Espectáculos (España de Noche) y GEBTA (agrupación de empresas en viajes de negocio y corporativo), entre otros.

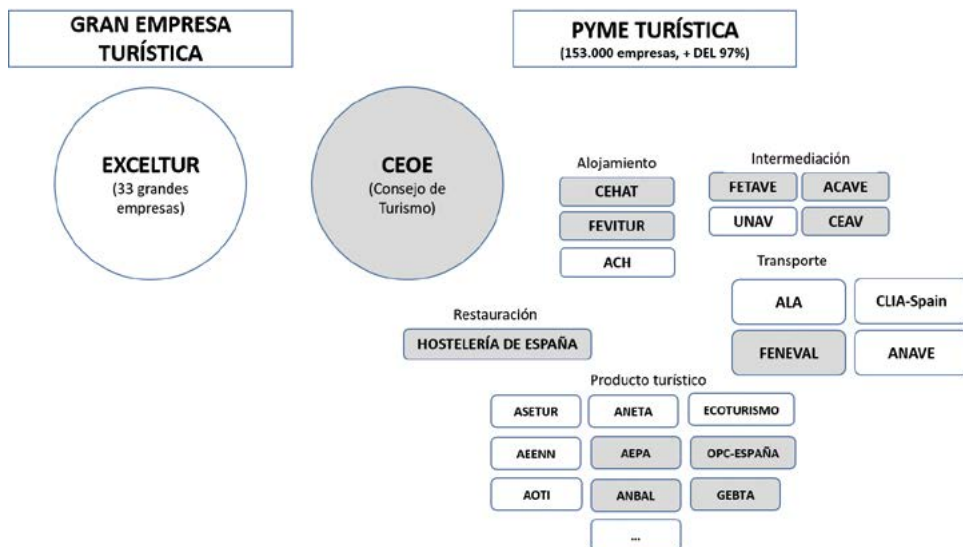
Muchas de estas agrupaciones son miembros del Consejo de Turismo de la CEOE, que aparece como el espacio de agregación de los intereses de la empresa turística. Pero, junto a esta, encontramos a Exceltur, que reúne a 33 grandes empresas con distintas posiciones en la cadena de valor del turismo (Exceltur, 2021). Su principal actividad es generar conocimiento a través de investigación y es su papel de grupo experto reconocido lo que legitima su participación y reconocimiento en los procesos de toma de decisiones, que se ve muy reforzada por el tamaño y peso de las grandes empresas que forman parte del mismo.

En el siguiente gráfico se muestra la fragmentación comentada y la dificultad para encontrar un liderazgo claro.

Los dos grandes sindicatos del país, UGT y CC. OO., tienen secciones dedicadas al turismo y su posición es relevante a la hora de impulsar determinadas acciones o aprobar medidas, pero menos que en otros sectores industriales. En cuanto a los grupos de expertos, encontramos también algunos actores relevantes. Así, por ejemplo, está el Instituto Tecnológico Hotelero (ITH), órgano con notable reconocimiento en el sector y dependiente de uno de los principales grupos de interés de profesionales (CEHAT), que está orientado a impulsar la innovación y tecnología en el sector de alojamientos. Junto a este, otras instituciones utilizan la investigación y el conocimiento como el elemento central de su trabajo, siendo la interlocución con actores públicos otra de sus principales funciones. Dentro de este grupo también hay matices. Algunos construyen y

GRÁFICO 1.

MAPA DE GRUPOS DE INTERÉS EMPRESARIAL



Nota: sombreadas en gris aparecen las entidades que agrupan empresas turísticas y pertenecen al Consejo de Turismo de la CEOE en la fecha de la investigación).

Fuente: elaboración propia.

defienden argumentos técnicos, pero generan dinámicas más cercanas al mercado, como las que terminan ofreciendo certificaciones a las empresas turísticas (caso del Instituto de Turismo Responsable y el sello Biosphere); otros se mantienen como espacios de investigación crítica y pretenden que sus reflexiones sean parte del propio debate de política turística (como Albasud). El grupo Instituto Empresa, ligado más a la formación que la investigación, aparece también como un actor experto relevante.

Otros grupos de interés, como determinados movimientos vecinales o plataformas ciudadanas, participan de manera activa en el debate sobre el turismo, el mercado turístico y la política turística, especialmente en ciudades en donde la saturación turística se ha convertido en objeto de discusión para la opinión pública, como Barcelona, Palma, Valencia o Sevilla. Así, como ellos mismos reconocen, «nosotros ya no somos los locos, hace tiempo que dejamos de serlo, así que el diálogo con las instituciones municipales es más frecuente» (Asamblea de Ciudadanxs, 1). Y en algunos gobiernos municipales se habían convertido en actores relevantes e innovadores con capacidad de contribuir a la política: «Hemos aportado en el giro del relato del turismo en la ciudad. Sin olvidar un rol institucional de interpelación y en ocasiones de colaboración en experiencias de colaboración entre movimientos sociales e institución» (id.).

b) La relación de los grupos de interés y los decisores antes de la pandemia: percepción mutua

El concepto que más aparece cuando se pregunta a los protagonistas sobre cómo eran las relaciones entre los grupos de interés y los decisores públicos en el momento anterior a la llegada de la COVID-19 es el de desvertebración. La atomización y consecuente dificultad para encontrar interlocutores que permitan un diálogo sobre la política turística se percibe por los decisores públicos, que afirman «no es sencillo encontrar interlocutores que representen un grupo significativo de actores, a veces sí, pero solo cuando se trata de ámbitos reducidos o intereses muy concretos» (decisor público 1). La dificultad es más evidente cuando se habla sobre subsectores que han sufrido una creciente división interna en las organizaciones de representación, como las agencias de viajes que «[...] tuvieron una presencia importante, pero se desarticularon y perdieron fuerza. Han dejado de estar presente a partir del 2010, posiblemente porque la desintermediación y el paso al mundo online y su paulatina desaparición del territorio, lo que les ha debilitado mucho» (decisor público 2). Y aún más complejo si se reflexiona sobre la articulación de intereses en el nivel local: «La capacidad de asociarse del sector es baja. Más baja aún, salvo excepciones muy importantes, a nivel local, donde son los empresarios individuales los que asumen este papel» (decisor público 2).

También los representantes de los grupos de interés señalan esta debilidad y creen que es aprovechada por los decisores políticos para dejarlos al margen de la elaboración de acciones: «El empresariado está muy desvertebrado, poco estructurado y mal organizado, hay un número alto de organizaciones empresariales y profesionales [...] esto para los políticos es un chollo» (sector empresarial 3). Y recuerdan: «Somos la voz que aúna las necesidades del sector, y deberíamos ser consultados. La realidad es la contraria» (sector empresarial 2).

Otros grupos de interés diferentes de los grupos empresariales tienen esa misma percepción, y afirman que lo que existe es una red de relaciones informales que se activa desde la Administración para consultas puntuales o apoyos concretos que les interesan, pero que no incluye la toma de decisiones: «Los decisores públicos, de vez en cuando, nos llaman para poder decir “contamos con”. Pero no tanto para que realmente participemos en la toma de decisiones. Si ponen en marcha un proceso participativo, pues no te pueden excluir. Otra cosa es cuánto te oyen, que es poco» (Asambleas de Ciudadanxs 1).

Tampoco resultan operativos los espacios formales establecidos para el trabajo conjunto, en especial el Consejo Español de Turismo, órgano que se convoca a voluntad de la Secretaría de Estado y que, por tanto, depende de la voluntad del titular: «El Consejo Español del Turismo debería ser el Parlamento del turismo español, pero ha habido gobiernos que no lo han convocado nunca» (representantes de los trabajadores 1). Además, dicho órgano cuenta con muchos miembros, lo que dificulta que se convierta en un espacio decisorio eficaz: «En el Consejo Español de Turismo hay más de sesenta miembros, es un disparate. Bueno... podría haberse convertido en un instrumento más ejecutivo durante la pandemia, pero tampoco» (sector empresarial 3).

Los grupos de interés señalan que han encontrado una mayor receptividad en algunos gobiernos autonómicos, aunque no en todos: «Realmente una Administración que pudiéramos citar como referente en tema de interlocución, no hay, aunque el nivel de éxito en que seamos escuchados es mayor a nivel autonómico» (sector empresarial 3) o «a nivel autonómico hay algunos casos puntuales sí: Comunidad Valenciana, Andalucía, Canarias y Cataluña, pero con otras comunidades no» (sector empresarial 2). Y la dinámica a nivel local es muy individual, como también se señala: «A nivel local solo tiene un peso de las personas individuales que tienen y no están interesados en la representación a nivel nacional» (decisor público 2), por lo que los grupos no tienen impacto en dicho nivel de gobierno.

c) Diferencias entre los grupos: presencia, arenas en las que actúan y repertorios de acción

Cuando se indaga sobre si existen matices entre los grupos de interés a la hora de articular posición y estrategia, aparecen algunas reflexiones interesantes. Cada grupo define su estrategia sobre qué tipo de relación establecen con los decisores públicos: algunos quieren estar en los procesos globales del diseño de la política turística, asumiendo que estos se elaboran por los actores públicos, mientras que otros apuestan por liderar una iniciativa y tener propuestas específicas para que sean apoyadas e incorporadas. Los decisores incluso señalan que diferentes subsectores asumen distintas posiciones: «El sector alojamiento quiere participar en temas estratégicos y en planificación, el sector de hostelería y agencias querían acciones y tenían propuestas concretas» (decisor público 2). Y, en general, parece más fácil trabajar con grupos de interés más pequeños y centrados en temas específicos: «Las asociaciones más ligadas a tipologías concretas han estado presentes cuando se trabaja en programas específicos, como los clubs de producto, porque son buenos interlocutores de lo que ocurre en el terreno, pero no se suelen mezclar con los representantes clásicos [...] son perfiles distintos» (decisor público 1).

Si nos fijamos en las arenas en las que cada tipo de grupo actúa, las diferencias entre grupos son más nítidas. Al Parlamento solo tienen acceso los grupos de interés empresarial y, en menor medida, los sindicatos². Aunque esta presencia en los Parlamentos tampoco está asegurada: «La participación en los Parlamentos nacionales o

2. El listado de actores que alguna vez ha participado como invitado en alguna comisión parlamentaria es el siguiente: representantes empresariales: Artiem Fresh People Hotels; Asociación de Compañías Españolas de Transporte Aéreo; Asociación Empresarial de Agencias de Viajes Españolas (AEDAVE); Asociación Nacional de Alquiler de Vehículos con y sin Conductor (ANEVAL); Barceló Corporación Empresarial; Cámara Oficial de Comercio Islas Baleares; Confederación Española de Hoteles y Alojamientos Turísticos (CEHAT); Deloitte & Touche; Exceltur; Federación Española de Agencias de Viajes (FEAAV); Federación Española de Camping y Parques de Vacaciones; Federación Española de Hostelería (FEHR); Grupo Orizonia; Iberia; Paradores de Turismo de España. Otros actores: Instituto de Empresa (IE Business School); Mesa del Turismo; Organización Mundial del Turismo (OMT).

autónomicos [...] depende de que los partidos políticos se hayan tomado en serio, o no, el turismo. Normalmente el partido de la oposición suele ser más proclive a sentarse contigo, que el que gobierna». (sector empresarial 3).

El hecho de que otros grupos no participen en la arena parlamentaria también podría explicarse porque en dicha sede se discute pocas veces sobre turismo y, cuando se hace, se aborda desde la perspectiva económica y el punto de vista empresarial tradicional. Porque cuando esto no ha ocurrido y se ha trabajado sobre algún problema concreto, como la situación laboral de las camareras de piso en hoteles, se ha invitado también a los grupos de interés sindicales.

Todos los grupos tienen, sin embargo, una relación fluida con los medios de comunicación, que se utiliza tanto para explicar posiciones como para intentar colocar asuntos en la agenda pública o presionar a los decisores a través de la conformación de opinión pública.

Para los grupos empresariales esto es claro: «Los medios de comunicación son nuestros mayores aliados porque, al final, la sensibilidad que muestran los políticos hacia los medios es muy alta, así que se convierte en un mecanismo principal [...]. Los políticos son muy sensibles a lo que saben la portada de un diario nacional, regional o sectorial» (sector empresarial 3). Aunque reconocen que no todos tienen los mismos recursos: «La presencia en los medios de las asociaciones es muy distinta. Las grandes sí tienen estrategia para posicionarse e influir, a través de los medios, a la hora de elaborar políticas públicas» (sector empresarial 2)

Pero incluso los grupos con menos recursos tienen una estrategia propia de relación con los medios: «Hay mucha conexión, sobre todo la radio. Pero la prensa local en cambio no está muy interesada en lo que hacemos [...]» (Asambleas de Ciudadanxs 2).

Respecto al tipo de acciones que constituyen sus herramientas centrales, casi todos los grupos consultados afirman que la investigación o generación de conocimiento está entre sus objetivos básicos. Aunque con recursos y posibilidades muy distintas, muchos de los actores hacen del análisis e investigación su herramienta central; es el caso de Excetur y ITH o de algunos actores empresariales más recientes. Para ello, tratan de trabajar con rigor, desde la posición que cada uno ocupa, temas que puedan condicionar decisiones posteriores: «Preparamos informes, datos, intentamos asesorar cuando se están tramitando normativas, a veces dentro de los procedimientos está el trámite de audiencia [...]» (representantes de los trabajadores 1). Esto es especialmente relevante en los grupos de expertos, tal y como ellos mismos afirman: «Aspiramos a que nuestro trabajo sirva de inspiración a organizaciones sindicales, organizaciones sociales o administración pública, intentamos generar un discurso fundamentado en el análisis y, especialmente a nivel local en algunos lugares, sí se nos escucha, en algunos gobiernos locales, comunidades autónomas o incluso Gobiernos de América latina» (Asociación de Investigadores 1).

Otros grupos, con recursos más limitados, ponen en marcha otras actividades que les permitan estar presentes en el debate: «Impulsamos acciones de sensibilización, buscando un apoyo social para luego servir como grupos de interés y poder también apoyar otras luchas de otros colectivos, como las Quelis» (Asambleas de Ciudadanxs, 2)

El impacto de la COVID-19 en las dinámicas de trabajo de los grupos de interés turísticos

a) Diferentes grupos, distintas reacciones

Como hemos señalado, la COVID-19 exigió la reducción del contacto y con ello el cierre de fronteras, lo que conllevó la paralización del turismo. Dependiendo del tipo de turismo y de su dependencia previa de mercados emisores cuya conexión era por avión, en algunos espacios se mantuvo algo de actividad, mientras que en otros el cierre fue completo. Para los grupos de interés vinculados al sector empresarial, esto duplicó el trabajo: «La crisis intensifica mucho del trabajo, también en medios, ha sido una situación muy extraña. Los ingresos del sector turístico se han desplomado y ha habido que sumar a lo que hacíamos cosas nuevas, se ha hecho lo mismo que antes pero ahora habido que coger el teléfono para negociar cosas concretas, como los préstamos ICO» (sector empresarial 2).

Sin embargo, los pequeños grupos más vinculados al discurso crítico, que llevaban un tiempo generando una visión que contestaba la tradicional, han de concentrar su energía en necesidades que se vuelven más urgentes: «Nuestra actividad no ha sido la misma. La pandemia ha afectado también al movimiento [...]. Los colectivos trabajaban en barrios y ahora tenemos prioridades y urgencias mucho mayores, hemos estado trabajando en medios de apoyo mutuo para que hubiera alimentos en algunas casas, dejamos a un lado la reflexión sobre otras posibles funciones de los hoteles [...]. La diferencia entre lo importante y lo urgente» (Asambleas de Ciudadanxs 1).

Para estos grupos, otras necesidades se anteponen y, en esta situación, su capacidad se ve más reducida, como afirman estos dos representantes de grupos de interés: «Durante la pandemia se activaron redes de alimentos en los barrios, con el apoyo de los comercios, en eso nos hemos concentrado» (Asambleas de Ciudadanxs 3). «Cuando llegó el COVID-19 estábamos armando distintas campañas de sensibilización, muy activos. Paramos todo porque otros colectivos tenían que articular otra serie de respuestas, por ejemplo, los grupos de apoyo a personas sin empleo, necesidades de comida de los vecinos [...]» (Asambleas de Ciudadanxs, 2)

En el contexto de la crisis de la COVID-19 aparece un actor nuevo, una plataforma de profesionales turísticos, en general autónomos, que apuestan por aprovechar la crisis para introducir cambios significativos en lógica del desarrollo turístico y orientarlo hacia una sostenibilidad social y medioambiental más real, la plataforma TurismoReset. En su conformación está la idea de diferenciarse: «Los grupos de interés tradicionales no cubren las sensibilidades de todo el sector. Algunos representan a los grandes, o al alojamiento o agencias, pero el sector es mucho más. Además, siguen con un concepto de turismo que muchos no compartimos» (sector empresarial 4).

b) Percepción simbólica de la crisis

La COVID-19 y su impacto en el sector es un detonador de distintas miradas que conviven. Para algunos grupos de interés la pandemia ha dejado al descubierto algunos

de los aspectos más críticos del turismo: «Los niveles de empobrecimiento y de exclusión social en las ciudades clásicas del turismo del Mediterráneo español han sido tremendos, el nivel de dependencia genera claramente una gran vulnerabilidad que ha quedado de manifiesto» (Asociación de investigadores 1). Para otros también se abre una oportunidad que se debería aprovechar, ya que la llegada de fondos relevantes para hacer políticas turísticas puede permitir un cambio de modelo: «La crisis también supone una gran oportunidad [...]. Al turismo le va a llegar mucho dinero público que permitiría abordar algunas de las grandes políticas estructurales: reconversión de destinos del litoral, una buena política de digitalización [...] estamos ante una oportunidad: nunca el sector turístico va a tener tanto dinero para hacer cosas de interés» (sector empresarial 3).

Pero los grupos destacan, sobre todo, que esta oportunidad abre un campo de disputa política en el que quieren participar, como afirma un entrevistado: «[...] esto de que hay que reajustar el modelo hay que aterrizarlo... ¿qué significa? ¿Reducir la huella ecológica? ¿Reducir el impacto local del turismo a través del control de las viviendas de uso turístico? ¿Reducir la oferta de menor valor, que es la imagen del declive del modelo?» (sector empresarial 2). Otro representante destaca otra dimensión del debate, que les legitima: «Dependiendo del modelo turístico vamos a tener un empleo u otro, unas condiciones u otras [...] para construir ese modelo que se está reclamando, el dialogo social es clave» (representantes de los trabajadores 1).

La crisis parece que conlleva una nueva dinámica en las relaciones entre decisores y grupos de interés. Esta nueva dinámica podría apuntar a un acercamiento entre ambos: «Lo que hemos visto es que con el COVID-19 han necesitado ayuda y por tanto han estado abiertos a nuevas iniciativas. Esto es muy positivo, porque ha cambiado algo las relaciones de confianza entre las empresas locales y el ayuntamiento, ahora vienen a las reuniones con otro talante» (decisor público 2).

c) ¿Crisis institucionales?

En este contexto, los grupos han elaborado propuestas que han enviado a los decisores políticos y se quejan de la falta de respuestas, «Estamos esperando... Nosotros hemos mandado un documento al Ministerio, el compromiso es hacer lo mismo con todos los niveles de gobierno, pero el Gobierno central debería coordinar [...]» (representantes de los trabajadores 2). Aunque los responsables públicos señalan que son parciales o vagas: «Hay una queja de que no se les ha escuchado, pero las propuestas siguen sin ser concretas» (decisor público 1).

Los decisores señalan también que las acciones estarán condicionadas por un elemento externo: la lógica de gestión del Fondo Next Generation, que impactará directamente en el sector y que exige una acción en la totalidad del sector, lo que algunos grupos de interés no asumen: «Los que defienden intereses del sector son los grandes grupos económicos localizados en espacios muy determinados, los archipiélagos y el levante, que no representan para nada al sector, qué es un sector muy atomizado de microempresas familiares diseminadas en todo el territorio» (decisor público 2).

Se destaca de manera más clara la falta de representantes de la totalidad de la actividad turística: «El paraíso sería que ellos nos dijeran lo que hay que hacer y nosotros lo hiciéramos. Pero nosotros no podemos responder a demandas muy concretas. Las políticas no son pequeñas decisiones para salvar solo a algunos» (decisor público 3) y el hecho de que no existan actores que articulen los intereses en otros espacios de uso turístico: «[...] hay otra parte de cosas que suceden en el sector que no tienen representantes tan claros: el destino, los residentes, el medio ambiente, los ecosistemas naturales...» (decisor público 1).

Por su parte, los grupos de interés desconfían de la capacidad de los decisores públicos para impulsar una política turística que permita salir de la crisis mejorando el modelo: «Se ven con la necesidad de hacer y eso es positivo [...] esperamos que se produzcan cambios interesantes, pero no somos muy optimistas con los decisores turísticos, más bien confiamos en otros ámbitos públicos: cambios en el sistema de relación público-privada por imposición de Europa, cambios en una Administración encorse-tada y con canales de comunicación muy poco ágiles [...]» (sector empresarial 1).

Parece que la crisis trae un cuestionamiento de la legitimidad de todos los actores que participan en el *policy domain*: los grupos acentúan las críticas sobre las capacidades de los decisores para elaborar acciones: «Las cosas en política turística funcionaban bien cuando el sector crecía, ahora es cuando todas sus limitaciones salen» (sector empresarial 3). Pero también se duda de la eficiencia que están teniendo los grupos de interés en una etapa tan complicada: «El impacto de la COVID-19 ha puesto de manifiesto la debilidad de estas estructuras de presión para influir en la agenda política. La medida más importante que se aplicado en el sector turístico, que han sido los ERTES, no vino desde el sector turístico [...]. Igual alguien se pregunta para qué han servido estos actores» (decisor público 1).

CONCLUSIONES FINALES

El análisis del funcionamiento de los grupos de interés en el ámbito de la política turística del Gobierno central nos permite concluir que son las características del conjunto que conforman los grupos de interés y los decisores —número de actores, capacidad de innovación y resiliencia de estos, dinámicas de interacción, tipos de relaciones, etc.— las que permiten comprender mejor las capacidades y los límites que estos tienen.

Una de las principales conclusiones del análisis es que la construcción de un mapa de grupos de interés relacionados con el subsistema de política turística no es sencilla. Algunos de los actores entrevistados cumplen claramente con los rasgos que la literatura establece para aquellos conceptos de grupo de presión más restrictivos; sin embargo, si asumimos posiciones teóricas más flexibles, es posible considerar otros y enriquecer el mapa conjunto. Para analizar un sector tan transversal como el turismo y con impactos tan diversos en lo económico y lo social, resulta imprescindible asumir las definiciones más integradoras del concepto grupo de interés o perderíamos una

parte importante de lo que sucede en el conjunto del sistema de relaciones de actores dentro de la política turística.

En la arena de la política turística del Gobierno central, los actores con mayor presencia son los grupos de interés empresariales, pero estos están estructurados en diversas agrupaciones: hay muchas asociaciones o federaciones en los diferentes subsectores (alojamiento, intermediación, transporte y producto), algunas de ellas son parte de la CEOE y Exceltur concentra un grupo significativo de grandes empresas. Los decisores de política turística del Gobierno central no tienen un interlocutor claro, por lo que se relacionan parcialmente, dependiendo del asunto a trabajar.

Otra conclusión apunta a la diversidad de objetivos perseguidos por los grupos de interés. Así, si observamos el conjunto de los actores analizados es posible detectar grupos de interés que persiguen intereses amplios, como sindicatos, expertos o plataformas ciudadanas, y otros con intereses más concretos, como los grupos empresariales (Berry, 1977; Jordan *et al.*, 2004).

En general, los decisores señalan que los grupos que representan a las grandes empresas y los que articulan las demandas de algunos profesionales tienen un papel preponderante. La sobrerrepresentación de los grupos de interés ligados al sector económico en los procesos de elaboración de políticas es señalada en la literatura desde hace muchas décadas (Schattscheider, 1960). Esto se contrarresta, en alguna medida, con la entrada de las organizaciones sindicales en los procesos (Molina y Rhodes, 2002). Junto a ellos aparecen, pero sin presencia parecida, grupos de interés cuyo objetivo es incorporar al proceso de elaboración de políticas las problemáticas ligadas a las lógicas de los destinos turísticos, como la saturación o las tensiones entre turismo y residentes. Esta parte, fundamento mismo de la actividad, está fuera del proceso, al menos a nivel nacional. En cambio, los pequeños grupos ligados a la acción en un producto o tipología turística concreta son tenidos en cuenta en la elaboración de programas específicos.

Si observamos el repertorio de estrategias que los grupos despliegan, también reconocemos algunas pautas que señalan investigaciones teóricas previas. Así, por ejemplo, las demandas impulsadas por grupos de interés empresarial y sindical pueden dividirse, ya que se persiguen diversos objetivos, así que ambos grupos usan más intensamente la estrategia de contacto con los decisores de política turística, y ello con la intención de influir en el proceso de toma de decisiones de política pública. En contrapartida, los grupos que trabaja en objetivos que no pueden dividirse, como los que trabajan por la modificación del modelo turístico, propio de los grupos de expertos o de las plataformas vecinales, usan los medios de comunicación y las estrategias de protesta más intensamente (Binderkrantz y Kroyer, 2012).

Estos, grupos de expertos o de las plataformas vecinales, a los que se suman las nuevas plataformas de profesionales que han surgido en la pandemia, están más centrados en la incorporación de temas en el proceso de agenda; es decir, en lograr que nuevas perspectivas sobre el fenómeno sean tenidas en cuenta. Para ello, utilizan necesariamente y con más intensidad la arena de los medios de comunicación, tratando de ampliar la definición de los problemas que sufre y provoca el turismo, y con ello el

rango del conflicto político. En este sentido, es coherente el uso de algunos medios de protesta no violenta, como las manifestaciones o las recogidas de firmas. Esto se refuerza porque también el marco teórico señala que aquellos objetivos de naturaleza más técnica se acoplan mejor a estrategias administrativas, mientras que los objetivos de naturaleza política o discursiva se vinculan más a estrategias de acceso a los medios de comunicación y/o protesta.

La dificultad de este segundo perfil de grupos de interés para lograr un impacto ha sido señalada a nivel teórico por varios autores: los grupos que trabajan por mantener el *statu quo* —grupos de interés empresarial— tienen mejores oportunidades de conseguir sus objetivos que aquellos grupos que buscan el cambio político —expertos, plataformas ciudadanas— (Baumgartner y Lench, 2001).

La presencia de algunos grupos en comisiones parlamentarias también responde a las propuestas teóricas. En el caso del turismo, esta participación parlamentaria de los grupos empresariales y algunos expertos está ligada a la función de control: los grupos parlamentarios de la oposición invitan a actores privados como una forma de erosionar la posición del partido de Gobierno y llamar la atención sobre los problemas, convirtiéndose así las comisiones parlamentarias en escenarios de confrontación política (Chaqués-Bonafont *et al.*, 2020).

Los grupos de interés turístico no señalan una interacción intensa con partidos políticos, aunque de hecho la hay. Queremos llamar la atención sobre el hecho de que el turismo no ha sido un asunto político prominente hasta la fecha, aunque el tema de la saturación turística supuso la entrada en la agenda pública y en algunos casos en las agendas de Gobierno locales. Los grupos de interés con más recursos en términos de conocimiento técnico y experiencia tienen, en todo caso, mayor capacidad para llegar a los partidos políticos (Beyers *et al.*, 2008).

La COVID-19 provoca la primera gran crisis profunda a un sector vinculado a un fenómeno profundamente contemporáneo: el movimiento masivo y voluntario de los ciudadanos por el planeta. No imaginábamos un mundo sin turismo, pero lo hemos vivido. La acción pública en materia de turismo, que se venía desarrollando desde los años sesenta del pasado siglo con una lógica similar y unas dinámicas homogéneas, se ve obligada a ayudar al sector turístico en un momento de necesidad real, pero ha de hacerlo incorporando cambios que permitan un giro de la política turística en el medio plazo, también en su manera de relacionarse con los grupos. Todos los actores señalan que, de no hacerlo, podría llevar a una crisis institucional en el futuro en la que se ponga en duda la legitimidad de la propia intervención pública en la materia (Boin *et al.*, 2009:15).

Pero la crisis también puede arrastrar a los grupos de interés a un escenario de deslegitimación, lo que explica que los grupos empresariales hayan mantenido una posición activa y, en diferente grado, cierta capacidad de propuesta e interlocución. Otros grupos, en cambio, tuvieron que dedicarse a cuestiones más urgentes que la crisis había causado, asumiendo un menor papel en el contexto de la COVID-19.

El resultado del análisis permite ver que la crisis ha modificado el mapa de grupos que existía previamente, ha aparecido algún grupo y otros, como las plataformas

ciudadanas que tenían objetivos que superaban la actividad turística, se han redirigido a otros asuntos que han tenido mayor relevancia, como los bancos de alimentos. Al menos temporalmente. Respecto del papel que tienen y de la posición que ocupan los grupos de interés en la arena de la política turística, parece que el impacto de la crisis sanitaria les ha hecho más propositivos y se percibe una mayor movilización, especialmente en los grupos empresariales, orientada a influir en las decisiones que se produzcan en relación con el Fondo Next Generation y los programas que se deriven del mismo. Pero la crisis en el sector turístico se va diluyendo según mejora la movilidad nacional e internacional y los indicadores de reservas, empleo o financieros mejoran al mismo ritmo. La siguiente pregunta será si una vez se establezca la situación regresaremos al mapa previo de los grupos de interés en la política turística nacional o si algunas dinámicas detectadas se mantendrán en el futuro.

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ANEXO

Preguntas relacionadas con el papel de su organización en la elaboración de propuestas y acciones públicas en materia de turismo

- Su grupo tradicionalmente asesora al Gobierno en materia de turismo. ¿Al Gobierno central? ¿Son más escuchados por los gobiernos de comunidades autónomas?

- ¿Participa en algún caso su organización en la implementación de las medidas o propuestas?
- En general, ¿creen que su organización es tenida en cuenta a la hora de impulsar políticas públicas sobre el sector, aprobar normas o incentivos o poner en marcha planes de acción concretos?
- ¿En alguna ocasión han acudido al Parlamento a exponer su visión y *expertise*? ¿Fueron invitados a ello? ¿Mantienen contactos estables con la comisión parlamentaria responsable de turismo?
- ¿Qué tipo de información aporta su grupo a los decisores?

Preguntas relacionadas con otras estrategias de trabajo de la organización

- ¿Qué estrategia mantienen respecto de los medios de comunicación? ¿Con los medios especializados? ¿Con la prensa generalista? ¿Les llaman los medios para consultar su visión?

Estrategias de protesta:

- ¿Se invita a los miembros del colectivo a participar en los mecanismos abiertos de las instituciones?
- ¿Han protestado en alguna ocasión por no haber sido considerados ante una decisión que afectaba al sector?

Preguntas relacionadas con la etapa COVID-19

- ¿Cómo han actuado durante la crisis de la COVID-19? ¿Qué acciones nuevas se han puesto en marcha?

Respecto de la crisis:

- ¿Cree que esta situación va a provocar cambios profundos en el modelo turístico? ¿Cree que el modelo se va a mantener en sus dinámicas básicas?
- ¿Considera que algunos actores están enfrentando mejor la situación?

Respecto del impacto en los objetivos de la organización:

- ¿Cuáles son los objetivos de su organización en este contexto?
- Dejando a un lado las acciones de ajuste a la situación de crisis momentánea, ¿su organización está planteándose reorientar estrategias que no consideraba previamente?

- ¿Algunos de estos nuevos objetivos plantean cambios de visión profundos en su organización?
- ¿Han sido consultados respecto a la COVID-19? ¿Qué información han aportado en momento crisis?
- ¿Cómo se han comunicado estas propuestas a los poderes públicos?

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¿Qué mueve a confiar en la gobernanza colaborativa? Análisis de un programa gubernamental en el País Vasco

*What drives trust in collaborative governance?
Analysis of a governmental programme in the Basque Country*

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Resumen

La gobernanza colaborativa constituye una aspiración en el estudio y la práctica de la gestión pública. En este empeño, el recurso intangible de la confianza adquiere especial relevancia porque avanzar en la participación de distintos actores en las políticas públicas pasa por otorgar valor a la contribución que estos puedan prestar. Si bien el desarrollo de la literatura en torno a la confianza ciudadana que generan los programas de gobernanza colaborativa es muy extenso, escasean los trabajos que atienden a la confianza intraorganizacional (entre políticos y funcionarios) e interorganizacional (de estos hacia las organizaciones societarias). Este artículo explora la dinámica de la confianza entre los actores (políticos, funcionarios y ciudadanos) que participan en un programa gubernamental de gobernanza colaborativa (Etorkizuna Eraikiz, de la Diputación Foral de Guipúzcoa), centrándose en las fuentes o motores de la confianza.

Con base en la *teoría fundamentada* para el análisis temático de entrevistas en profundidad semiestructuradas con los actores del programa (políticos, funcionarios y organizaciones civiles), el artículo explora los motores de la confianza de acuerdo a una tipología que distingue fuentes formales (lo estructural o legal) de informales (lo interaccional). El análisis revela que en los espacios de relación que genera la colaboración se desarrollan unos marcos normativos

con valores compartidos que pueden indicar la existencia de una orientación típica de grupo que mueve a confiar. A partir de los resultados, se identifican una serie de desafíos para avanzar en el estudio y práctica de la gobernanza colaborativa.

Palabras clave: gobernanza colaborativa, confianza, organizaciones públicas, programa gubernamental, administración pública.

Abstract

Collaborative governance constitutes an aspiration in both the study and practice of public management. In this endeavour, trust is an intangible resource that gets of special relevance, because it is assumed that in order to foster the participation of different actors in public policies it is necessary to acknowledge the value of their contributions. While the literature on citizen trust on collaborative government programs is large, works about both intra-organizational trust (between politicians and civil servants) and inter-organizational trust (from the latter to societal organizations) are scarce. This article explores the dynamics of trust between actors (politicians, civil servants and citizens) who participate in a governmental program of collaborative governance (Etorikizuna Eraikiz, Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa), and it focuses on the sources or drivers of trust.

Based on the grounded theory for the thematic analysis of in depth semi-structured interviews with actors involved in the program (politicians, civil servants and civil organizations), the article explores the sources and drivers of trust by applying a typology that distinguishes formal sources (structures and rules) from informal ones (interactions). The analysis reveals that the spaces of interaction created by collaboration develop normative frameworks with strongly shared values that suggest the existence of some typical group orientation leading to trust. Based on these findings, some challenges are identified for the advancement of the study and practice of collaborative governance.

Keywords: collaborative governance, trust, public organizations, governmental program, public administration.

INTRODUCCIÓN

El estudio y la práctica de la gestión pública han puesto como objetivo central el compromiso ciudadano, bajo la asunción de que implicar a los públicos en lo público es vital para una sociedad floreciente (Canel y Luoma-aho, 2019; Coursey *et al.*, 2012; Delli Carpini, 2004; Fung, 2015). Se trabaja con la asunción de que una democracia es más fuerte en la medida en que sus ciudadanos coparticipan con las autoridades públicas en la toma de decisiones, por cuanto la colaboración ciudadana mejora los servicios públicos (Bowden, *et al.*, 2016; Nabatchi *et al.*, 2017).

En este empeño la variable confianza adquiere relevancia: para que haya coparticipación en la gestión pública hace falta que los distintos actores (políticos, funcionarios y ciudadanos) otorguen valor a la contribución que pueda prestar la otra parte. La

confianza constituye así un recurso intangible que estrecha las relaciones entre organizaciones públicas y públicos (Canel y Luoma-aho, 2019), y se presenta como base para la colaboración.

Si bien hay autores que abogan por matizar los límites de (des)confianza (disfuncional deseables (Oomsels *et al.*, 2019), la literatura tiende a establecer una relación positiva entre confianza e implicación ciudadana en los programas gubernamentales (Carpini *et al.*, 2004; Bovaird y Loeffler, 2012; Bovaird *et al.*, 2015). Esta relación es hipotéticamente de doble dirección, y sobre ella se realizan distintas interpretaciones: por un lado, se considera que cuando un Gobierno logra que los ciudadanos se impliquen en programas para la toma de decisiones conjuntas, la organización se hace más fiable entre sus públicos; y por otro, que los Gobiernos fiables son también los que consiguen que sus ciudadanos participen activamente en lo público. En los dos casos se enfoca la confianza en sentido finalista; es decir, atendiendo a la decisión de confiar del usuario final de los servicios públicos, el ciudadano. Pero como señalan algunos autores (Bouckaert, 2012; Klijn *et al.*, 2010), la literatura desatiende factores relevantes como la confianza que políticos y funcionarios tienen en los ciudadanos (no en vano la coparticipación implica fiarse de que estos pueden aportar algo) o la que políticos y funcionarios tienen entre sí (implicar a la sociedad exige que unos y otros se fíen mutuamente para asumir conjuntamente el desafío de otorgar a esta autoridad).

El presente artículo explora la dinámica de la confianza en un programa gubernamental de gobernanza colaborativa con apoyo en dos asunciones. Por un lado, para avanzar en la gobernanza colaborativa hace falta conocer cómo se desarrolla la confianza entre las organizaciones que participan, así como dentro de las mismas; es decir, la confianza interorganizacional e intraorganizacional (Bouckaert, 2012); más específicamente, y aplicado al caso objeto de esta investigación, la confianza no solo de los ciudadanos en lo político y público, sino también entre políticos y técnicos y la de estos hacia las organizaciones societarias a las que quieren implicar. En segundo lugar, una vía para conocer esa compleja dinámica de confianza consiste en explorar las fuentes de esta; es decir, en buscar lo que está en el origen de la decisión de confiar. Para ello, se aplica el modelo de Oomsels y Bouckaert (2014) al programa gubernamental de compromiso cívico Etorikizuna Eraikiz (construyendo el futuro) llevado a cabo por la Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa (España): explora las evaluaciones que los políticos, funcionarios y entidades civiles implicadas hacen, y analiza qué es lo que movió la decisión de confiar para implicarse en este programa.

Es preciso señalar que esta investigación es parte de un análisis más amplio en torno a la dinámica de la (des)confianza en un programa de gobernanza colaborativa. Así, en primer lugar esta investigación entiende que la confianza y la desconfianza son dos conceptos y realidades que, aunque están relacionadas, son constructos diferentes, y por tanto han de evaluarse separadamente (Oomsels, 2016). El diseño metodológico permitió registrar tanto las fuentes de confianza como las de la desconfianza, y con ello analizar la dinámica de la (des)confianza. En segundo lugar, esta investigación entiende que la dinámica de la (des)confianza sigue un proceso acumulativo que se desarrolla en el tiempo. El diseño metodológico incluye dos olas de recolección de datos, lo que

permite hacer constar la (des)confianza en dos momentos: al inicio del proyecto —tres años después de su lanzamiento en 2016, cuando los actores ya pudieron identificar una decisión de (des)confiar en el mismo—, y en su consolidación —en 2022, seis años después de su lanzamiento, es decir, cuando el proyecto ha podido arrojar datos sólidos sobre el mantenimiento de la (des)confianza—. Esta segunda ola de recogida de datos está actualmente en curso, por lo que el presente artículo es el análisis de la decisión de confiar; es decir, de la dinámica de la confianza en la primera fase del proyecto.

La estructura del resto del artículo es la siguiente: en primer lugar se exponen los conceptos clave en los que se apoyan los presupuestos del modelo. Seguidamente se describen las características del modelo de exploración de las fuentes de confianza. A continuación, se exponen los resultados obtenidos de las evaluaciones por parte de los actores con información obtenida de entrevistas en profundidad. Finalmente, se presentan las conclusiones con algunas implicaciones para la investigación sobre la relación entre la confianza y la gobernanza colaborativa.

HACIA UNA GOBERNANZA COLABORATIVA

La gobernanza colaborativa se inserta en los intentos actuales de buscar y tener en cuenta la sabiduría colectiva para la toma de decisiones públicas. Bajo distintas denominaciones, las Administraciones públicas están adoptando acciones con el fin de escuchar a la sociedad y estimular su participación: «ciudadanía colaborativa» (Smith, 2010), «compromiso comunitario» (Head, 2008), «gestión pública enfocada al ciudadano» (Cooper, 2005), «coproducción» (Bovaird y Loeffler, 2010, 2012; Brandsen y Honingh 2015; Bovaird *et al.*, 2015) y «esfuerzos para implicar al ciudadano» (Yang y Callahan, 2005, 2007; Yang y Pandey, 2011). Todos estos términos tienen en el horizonte lograr una implicación de la sociedad para la coparticipación en las decisiones públicas, de forma que se pueda establecer una colaboración entre los ciudadanos y quienes tienen responsabilidad de gobierno (Batory y Svensson, 2019; Bianchi *et al.*, 2021).

De manera más específica, la «gobernanza colaborativa» trata de

una situación en la que los administradores públicos interactúan con el público, pero no como expertos que poseen información privilegiada y las respuestas correctas, sino como personas responsables de estimular procesos colectivos de deliberación y discusión con los que identificar prioridades, posibles líneas de actuación, así como la mejor manera de implementarlos sobre la base de las fortalezas que ya existen en las comunidades y en los individuos (Sirianni, 2010: 240).

Gestionar lo público buscando la colaboración tiene importantes implicaciones operativas: lleva consigo la transformación de las estructuras con el fin de facilitar decisiones y políticas más transversales (por ejemplo, se crean unidades que superan las divisiones departamentales tradicionales de la Administración pública); exige recabar

el *feedback* de los públicos de manera más sistemática (Bourgon, 2011; Brandsen *et al.*, 2018); requiere la incorporación de nuevas habilidades y competencias en los gestores públicos (tanto políticos como técnicos) con las que dialogar, negociar y llegar a consensos (Thomas, 2013; Brandsen *et al.*, 2018), y lleva consigo cambios en la manera de interactuar y relacionarse (Canel y Luoma-aho 2019; Bowden *et al.*, 2016; Crosby *et al.*, 2017). En definitiva, en la medida en que los *programas* gubernamentales de gobernanza colaborativa suponen el restablecimiento de relaciones que pongan en igualdad de condiciones a públicos y organizaciones públicas, se revolucionan las relaciones de poder y, con ello, se desafía la confianza entre los actores implicados.

GOBERNANZA COLABORATIVA Y CONFIANZA INTER/INTRA ORGANIZACIONAL

Es ingente la literatura sobre confianza, por lo que aquí simplemente nos limitaremos a recoger algunos factores o rasgos del fenómeno de (des)confiar que inciden en el planteamiento metodológico con el que en esta investigación se observa lo que mueve a confiar en quienes participan en proyectos de gobernanza colaborativa. Concretamente, la revisión de la literatura sobre confianza en el sector público permite extraer las siguientes características básicas sobre el fenómeno de la confianza. Se trata de un juicio que se formula en un contexto de interdependencia y contingencia; es decir, constituye una apuesta por algo en una situación de incertidumbre (Sztompka, 1999: 25). Tiene una dimensión temporal: hace referencia al pasado (es el juicio acumulado de lo que ha realizado la otra parte hasta el momento) y al futuro (implica asunción de riesgo) (Fukuyama, 1995; Bouckaert y Van de Walle, 2001). Por último, y en consecuencia, confiar lleva consigo la asunción de vulnerabilidad: si bien se apoya en que se ha experimentado que en situaciones similares y con actores también similares se han cumplido las expectativas positivas (lo que uno pensaba que podía pasar) (Quandt, 2012: 8-9), esperar requiere ceder el control (Oomsels y Bouckaert, 2014). Por eso, la confianza «comprende el reconocimiento de la propia vulnerabilidad acerca de las expectativas positivas sobre las intenciones y conductas de los demás» (Rousseau *et al.*, 1998: 395).

La confianza, por tanto, consiste —y es este un rasgo esencial que estará presente en el diseño metodológico de este trabajo para la observación empírica— en un «salto al vacío» en el que se aplaza el juicio ante la incertidumbre y vulnerabilidad que son irreductibles (Van de Walle y Six, 2014: 159). Confiar incluye la aceptación de la propia vulnerabilidad con la voluntad de arriesgar (Kim, 2005: 261). Aplicado al caso objeto de estudio, un político dejará que una organización societaria determine su decisión política solo si reconoce que necesita de esa aportación, si la considera válida y si, en consecuencia, asume el riesgo de las posibles equivocaciones.

El planteamiento de Bouckaert (2012) sobre el estudio de la confianza en el sector público es de utilidad para analizar el proceso de (des)confiar en un programa gubernamental de gobernanza colaborativa. Su apuesta central es que el análisis del

funcionamiento de la confianza quedaría incompleto si solo se atendiera a los movimientos de confianza que se puedan producir en los ciudadanos. Hace falta, considera, incorporar el análisis de la confianza en sentido inverso (la que tiene el Gobierno y el sector público en los ciudadanos y organizaciones societarias), así como de la que tienen entre sí las organizaciones públicas (la interorganizacional) o dentro de la misma organización (la intraorganizacional).

Atender solo a la confianza ciudadana conlleva el riesgo de desatender a una parte importante de la realidad, y así ha sido señalado en diversos estudios sobre la (des)confianza como causa y consecuencia de los programas gubernamentales de participación. Por ejemplo, algunas investigaciones han mostrado que no es la coproducción como tal la que determina la (des)confianza, sino la forma en cómo los gestores públicos la organizan (Fledderus, 2015). También se ha observado que la causa de un no incremento de confianza puede estar en el escepticismo de los propios gestores públicos, que consideran que esos programas proporcionan servicios de peor calidad y además con un coste más elevado (Bovaird y Loeffler, 2012: 1137). Otros autores han planteado que son la integridad de los funcionarios (proyectada en una actitud auténtica a la hora de desear incorporar la opinión ciudadana mediante procesos de escucha) y los buenos resultados de gestión lo que realmente incrementa la propensión de los ciudadanos a confiar (Wang y Wan Wart, 2007; Yang y Pandey, 2011). También se ha concluido que la sospecha o lejanía ciudadana hacia estos programas puede derivar de la impresión de que estos no responden más que a intereses electoralistas (Sanders y Canel, 2015), o que incrementar la confianza ciudadana pasa por una mayor confianza de los gestores públicos en las organizaciones societarias a las que quieren implicar (Barandiarán *et al.*, 2022). Teniendo en cuenta lo anterior, la presente investigación trata de cubrir la laguna identificada atendiendo no solo a la confianza que depositan los ciudadanos, sino también a la de los políticos y los funcionarios en un programa de gobernanza colaborativa.

LA GOBERNANZA COLABORATIVA DE ETORKIZUNA ERAIKIZ

La Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa (autoridad pública dentro de la Comunidad Autónoma Vasca, capital San Sebastián)¹, inició en el año 2016 la construcción de un modelo de gobernanza abierta y colaborativa, que consiste en una nueva dinámica de cooperación junto con otros muchos actores del territorio, con el fin de elaborar la

1. Es preciso mencionar que la Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa es una entidad que, en virtud de los fueros y como territorio histórico que es, goza de mayor autonomía que las diputaciones provinciales para las infraestructuras y políticas de bienestar, y puede recaudar impuestos a través de una hacienda propia. Con un presupuesto total de 5000 millones de euros, goza de una amplia estructura de gobierno: nueve departamentos, entre los que caben mencionar: Políticas Sociales; Infraestructuras Viarias; Cultura, Turismo, Juventud y Deportes; Gobernanza y Comunicación con la Sociedad; Medio Ambiente y Obras Hidráulicas; Hacienda y Finanzas.

agenda pública compartiendo sus contenidos, objetivos y prioridades. Este modelo se materializó en Etorikizuna Eraikiz (construyendo el futuro). Se trata de un plan o programa que involucra a todas las áreas de gobierno (nueve departamentos), con un horizonte de diez años (hasta 2026), por lo que continúa vigente en el momento de publicación de este artículo.

Entre las principales acciones que se llevan a cabo cabe mencionar las siguientes: una fase inicial de deliberación de un año de duración en la que las organizaciones civiles (universidades, compañías, pymes, organizaciones no gubernamentales y asociaciones ciudadanas) participaron junto con las autoridades públicas en: la definición de las prioridades; una fase continuada de coexperimentación en la que tanto la Diputación como entidades de investigación evalúan los proyectos (veintisiete en el momento de realización del trabajo de campo) para determinar cuáles deberían formar parte más estable de las políticas públicas; la presencia de organizaciones civiles en el comité directivo de los llamados «centros de referencia» establecidos (ocho en el momento de realización del estudio de campo) para trabajar en las áreas identificadas conjuntamente como áreas de innovación social; la deliberación continuada en un *think tank* en el que tanto las autoridades públicas como ochenta organizaciones civiles trabajan en la definición de las políticas públicas y, finalmente, la recopilación continuada del *feedback* ciudadano sobre las políticas pública mediante barómetros de opinión pública trimestrales.

En el momento de llevar a cabo el estudio de campo, Etorikizuna Eraikiz estaba en su tercer año de implementación (2018), en el que ya se habían puesto en marcha cuarenta proyectos, y más de ciento sesenta organizaciones estaban implicadas tanto en la definición de la agenda como en el diseño e implementación de políticas públicas en los ámbitos del empleo, cuidado de mayores, energía, movilidad, inteligencia artificial, inmigración, educación, igualdad social y cultura. Pero quedaban seis meses para las elecciones (previstas para mayo de 2019), por lo que cabía preguntarse por la permanencia del programa si el Gobierno cambiaba de color político.

Investigaciones precedentes sobre este programa han evidenciado que su implementación requiere de cambios importantes en las estructuras y procedimientos de la gobernanza (Canel *et al.*, 2020), tales como el establecimiento de unidades o prácticas de presupuestación más transversales. Estos cambios afectan las comunicaciones e interacciones que se dan entre los distintos actores que sus proyectos ponen en juego (Canel *et al.*, 2022), y cuando estos programas se acompañan de acciones de aprendizaje colaborativo para escuchar a la sociedad, los políticos se hacen más capaces de avanzar en la gobernanza colaborativa al incrementar su confianza en el alcance e impacto transformacional del programa y, como consecuencia, se incrementa el deseo de compartir el poder y autoridad con la sociedad (Murphy *et al.*, 2020; Barandiarán *et al.*, 2022).

Pero, ¿qué hay en el origen de la decisión de suspender la vulnerabilidad que supone ceder y compartir la autoridad en un programa de gobernanza colaborativa? Es decir, ¿a qué se debe la confianza en la gobernanza colaborativa, cuando la hay? Esto es lo que se pretende analizar en la presente investigación.

OBJETIVO, PLANTEAMIENTO Y METODOLOGÍA

Este artículo pretende explorar cuáles son las fuentes de confianza de los actores que participan en el programa gubernamental de gobernanza colaborativa Etorkizuna Eraikiz. Lo hace aplicando el modelo de análisis de Oomsels y Bouckaert (Oomsels y Bouckaert, 2014), que entiende que las evaluaciones que los actores hacen de sus interacciones con el resto de actores proporcionan la información necesaria para analizar de dónde procede el estímulo para confiar o desconfiar en la otra parte (Oomsels *et al.*, 2019) a la hora de acometer un programa gubernamental de gobernanza colaborativa. Se asume que la confianza o desconfianza se constituyen sobre la base de evaluaciones de confianza subjetivas y son afectadas por las consideraciones interpersonales e interorganizacionales (Oomsels y Bouckaert, 2014).

Además de un análisis documental, para el presente trabajo se llevaron a cabo veintiuna entrevistas en profundidad semiestructuradas con tres cargos políticos, cinco funcionarios y trece representantes de organizaciones civiles. En cuanto al criterio de selección, hay que decir que el equipo político de gobierno está formado por el líder (el diputado general) y ocho diputados (son los directores de departamentos, lo equivalente a ministros en el nivel de Gobierno central). Se escogieron las tres personas más relevantes para el programa; es decir, quienes lo idearon, lanzaron y habían sido los principales responsables de su implementación en el momento del estudio de campo (de estas tres personas una es el diputado general y otra el director de Etorkizuna Eraikiz). En cuanto a los funcionarios, la Diputación cuenta con dos mil, de los que había sesenta más directamente en el proyecto involucrados en el momento del estudio de campo. Por último, el número de organizaciones civiles que el programa había movilizado (es decir, involucrado directa o indirectamente por la convocatoria de proyectos) en el momento del estudio de campo es de ciento sesenta. De ellas, aproximadamente cuarenta habían participado desde el comienzo (y, por tanto, podían ser consideradas objeto de la presente investigación) y se logró entrevistar a casi un tercio de las mismas.

La estructura de la entrevista es consecuente con el objetivo de explorar las fuentes de confianza. Así, se preguntó a los entrevistados por la decisión inicial de enrolarse en el programa (¿Qué le hizo confiar en el proyecto?), expectativas (¿Qué esperaba?), motivaciones para confiar (¿Cuál ha sido el principal motor de su confianza? ¿Qué le lleva a seguir participando?), obstáculos (¿Cuáles fueron/son los principales obstáculos para confiar?), evaluación (¿Cómo valora la participación? ¿Se han cumplido las expectativas? ¿Qué le ha aportado?), confianza en los otros actores (políticos, funcionarios, organizaciones societarias), y expectativas de futuro (¿Qué cree que pasará con el programa después de las elecciones?).

Las entrevistas fueron transcritas (y traducidas al castellano las cuatro que se realizaron en euskera), y para su análisis cualitativo se utilizó el planteamiento de la *grounded theory* o teoría fundamentada (es decir, teoría que se elabora no desde la especulación científica, sino a partir de lo que sucede en la realidad). Se optó por este

enfoque porque otorga espacio para interpretar las experiencias «reales» en sus contextos locales (Lansisalmi *et al.*, 2004: 253), y facilita la comprensión de cuestiones que requieren que los investigadores vayan más allá de la teoría y apliquen una mirada fresca a las ideas que emergen de los datos recopilados (Glaser y Strauss, 1967). A partir de la información facilitada por las personas entrevistadas, aquí se trataba de extraer lo que les había llevado a confiar en un programa de gobierno. Teniendo esto en cuenta, la teoría fundamentada trata, sobre todo, de identificar cuáles son las categorías comunes que se encuentran en las interacciones diarias y de explicar la actividad cotidiana, dejando que de ella emerja una explicación o teoría (Stacks, 2016: 180), más que facilitar la exploración de las relaciones abstractas entre los conceptos y constructos.

En la operacionalización del análisis se siguieron los criterios sugeridos por la literatura sobre los niveles de codificación (Glasser y Strauss, 1967; Braun y Clarke, 2012; Lúquez y Fernández, 2016). En primer lugar, se leyeron y releeron varias veces los datos cualitativos con el fin de realizar una codificación abierta; es decir, de registrar en sentido amplio las ideas y conceptos emergentes. De la codificación abierta se extrajo una relación de 788 anotaciones o unidades de análisis (222 de políticos, 189 de funcionarios y 377 de organizaciones civiles). Sobre ellas se identificaron los temas con apoyo en la recurrencia y repetición: no se trata de un cómputo cuantitativo, sino de encontrar las ideas clave que, porque aparecen de forma continuada, dan pistas sobre qué es lo que está ocurriendo. Por último, se utilizó la codificación axial, que es la que surge de la comparación e integración de ideas y conceptos en un orden más elevado: se establecen conexiones entre categorías y se colapsan estas con dominios conceptuales superpuestos. Por ejemplo, la codificación abierta de las entrevistas con funcionarios arrojó 47 anotaciones referidas a las relaciones personales como fuentes de confianza, sobre las cuales se identificó que son «conceptos» (en términos de la teoría fundamentada) recurrentes el sentirse a gusto, recibir *feedback* positivo y comprobar que se tiene en cuenta la propia opinión; de la codificación axial se extrajo que «sentirse reconocido» es un eje que define lo que de las relaciones mueve a confiar.

Pero en esta investigación se siguió también a Lansisalmi *et al.* (2004), al usar una aproximación que combina en la teoría fundamentada la apertura al contexto (la codificación abierta mencionada, que es abierta porque registra todos los matices del contexto) con la determinación *a priori* de conceptos (*id.*) (se proyecta sobre la codificación abierta una serie de conceptos o categorías prefijadas). Esta combinación proporciona una interpretación de experiencias reales (en este caso, las narraciones sobre la decisión de confiar en Etorikizuna Eraikiz), «como también unos medios sistemáticos para analizar eficientemente grandes cantidades de datos cualitativos desestructurados» (Lansisalmi *et al.*, 2004: 253). De la revisión de la literatura se extrajo una tipología de fuentes de confianza que sirvió como guía para sistematizar la información desestructura de los datos cualitativos que son las entrevistas. En el siguiente epígrafe se describe la tipología y se presenta la matriz que se utilizó para el análisis.

LAS FUENTES DE (DES)CONFIANZA EN EL MODELO DE OOMSELS Y BOUCKAERT

El modelo que se aplica en esta investigación está como tal explícitamente descrito en Oomsels y Bouckaert (2014) e implementado en trabajos posteriores (Oomsels, 2016; Oomsels *et al.*, 2019). El modelo entiende que el proceso de (des)confiar pasa por tres fases (estos autores hablan de dimensiones) que son: la percepción de fiabilidad de la otra parte, la decisión de suspender la vulnerabilidad y, en último término y como consecuencia, la asunción de conductas arriesgadas (Oomsels y Bouckaert, 2014). El modelo explora el avance en el proceso de (des)confianza atendiendo al origen o fuente de confianza, y los autores proponen una tipología que clasifica las fuentes por los niveles en los que estas pueden operar: nivel macro, meso y micro.

En un nivel macro, se examina si las instituciones pueden actuar como fuente estableciendo puentes entre actores que no se conocen entre sí. Estas características institucionales abarcan las interacciones interorganizacionales concretas que se producen, y lo hacen estableciendo un «mundo en común» (en el ejemplo, un decreto gubernamental que establece el programa Etorikizuna Eraikiz, con su organigrama, estructura y recursos viene a dar seguridad a los actores que se involucren). Son fuentes institucionales formales las *reglas* (por ejemplo, un decreto de participación ciudadana pone en juego la colaboración de actores que habitualmente no se relacionan) y los *roles* (por ejemplo, el nombramiento de un consejo asesor que asigna un papel a un académico). Estas reglas, dicen los autores, generan un isomorfismo coercitivo, ejercen presión por cuanto obligan a obedecer y otorgan legitimación únicamente a quien obedece; una confianza basada en las reglas es la que combate la incertidumbre con la existencia de esa presión.

Son fuentes institucionales informales las *rutinas organizacionales*, que pueden generar confianza porque implican una actitud que da por supuesta la confianza mutua (por ejemplo, una comisión interdepartamental establece la rutina de reuniones semanales para intercambiar información y tomar decisiones). La manera en cómo estas rutinas afectan es dando por sentada una actitud de confianza mutua. Están también entre estas fuentes informales los *marcos normativos* percibidos, que son las consideraciones sobre el «deber ser» de las cosas. Por ejemplo, «hay que escuchar a la sociedad» puede convertirse en una orientación de grupo que se hace típica hasta el punto de ejercer presión en la decisión de confiar (se confía en la bondad de escuchar porque nadie en la institución se atreve a pensar lo contrario). Establecen una «cultura de confiabilidad» (Sztompka, 1998) organizacional.

Las fuentes que pueden operar en un nivel meso tienen que ver con la familiaridad, información, características y dinámicas que derivan de las interacciones. Los autores diferencian el cálculo racional de la identificación afectiva. Quien confía por cálculo lo hace por pragmatismo, porque sopesa el coste-beneficio que lleva consigo implicarse en interacciones de cierta asimetría y en las que no hay certidumbre porque no se cuenta con toda la información. Es, por ejemplo, el tipo de fuente que mueve a la compañía a invertir tiempo y recursos en el proyecto porque, aunque le falte información del proyecto global, calcula que participar le dará acceso a contactos en el Gobierno. Aquí

la confianza descansa en la utilidad, así como en la disponibilidad de información creíble sobre el actor en quien hay que poner la confianza.

La confianza basada en la relación es la que logra obtener información a través del conocimiento personal (por ejemplo, el funcionario que confía porque experimenta que el político está auténticamente dispuesto a compartir la autoridad con la sociedad y lo ve anteponer el beneficio del programa al rédito electoral), de la reputación de la organización (por ejemplo, las organizaciones societarias confían porque ven que la organización tiene trayectoria de profesionalidad) o de la propia institución (por ejemplo, auditorías o informes con los resultados de los proyectos). Mientras que el cálculo es más cognitivo (se razona y computa), la relación es más emocional. Las relaciones se apoyan en interacciones repetidas en las que se experimenta un cuidado y preocupación mutuas, y de las que derivan vínculos emocionales.

Por último, en un nivel micro operan las predisposiciones personales, que representan cuál es la tendencia habitual a (des)confiar independientemente de otros factores (Frazier *et al.*, 2013). Aparecen en los rasgos psicológicos, temperamentales o profesionales de los individuos. Por ejemplo, puede operar en los funcionarios que participan en los proyectos de Etorikizuna Eraikiz su conciencia de servicio público («hay que participar para servir a los ciudadanos»).

El análisis de las fuentes proporcionará información sobre la naturaleza de la (des)confianza con la que los distintos actores abordan la incertidumbre que lleva consigo implementar un programa de gobernanza colaborativa. Más concretamente para el presente trabajo, en el umbral de unas elecciones (las entrevistas, como se ha dicho, se llevaron a cabo dentro de los seis meses previos) reinaba la incertidumbre ante la posibilidad de que un cambio de partido en el Gobierno supusiera el final del proyecto y abortara procesos de transformación en el que los distintos actores habían puesto su confianza.

El análisis ayudará a identificar de qué manera cada tipo de fuente activa el avance en el proceso de (des)confiar. Se podrá dibujar entonces el «mapa intencional de la confianza», es decir, hasta qué punto políticos y funcionarios estaban dispuestos a otorgar margen de confianza al programa Etorikizuna Eraikiz y, por tanto, a conceder autoridad a la sociedad a la que querían involucrar; y hasta qué punto la sociedad (representada en las organizaciones civiles) estaba dispuesta a compartir recursos con la Diputación para abordar los problemas públicos aún a pesar de la incertidumbre sobre la estabilidad del proyecto ante un cambio electoral. Así, por ejemplo, una confianza más apoyada predominantemente en las reglas denotará una cierta debilidad, pues no basta la fuerza coercitiva de los contratos y de las multas para atravesar la incertidumbre que es propia de la innovación de la gobernanza colaborativa (Klijn *et al.*, 2010); o, por ejemplo, la información que el análisis arroje sobre el marco normativo ayudará a comprender hasta qué punto una «cultura de confiabilidad» (Stzompka, 1998) actúa como orientación típica de grupo que ejerce presión sobre la decisión individual de confiar. En definitiva, las relaciones y los marcos normativos se presentan como motor de confianza más fuerte y estable que las reglas, pues «la incertidumbre no se puede combatir con leyes y contratos» (Klijn *et al.*, 2010, 3), sino que

TABLA 1.
MATRIZ PARA BUSCAR LAS FUENTES DE LA CONFIANZA

Punto de partida	Contextos de incertidumbre y riesgo: la confianza supone aceptar vulnerabilidad y dar un salto en el vacío		
Niveles	Macro: fuentes institucionales	Meso: interacciones	
Qué son	Formales	Informales	
Características institucionales que abarcan/enmarcan las interacciones		Conexiones entre actores, repetidas y acumuladas, y en las que hay un intercambio de información	
Formales		Informales	
Marco normativo		Cálculo	
Rutinas organizacionales		Relaciones	
Roles		Predisposiciones	
Reglas	Asunciones sobre la profesión, procesos formativos, rendición de cuentas en el ejercicio de la función		
Pistas/señales para identificarlas en el análisis	Leyes Normas Estructuras Organigramas Obediencia Obligatoriedad	Prácticas habituales Pautas Guías Tradiciones	Percepciones sobre el deber ser Consideraciones compartidas Orientación típica de grupo Identificación de valores
		Constatación beneficio Análisis coste/beneficio Pragmatismo Utilidad Información cognitiva	Identificación afectiva Vínculos emocionales Cuidado mutuo Preocupación mutua Interés mutuo Familiaridad personal e histórica
			Trayectoria personal Características personales Tendencia habitual
			Determinan la confianza independientemente de las características contextuales o interaccionales
Relación con la confianza	Se confía porque obligan a la otra parte a comportarse de una determinada manera	Se confía guiándose por el ejemplo, la imitación, la orientación típica de grupo. Cuando hay estas fuentes es que se da por sentada una actitud de confianza mutua.	Se confía por una sintonía emocional personal con la otra parte
	Crean puentes entre actores que se desconocen estableciendo un mundo en común	Las interacciones proporcionan información con la que se afronta la incertidumbre que se tiene sobre cómo se comportará la otra parte	Determinan la confianza independientemente de las características contextuales o interaccionales

Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de Oomsels y Bouckaert (2014).

necesita una asimilada cultura de colaboración y del compartir. ¿Hay señales de tal cultura entre los actores de Etorikizuna Eraikiz?

Con apoyo en la revisión de la literatura presentada hasta aquí, se trata de dar respuesta a la siguiente pregunta de investigación:

PII: ¿Qué tipo de fuentes se muestran como predominantes a la hora de avanzar en el proceso de confiar para implicarse en el programa de gobernanza colaborativa?

La tabla 1 representa el esquema que deriva del modelo de Oomsels y Bouckaert, que será aplicado en el análisis de los datos cualitativos. La tabla incluye la tipología de fuentes, y para cada tipo recoge pistas o señales que si aparecen en los datos cualitativos —las entrevistas—, pueden ayudar a clasificar lo que movió al actor a confiar en el programa o plan de gobierno de gobernanza colaborativa; la parte inferior de la tabla indica qué nos dice sobre la confianza cada tipo de fuente.

Este modelo de análisis de las fuentes de (des)confianza permite explorar las relaciones interpersonales; es decir, entre los distintos tipos de actores (en este caso, político, funcional y sociedad civil); explorar relaciones intraorganizacionales (entre los departamentos de una organización); desagregar las diferentes fases del proceso de la confianza (la perceptual, la actitudinal y la conductual); clasificar las fuentes no solo por niveles (macro, meso y micro), sino que también permite otras clasificaciones como la que distingue las formales de las informales, o el cálculo racional de la vinculación emocional y, finalmente, todo esto lo permite tanto para la confianza como para la desconfianza. De todas estas posibilidades se escogió para el presente artículo el análisis de las fuentes de confianza.

RESULTADOS Y DISCUSIÓN

¿Qué mueve a confiar en un proyecto gubernamental de gobernanza colaborativa? De manera más específica, y siguiendo los términos en los que se redactó la pregunta de investigación, se pretende responder a lo siguiente: *¿Qué tipo de fuentes se muestran como predominantes a la hora de avanzar en el proceso de confiar para implicarse en el programa de gobernanza colaborativa?*

La exposición de los resultados requiere la siguiente aclaración inicial: la metodología empleada es la de análisis cualitativo temático; debido a eso, lo que se presenta no es un cómputo cuantitativo, sino el resultado de análisis de recurrencia en datos cualitativos. Pero se recuerda también que el enfoque de análisis combina la codificación abierta —qué dicen los datos— con la guía de categorías sugeridas por la revisión de la literatura —en este caso los tipos de fuentes—. En este sentido, si bien el grueso del análisis se apoya en la recurrencia cualitativa, algunas afirmaciones generales referidas al tipo de fuente —sobre todo las del siguiente epígrafe— se apoyan en números.

Predominio de las interacciones y de lo informal

En términos generales, el análisis para los distintos actores permite afirmar que, desde la perspectiva de los niveles, en las interacciones (nivel meso) hay más fuente de confianza que en lo institucional (nivel macro) y lo individual (nivel micro), nivel este último que apenas se menciona. Hay que decir que tal cosa no se cumple para los políticos, pero porque en ellos está muy por encima el marco normativo, desequilibrando con ello el peso de las fuentes institucionales. La tabla 2 recoge los datos.

TABLA 2.
TIPOS DE FUENTES DE LA CONFIANZA. TOTAL MENCIONES

	Políticos	Funcionarios	Organizaciones civiles
Reglas	14	8	24
Roles	12	29	18
Rutinas	23	8	7
Marco normativo	118	40	45
Total rasgos institucionales	167	85	94
Cálculo	39	49	128
Relaciones	16	47	133
Total interacciones	55	96	261
Predisposiciones personales	0	8	22
Total predisposiciones personales	0	8	22

Fuente: elaboración propia.

Se aprecia, además, una predominancia de fuentes informales sobre las formales. Los actores muy rara vez mencionan reglas o estructuras ante preguntas sobre lo que les llevó a confiar en el proyecto o a mantenerse en el mismo, mientras que son más frecuentes las referencias a las rutinas y al marco normativo.

Respecto a los *roles*, cabe afirmar que todos comparten la atribución a la organización (la Diputación) del rol de liderazgo, y en unos términos algo similares. Así, por ejemplo, uno de los políticos entrevistados afirma: «Tiene que haber un liderazgo público para impulsar una idea como esta». Entre los funcionarios son frecuentes categorizaciones de la Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa como «ente aglutinador», cuyo papel es «canalizar, conectar, impulsar», y que ha demostrado tener «importante capacidad de convocatoria». Este reconocimiento del papel del liderazgo está también en varias afirmaciones de las organizaciones civiles, entre las que se destaca la siguiente: «Lo mismo que en una empresa el liderazgo es clave, los políticos tienen un liderazgo clave en este proyecto».

La importancia de las relaciones

El análisis en el nivel meso manifiesta que la relación personal (con su consecuente vinculación afectiva, emocional o de familiaridad) es una fuente importante de confianza. ¿Qué aspectos relacionales son los que más han podido estar en la base de la confianza? La tabla 3 representa los códigos semánticos más recurrentes. Lo que aparece en la tabla no son extractos de las entrevistas, sino la síntesis que deriva del análisis de recurrencia.

TABLA 3.

LAS RELACIONES COMO FUENTE DE CONFIANZA

Políticos	Funcionarios	Organizaciones Civiles
Se constata que hay conocimiento de la sociedad a la que se quiere implicar, que se califica de: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidaria • Con capital social 	Sentirse escuchado.	Sentirse escuchado.
	Sentirse reconocido.	Sentirse reconocido.
	Sentirse tratado con equidad.	Sentirse tratado con equidad.
	Sentirse confiado.	No sentirse tratado instrumentalmente.
	Sentirse respaldado políticamente.	Experiencia de comprensión mutua.
	Sentirse parte de un proyecto.	Experiencia de relación con líderes y funcionarios que creen en el proyecto.
	Experiencia de relación con líderes que creen en el proyecto.	Constatación de intereses compartidos.
	Satisfacción al trabajar en equipo.	Satisfacción al trabajar conjuntamente.
	Satisfacción de problemas compartidos.	Experiencia de apertura de la DFG a la escucha.
		Experiencia de relaciones fluidas con los gestores públicos.
	Constatación de relaciones integradas entre políticos y funcionarios.	

Fuente: elaboración propia

Lo más recurrente en los políticos en el nivel de las relaciones es la referencia a una familiaridad histórica con una sociedad que consideran solidaria y con capital social. El siguiente extracto es representativo del discurso de los políticos: «En Guipúzcoa la sociedad organizada está acostumbrada a trabajar con la Administración pública en las políticas públicas. Tiene una historia de colaboración. Lo que hacemos con Etorikizuna es profundizar en esa colaboración».

Las relaciones como fuente de confianza es muy recurrente entre funcionarios. Se menciona: la satisfacción de sentirse escuchado/a y reconocido, tratado con equidad y confiado. Un extracto ilustrativo es: «Al final necesitas ver que lo que dices ha servido para algo que, aunque no determine la decisión última, se ha tenido en cuenta». Como

era de esperar, en los funcionarios predominan aquellas experiencias asociadas al respaldo político («tiene que haber ahí personas que crean y que generen confianza, que te vayan creyendo»), y a la colaboración interna: sentirse parte de un proyecto, con satisfacción por trabajar en equipo («se ha puesto de manifiesto que yendo en conjunto somos mejores y más eficientes», dice uno; «para mí es bueno ver que en este proyecto todos los departamentos de la Diputación están trabajando juntos como un equipo», dice otro).

En las organizaciones civiles son también recurrentes las respuestas que apuntan a la importancia de la relación. «Al principio el nivel de confianza era muy bajo —dice una de las entrevistadas—. Pero una vez que comenzamos a trabajar, quedó claro que ambas partes estaban interesadas en trabajar juntas, y la confianza se afianzó y se instaló». También en éstas aparece la idea de sentirse escuchado, reconocido, pero además no tratado instrumentalmente y con experiencia de comprensión mutua: «He visto que verdaderamente nos han sabido entender, han sabido asumir la realidad, y nosotros hemos sabido asumir las dificultades que hay a lo largo de los años».

Tanto para funcionarios como para organizaciones civiles resulta relevante la experiencia de relación con líderes que creen fuertemente en el proyecto: «Al principio dudas, pero luego te das cuenta de que también el equipo de gobierno se cree el tema», dice una funcionaria; «[me ha dado] la sensación de buena sintonía [...], de que [los políticos] se lo estaban creyendo, y haciendo que todos fuéramos hacia un proyecto en común», dice una organización civil.

De manera particular, entre las organizaciones civiles es de importancia comprobar la apertura de la Diputación a la escucha, y la constatación no solo de que hay relaciones fluidas con los gestores públicos, sino además de que fluidas son también las relaciones entre políticos y funcionarios.

Globalmente, los datos sobre las interacciones entre los actores del programa de gobernanza colaborativa muestran que no es la fuerza coercitiva de los contratos, las leyes o las estructuras, sino la información y vinculación que deriva de las relaciones lo que puede estar ayudando a navegar en la incertidumbre que entraña la innovación de la gobernanza colaborativa de Etorikizuna Eraikiz.

Una concepción del «deber ser» sólidamente compartida

El análisis cualitativo de los datos permite afirmar también que hay en los entrevistados importantes consideraciones sobre el deber ser (el marco normativo), no solo entre políticos, sino también entre funcionarios y organizaciones civiles; y que ese marco normativo está altamente compartido por unos y otros.

¿Hay señales de cultura de colaboración y del compartir que puedan apuntar una cierta cultura de confiabilidad que actúe como orientación típica de grupo moviendo a la decisión de confiar?

La tabla 4 representa el contenido del marco normativo que emerge del análisis de recurrencia de las entrevistas para cada uno de los actores.

TABLA 4.
EL MARCO NORMATIVO COMO FUENTE DE CONFIANZA

Políticos		Funcionarios		Organizaciones Civiles	
Consideraciones recurrentes sobre el deber ser	Valores que se desprenden	Consideraciones recurrentes sobre el deber ser	Valores que se desprenden	Consideraciones recurrentes sobre el deber ser	Valores que se desprenden
Hay que ser sostenibles económicamente.	Colaboración Comunalidad	Tiene que haber cultura de trabajo compartido.	Colaboración Comunalidad	Hay que abrirse a nuevas perspectivas.	Colaboración Comunalidad
Hay que combinar lo inmediato con el largo plazo.	Diversidad Eficacia Igualdad	El proyecto tiene que ser viable. La coparticipación enriquece la toma de decisiones.	Diversidad Eficacia Igualdad	Hay que combinar el corto y largo plazo. Pensar en el futuro es beneficioso.	Diversidad Eficacia Igualdad
Hay que introducir nuevas formas de hacer.	Liderazgo Humildad	La escucha y el aprendizaje mejoran la gestión pública.	Liderazgo Humildad	Es bueno afrontar los retos en común. Hay que contar con la implicación de todos.	Liderazgo Humildad Innovación
Hay que colaborar para abordar los problemas del futuro.	Innovación Experimentación Anticipación	La diversidad de opiniones es buena. Hay que garantizar la participación de todos.	Innovación Experimentación Anticipación	Escuchar es bueno. La gobernanza colaborativa es buena para la sociedad.	Experimentación Anticipación
Hay que conectar con la sociedad.		Hay que compartir el proyecto.			
Hay que vincular a la ciudadanía.		Hay que compartir la autoridad.		La confianza sale de ir más allá de las palabras.	Profesionalidad
Hay que combatir la desigualdad.		La propuesta tiene que ser honesta.		Hay que evitar desigualdades. Hay que ser transparentes.	Dinamismo

Fuente: elaboración propia.

En la columna de la izquierda se recogen las consideraciones más recurrentes sobre el deber ser, y en el de la derecha los valores que, según lo que emerge, están incluidos en ese marco normativo. Esta columna se divide en tres filas: la primera señala los valores que son coincidentes con los tres actores; la segunda los que lo son con al menos uno de los otros dos actores, y la última los valores que son específicos del actor correspondiente; es decir, que no coinciden con nadie más.

Las consideraciones normativas que aparecen podrían clasificarse en dos bloques. En un bloque están las que se refieren a eficacia: la necesidad de que el proyecto sea sostenible económicamente, de combinar el corto con el largo plazo, de orientarse al futuro, de innovar y de colaborar. En un segundo bloque están las que tienen que ver con el carácter democrático del proyecto: la importancia de conectar y vincular a la sociedad, de darle representación y de combatir la desigualdad y fortalecer la cohesión social.

Consideraciones similares hacen los funcionarios, si bien aquí se aprecia más énfasis en lo que supone la colaboración para la mejora de la gestión pública. Las respuestas de estos muestran, además, que hay una asimilación del programa gubernamental en lo más profundo del «ser funcionario», y este marco normativo se revela como una sólida fuente de confianza para actuar sobre inercias que podrían frenar el avance a la gobernanza colaborativa. Los siguientes son extractos ilustrativos y proceden de entrevistas diferentes: «Hay que compartir el proyecto: recibir dudas, suspicacias, críticas, e incorporarlas». «Escuchar y aprender es fundamental. Hay que ir convirtiendo estas dinámicas de escucha en una forma de hacer nuestro trabajo en la función pública».

En las entrevistas están presentes algunas consideraciones sobre el punto crítico de la cesión de autoridad que supone gobernar colaborativamente. No hay suficientes datos para realizar un análisis sólido al respecto, pero se recogen los siguientes extractos por considerarlos de interés. «Aunque la toma de decisión pertenece a la autoridad pública —dice un funcionario—, consultar la opinión de los ciudadanos te sitúa. No puedes tomar una decisión absolutamente alejada de la sociedad. En el momento en que escuchas y haces coparticipes a otros en el debate, la decisión se hace coparticipada».

En la misma línea afirma un político: «O pensamos en común o fragmentamos y nos dividimos y tenemos serias dificultades para abordar los procesos de futuro». Es como si políticos y funcionarios quisieran compensar las dificultades que lleva consigo compartir autoridad, recurriendo a los beneficios que tal cosa reporta; y sobre esos beneficios parece que hay coincidencia con las organizaciones civiles, quienes, además de también apuntar las implicaciones sobre la eficacia, consideran que la gobernanza colaborativa es beneficiosa para la sociedad.

Del análisis del marco normativo se extraen los siguientes valores compartidos por los tres actores: colaboración, comunalidad, diversidad, eficacia e igualdad. Interesante es que hay valores compartidos por políticos y organizaciones civiles que no aparecen entre funcionarios: liderazgo, humildad, innovación, experimentación y anticipación. En conjunto, se puede decir que hay entre los actores que participan en Etorikizuna Eraikiz la asunción de una serie de valores que implican una asunción positiva de la

colaboración, la inclusión y la diversidad para hacer cosas en común que, se considera, ayudan a la eficacia de la gestión; y esos valores pueden haber actuado y seguir actuando como orientación de grupo que inclina a confiar.

CONCLUSIONES

Esta investigación constituye una exploración de datos registrados sobre las evaluaciones que políticos, funcionarios y organizaciones civiles realizan de sus interacciones de confianza, con el fin de identificar lo que puede estar animándolos a asumir la incertidumbre que entraña la colaboración e implicarse conjuntamente en un programa de gobernanza colaborativa.

Se ha puesto de manifiesto que la confianza de políticos, funcionarios y organizaciones civiles se alimenta de fuentes coincidentes, y son las siguientes:

- Más que las institucionales formales como las leyes o las estructuras, son las fuentes informales como rutinas y marcos normativos (las consideraciones sobre el deber ser) las que mueven a confiar a los actores que participan en el programa.
- Globalmente, la fuente que predomina es la que tiene que ver con las interacciones, por delante de lo institucional y de las predisposiciones individuales. En este nivel parece jugar un papel importante para irradiar confianza la experiencia de una relación con líderes políticos fuertemente comprometidos con el proyecto, además de la vinculación afectiva que deriva de la consolidación de las relaciones que lleva consigo la colaboración (sentirse escuchado, bien tratada, reconocida y parte de un equipo con el que se trabaja conjuntamente).
- Hay un marco normativo sólidamente compartido entre todos los actores, y que versa sobre los beneficios del plan o programa tanto para la eficacia de la gestión pública como para la representación de la sociedad. En este marco normativo aparecen como valores coincidentes varios que tienen que ver con una cultura de la colaboración, del entendimiento mutuo y de la inclusión y la diversidad.

La bondad de la colaboración ha sido frecuentemente teorizada pero menos observada en la práctica, y esta es una laguna de la que este artículo se ha querido ocupar. La observación de cómo políticos, funcionarios y organizaciones civiles despliegan sus interacciones al colaborar conjuntamente ha revelado que un programa de gobernanza colaborativa puede generar unos espacios y dinámicas de relación de los que surge la información necesaria para asumir la incertidumbre y vincularse. Cuánto de esto ayuda a superar la posible desconfianza, en comparación con la seguridad que aportan las estructuras y la obligatoriedad de las leyes, es algo que habrá que dilucidar en futuras investigaciones. Pero con los resultados presentados, parece razonable concluir que lo mostrado por este programa está en línea con una afirmación generalizada en la

literatura según la cual las relaciones y los marcos normativos se presentan como motor de confianza más fuerte y estable que las reglas; es decir, «la incertidumbre no se puede combatir con leyes y contratos» (Klijn *et al.*, 2010), sino que necesita una asimilada cultura de colaboración y del compartir.

En este sentido, esta investigación parece mostrar también lo relevante que es registrar la confianza en todas las direcciones; es decir, no solo de las organizaciones civiles hacia las instituciones públicas, sino entre políticos y funcionarios, y de estos hacia la sociedad a la que quieren implicar. En el caso del programa Etorikizuna Eraikiz objeto de este análisis, el partido que lo promovió ganó de nuevo las elecciones y continuó con su plan o programa de gobernanza colaborativa (actualmente en marcha en todos sus aspectos). Cabría argumentar que de no haber sido así, posiblemente un nuevo gobierno hubiera cancelado los procesos iniciados, como también las estructuras que para tal gobernanza colaborativa se hubieran creado.

Esta investigación no se ha propuesto medir la cantidad de confianza, sino saber a qué se debe cuando la hay; y al hacerlo, concluye apuntando una relación positiva entre las interacciones de la colaboración y la confianza en el programa gubernamental. A partir de esta relación, cabe plantearse varias cuestiones para el futuro teniendo en cuenta que una mejor colaboración entre los distintos actores ayudaría en el desarrollo de las iniciativas de gobierno abierto en marcha. Es preciso, por ejemplo, preguntarse qué papel juega la institucionalización en esas iniciativas y hasta qué punto una excesiva institucionalización podría actuar en detrimento de las fuentes que aquí se han mostrado como especialmente activas; cabe preguntarse, además, qué es lo que más cuesta *cancelar*, si la estructura o unas pautas culturales sólidamente compartidas; hay que explorar también cuáles son las habilidades de liderazgo público que ayudan a gestionar unas relaciones que sean tales para que muevan a la confianza, y ver cómo articular la complementariedad entre los distintos actores, o sea, cómo equilibrar y redistribuir en un red de gobernanza colaborativa el conocimiento de experto, la asunción de responsabilidades y la rendición de cuentas.

Parece necesario seguir desarrollando trabajos de investigación que permitan aprovechar los espacios para estimular una activa participación ciudadana, promover la idea de la colaboración y sumar capacidades para responder a la complejidad e incertidumbre en los asuntos públicos.

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100 años de relaciones internacionales: una mirada reflexiva

Caterina García Segura, José Antonio Sanahuja y Francisco J. Verdes-Montenegro.
Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch. 2021, 406 pp.

100 años de relaciones internacionales: una mirada reflexiva celebra el centenario de las relaciones internacionales (RRII) de acuerdo con la convención que sitúa el hito histórico del nacimiento de la disciplina en el año 1919 con la creación de la Cátedra Woodrow Wilson de Política Internacional en la Universidad de Aberystwyth (Gales). La obra es fruto de un encuentro impulsado por la Asociación Española de Profesores de Derecho Internacional y Relaciones Internacionales (AEPDIRI), que se celebró en marzo de 2019; un seminario que logró reunir a un número significativo de internacionalistas y que, finalmente, impulsó el proyecto de libro que aquí se recensiona. El volumen se nutre, por lo tanto, de las doce comunicaciones aportadas entonces por profesores e investigadores de distintas universidades y de las cinco ponencias de profesores destacados en las RRII en España: Celestino del Arenal (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, UCM), Esther Barbé (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, UAB), Leire Moure (Universidad del País Vasco, UPV/EHU), Irene Rodríguez (Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, USC) y Karlos Pérez de Armiño (UPV/EHU).

El libro se suma a la literatura centrada, sobre todo, en las cuestiones de teoría de RRII. Aquí encontramos, por un lado, obras más clásicas como, por ejemplo, *Introducción a las relaciones internacionales* (1984) y *Teoría de relaciones internacionales* (2000), ambos de Celestino del Arenal, y *Relaciones internacionales* de Esther Barbé (2000) o *Relaciones internacionales* de Rafael Calduch (1991). Por otro lado, en esta literatura también encontramos trabajos más recientes, como podría ser el caso de *Otras miradas y otras voces* (2018), que reuniendo a un conjunto de autores se centra sobre todo en las visiones más críticas y enfoques más recientes que han surgido en la disciplina. En este sentido, la obra aquí recensionada bien se inserta en esta literatura, puesto que abarca un gran abanico de temas, desde las teorías más clásicas a los enfoques más recientes en la disciplina. Esta heterogeneidad no solo de miradas y de enfoques, sino también de voces al ser una colección de contribuciones, hace que el volumen represente una importante contribución a la literatura en RRII.

El libro representa un esfuerzo colectivo de miembros que representan a distintas generaciones de internacionalistas en España y nace con la intención de reflexionar

sobre el pasado, presente y futuro de la disciplina en el país. Con diferencia de las obras existentes, y como fortaleza de este volumen, el objetivo —inicialmente del seminario, ahora del libro— es «revisar, debatir y dialogar en conjunto, desde una mirada reflexiva, la conformación de agendas y confines de las Relaciones Internacionales a la luz de su primer centenario de vida; cuál es su estado y avances, tanto en su desarrollo teórico como académico, qué ha quedado en los márgenes y qué retos plantea tanto en la investigación como en la docencia» (p. 14). Son estas las líneas de reflexión las que unen los veintidós capítulos —cinco ponencias y diecisiete comunicaciones— que componen el libro, estructurado en cinco bloques temáticos que también estructuran la presente recensión.

La primera sección, «Un relato canónico en disputa», recoge el relato canónico del desarrollo de las RRII y también sus disputas más importantes. Abre este bloque el capítulo de Celestino del Arenal, que señala el carácter líquido de la disciplina al referirse a su cambiante trayectoria teórica y variadas metodologías y a su constante autorreflexión y autocrítica. Los restantes capítulos dialogan con este relato etnocéntrico que se describe en el primer capítulo y narran la evolución de la disciplina en y desde otros postulados teóricos y/o geográficos. En concreto, estas contribuciones abarcan el caso de la URSS (capítulo 2), las doctrinas islámicas (capítulo 4), la escuela inglesa (capítulo 3) y las aportaciones de aproximación legalista-moralista de Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (capítulo 5).

El segundo bloque temático, «La europeización de la disciplina: origen y manifestaciones», describe la europeización de la disciplina y su origen y manifestaciones en España. Abre la sección Esther Barbé con una aportación autoetnográfica de la europeización de las RRII españolas o, en otras palabras, la institucionalización de la disciplina a nivel europeo, lo que conllevó también la socialización de la comunidad académica internacionalista de España a nivel regional. Fue gracias a este proceso que las RRII llegaron a manifestarse con más fuerza en este país. Entre otros, uno de los resultados visibles de este viaje regional de la disciplina es la llegada de los estudios críticos de seguridad a la academia española. Por esta razón los demás capítulos de esta sección reflexionan en torno a la seguridad desde las perspectivas de la securitización y militarización (capítulo 7), de la desecuritización (capítulo 8) y de la securitización como proceso visual (capítulo 9).

El tercer bloque, «La disciplina en España en un momento de crisis», analiza el estado de las RRII en España desde distintas perspectivas. En el capítulo 9, Leire Moure estrena la sección con una aportación que, desde la sociología del conocimiento, dibuja un mapa de la disciplina en España que evidencia las distintas posiciones teóricas e institucionales (capítulo 10). Siguen y respaldan esta delineación histórica y teórica otros tres capítulos centrados en el mapeo de los estudios estratégicos (capítulo 11), del realismo neoclásico y del análisis de política exterior (capítulo 12), y en la aplicación de las tres grandes corrientes hegemónicas de la disciplina — el realismo, el internacionalismo liberal y el neoconservadurismo — al estudio del papel de EE. UU. en el momento actual de crisis del orden liberal internacional (capítulo 13). En este sentido, esta sección dibuja no solo el estado de la disciplina en España

hoy en día, sino también el desarrollo de campos relacionados o de enfoques teóricos específicos a través de un proceso que ha ido de la mano de la llegada y expansión de las RRII en España.

El cuarto bloque, «Incluyendo las ausencias históricas», da voz a las grandes voces generalmente silenciadas y ausentes en el discurso hegemónico. Aquí aparecen las visiones heterodoxas acerca de la disciplina, como, por ejemplo, las corrientes feministas y los estudios poscoloniales. La mirada reflexiva hacia la disciplina en general, y en su desarrollo en España en particular, no sería completa sin la presencia de aquellas agendas menos convencionales que, sin embargo, han sabido abrirse un espacio dentro de la disciplina en la última década. En palabras de los propios coordinadores, la importancia de dichas «omisiones, ausencias, disidencias y exclusiones» y del espacio que reciben en el volumen reside en que pueden «ofrecer una imagen más novedosa sobre su acervo y condición, y aportar elementos no convencionales al debate sobre qué disciplina de las Relaciones Internacionales es posible, necesaria y deseable para su futuro» (p. 19). Por ello, esta sección incluye aportaciones sobre el pacifismo feminista (capítulo 14), el enfoque poscolonial (capítulo 15), la teoría neogramsciana (capítulo 18), la sistematización de la pluralidad y diversidad de los enfoques feministas (capítulo 16) y las contribuciones teóricas de estos últimos al estudio de los conflictos y de la paz (capítulo 17). Son estas voces las que contribuyen a la autorreflexión acerca de la disciplina y ayudan a pensar críticamente y hasta contestar los relatos dominantes, tanto los teóricos y epistemológicos como los históricos y geográficos.

Finalmente, con la intención de responder a los retos contemporáneos de las políticas internacionales, el quinto y último bloque aglutina autores que identifican las nuevas tendencias. Bajo el título «Horizonte futuros: ¿hacia dónde se encaminan las Relaciones Internacionales?», esta sección se abre con una reflexión firmada por Karlos Pérez de Armiño acerca de las potenciales aportaciones de las propuestas teóricas alternativas que se suelen categorizar como «teoría verde» (capítulo 19). Además, se vislumbran aquí otros de los caminos de reflexión pendientes para la disciplina, entre los cuales se encuentra el desarrollo docente a través del uso de nuevas fuentes (capítulo 20) o el pluralismo epistemológico resultado de la profesionalización de la diplomacia pública (capítulo 21). Cierra la sección y también el libro el capítulo 22. Se plantea aquí la posibilidad de instaurar un programa de investigación basado en un diálogo y en nuevos ejes para las RRII, con el objetivo de empujar a la disciplina hacia un futuro plural donde las diversas corrientes puedan estar presentes y en el cual se pueda superar la polarización y el ensimismamiento teórico. En este sentido, esta propuesta representa una perfecta conclusión para un volumen que se centra en la autorreflexión no solo con la intención de analizarla, sino también de dibujar un horizonte de futuro de las RRII y sus retos por venir.

La foto que nos dibujan los autores de estos capítulos y los coordinadores del libro es la de una disciplina heterogénea que ha ido evolucionando en el mundo y en España, y que se va abriendo cada vez más a la pluralidad de voces y enfoques. Esto ha conllevado una creciente diferenciación de las ontologías, epistemologías y metodologías que componen la disciplina, además de una pluralidad creciente de voces y

presencias. Todo esto hace que los internacionalistas sigamos cuestionándonos nuestros paradigmas y que vayan surgiendo cada vez más preguntas en la disciplina acerca del mundo que nos rodea y de las políticas internacionales. Precisamente para una disciplina dinámica y acostumbrada a construir sobre la heterogeneidad de pensamiento y a avanzar a través de debates teóricos, esta heterogeneidad intelectual representa una riqueza más que un obstáculo.

Es esta misma riqueza de pensamiento la que da valor al volumen *100 años de relaciones internacionales: una mirada reflexiva*. Por todo ello, el libro resultará de interés a una audiencia académica interesada en reflexionar acerca de la evolución de la disciplina en general o en algunos de los asuntos más concretos abordados por los varios capítulos que componen la obra. Asimismo, su estructura en capítulos breves centrados en diferentes temas abordados de una manera muy accesible hace que el volumen pueda ser de interés también para jóvenes investigadores y estudiantes de posgrado.

De la mano de la multiplicidad de autores y heterogeneidad de miradas, el volumen nos permite realizar un triple viaje a través de la disciplina: (1) un viaje genealógico que no solo describe el relato histórico estándar, sino más bien su emergencia y formación, a través de su institucionalización y sus cuestionamientos; (2) un viaje intelectual que nos permite apreciar los cambios y la pluralidad creciente que ha venido dando forma al campo a lo largo del último siglo, y (3) finalmente un viaje geográfico en cuanto nos enseña cómo se vino formando la comunidad académica internacionalista en Europa y en España y cuánto se retroalimentaron intelectualmente y a nivel más práctico la comunidad regional y la nacional, y que nos dibuja un mapa del estado contemporáneo de las RRII en España, la evolución del campo y de sus miembros.

Además, como nos recuerdan los coordinadores del libro, a pesar de los desacuerdos ontológicos, lo que reúne y aglutina todas estas voces es el convencimiento de que nuestra disciplina no debe quedarse aislada en torres de marfil. Así, en palabras de Caterina García Segura, José Antonio Sanahuja y Francisco J. Verdes-Montenegro, esta responsabilidad «es mayor en el caso de los internacionalistas, tanto por su rol en las aulas como en su labor investigadora» (p. 22) y es por esta razón que tenemos que seguir reflexionando sobre los retos que hemos tenido que afrontar como sociedad internacional y los que se nos presentarán en el futuro. *100 años de relaciones internacionales: una mirada reflexiva* nos ayuda a emprender esta labor intelectual imprescindible y nos recuerda la importancia de nuestra disciplina dentro y fuera de la academia. ¡A por 100 años (de debates) más!

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American affective polarization in comparative perspective

Noam Gidron, James Adams y Will Horne. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, 86 pp.

La polarización afectiva se ha convertido en una de las principales preocupaciones recientes de los politólogos norteamericanos, como así lo atestiguan decenas de trabajos académicos que se preguntan por las causas y las consecuencias de este fenómeno. La tendencia a considerar a los grupos políticos como tribus sociales en conflicto que actúan como referentes identitarios (Iyengar *et al.*, 2012; West y Iyengar, 2022), el cambio en las actitudes de las élites (Banda y Cluverius, 2018) o las formas de consumo de información política tanto en los medios tradicionales como en las redes sociales (Garrett *et al.*, 2014; Gill, 2022; Törnberg, 2022) son algunas de las posibles variables explicativas de la polarización afectiva. En cuanto a las consecuencias, el foco se centra en el impacto de la polarización afectiva sobre la salud de las instituciones democráticas y el compromiso de los ciudadanos con sus reglas (Kingzette *et al.*, 2021; Gidengil *et al.*, 2022), así como en el crecimiento de la desconfianza entre quienes apoyan opciones políticas diferentes, lo que dificulta notablemente la convivencia (Levendusky y Stecula, 2021).

Como señalan los autores de *American affective polarization in comparative perspective*, la polarización afectiva puede ser entendida como un tipo especial de polarización política, de carácter emocional (no ideológica ni sobre políticas concretas), marcada por la desconfianza y la hostilidad entre personas en función de sus grupos partidistas de pertenencia. De forma concreta, se propone aquí una definición de la polarización afectiva a nivel de masas como la diferencia entre los sentimientos expresados hacia el propio partido y los sentimientos desarrollados hacia los partidos ajenos (p. 3). Cuando el desagrado hacia los partidos externos es muy elevado (partidismo negativo alto) y el sentimiento positivo de adhesión al partido del que nos sentimos parte también es muy alto, es posible que el desacuerdo con los oponentes se vuelva una cuestión personal y afecte a nuestras relaciones sociales, hasta el punto de que la discriminación y el prejuicio entre partidarios de diferentes opciones políticas se vuelve más intenso que el que se produce por motivos étnico-raciales (ver Sunstein, 2015, citado en p. 1).

En este contexto, es habitual caracterizar a los Estados Unidos como un país extraordinariamente polarizado en términos afectivos. Sin embargo, Noam Gidron, James

Adams y Will Horne pretenden realizar un ejercicio comparativo que enfrente el caso estadounidense con otras democracias occidentales para poner a prueba estas afirmaciones. Este libro forma parte de la colección *Elements in American Politics* de Cambridge University Press, un conjunto de publicaciones más extensas que un artículo académico, pero más breves que un libro al uso, de tal forma que resultan materiales de gran capacidad divulgativa y atractivos tanto para investigadores —especialmente aquellos en periodo de formación predoctoral por su coherencia a nivel de diseño y formulación del problema central— como para el público en general, que encontrará un relato sencillo que incorpora los requerimientos formales y estadísticos de un artículo sin renunciar a elementos característicos del ensayo. Así, el libro comienza con una introducción que sirve como marco teórico, para seguidamente presentar un segundo apartado que compara al electorado americano con el de otros entornos. El tercer apartado se ocupa de explicar las variaciones en los niveles de polarización afectiva en los Estados Unidos y, por último, se ofrece un sugerente capítulo 4 de conclusiones.

A lo largo de los cuatro capítulos del libro, todos ellos de lectura sencilla y amena, a pesar del completo conjunto de datos que se aporta, los lectores podrán reflexionar sobre algunos factores que podrían explicar diferentes niveles de polarización afectiva por países, distinguiéndose fundamentalmente tres determinantes contextuales: la naturaleza de las condiciones económicas nacionales (niveles de desigualdad y de desempleo); las instituciones electorales (sistema electoral mayoritario *vs.* sistema electoral proporcional, recuperando las tesis de Lijphart), y la intensidad de la polarización ideológica y temática entre las élites. Sobre la materia particular de las disputas sostenidas por la élite política, el libro se adentra en un debate fundamental sobre el alcance polarizador de los desacuerdos de base económica frente a las llamadas batallas culturales que, según los autores, han protagonizado los principales enfrentamientos de la última campaña electoral americana, a propósito del movimiento *Black Lives Matter*.

Con el fin de analizar la polarización afectiva tanto en su evolución longitudinal como en la comparación transversal entre diferentes países, los autores plantean dos preguntas de investigación: a) ¿cómo de polarizado afectivamente está Estados Unidos en comparación con otras diecinueve democracias occidentales, y b) ¿es la intensa polarización afectiva presente en los Estados Unidos un fenómeno aislado y particular?

En el capítulo 2 del libro, los autores explican pormenorizadamente el marco metodológico y el proceso de producción y análisis de los datos. Sobre los países seleccionados, la muestra la componen un total de veinte democracias occidentales (Australia, Austria, Canadá, Dinamarca, Finlandia, Francia, Alemania, Reino Unido, Grecia, Islandia, Irlanda, Israel, Nueva Zelanda, Holanda, Noruega, Portugal, España, Suecia, Suiza y los Estados Unidos) para las que se han considerado diferentes encuestas electorales (81 en total) del *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES). Los años y marcos temporales de las encuestas seleccionadas varían para cada país según la disponibilidad del módulo desarrollado por el proyecto del CSES y el año de cada elección nacional. Por ejemplo, los datos disponibles para el caso español se limitan a 1996, 2000, 2004 y 2008.

En cuanto a la forma de medición de la polarización afectiva, dicho concepto es operacionalizado a partir de dos dimensiones: partidismo positivo (apego hacia el propio partido) y partidismo negativo (desagrado/rechazo hacia el/los partidos contrarios). Estas dimensiones se trabajan tomando en cuenta los resultados del *party thermometer*, una pregunta habitual también en las encuestas del ANES (Iyengar *et al.*, 2019), donde se pide al entrevistado manifestarse sobre sus sentimientos, más o menos cálidos o fríos, hacia los diferentes partidos. A efectos de interpretación y tratamiento, esta escala es invertida por los autores para una exposición de resultados más intuitiva. Los niveles de polarización afectiva resultarían de la diferencia entre los sentimientos de un ciudadano hacia su partido y los sentimientos de ese mismo ciudadano hacia el resto de los partidos del sistema, catalogados, inicialmente, como exogrupo (p. 13).

Medir la polarización afectiva a partir de los datos del *party feeling thermometer* plantea un debate metodológico de calado porque la discriminación intersubjetiva es el efecto singular de la polarización afectiva, mientras que la pregunta del *party feeling thermometer* —en su formulación prototípica— capta los sentimientos hacia partidos y no tanto hacia los seguidores de los mismos. ¿Podemos presuponer que los sentimientos hacia los objetos (partidos) son equivalentes a los sentimientos hacia los sujetos (partisanos)? Los autores resuelven esta controversia afirmando que los sentimientos expresados no solo son relativos a la élite del partido, sino que se pueden considerar extensibles a sus bases. Una vez superada esta cuestión, se ofrecen los detalles técnicos de las fórmulas usadas para la obtención de las puntuaciones promedio de polarización afectiva por país. Gidron, Adams y Horne usan una medida agregada que parte de la propuesta de medición realizada por Reiljan (2020), conocida bajo el nombre de *affective polarisation index* (API). Esta medida, que calcula las diferencias entre los sentimientos de los electores hacia los diferentes partidos tomando como base su adscripción partidista, favorece la comparación porque no se centra en los niveles individuales de polarización, como sí lo hace Wagner (2021), sino en los niveles agregados de polarización intergrupala. Otro aspecto que destacar en esta fórmula es que se introduce una ponderación según el tamaño de los partidos (porcentaje o cuota de voto), lo que relativiza posibles efectos introducidos por partidos que generan mucho rechazo o mucha adhesión, pero son poco relevantes electoralmente dentro de sistemas multipartidistas fragmentados.

Conocidos los aspectos técnicos, a partir de la p. 22 comienza la exposición de resultados, donde los lectores podrán conocer cuáles son los países con cifras promedio de polarización más elevadas a lo largo de la serie, las tendencias en materia de partidismo (positivo y negativo) y la evolución temporal de la polarización afectiva en cada país (ver figura 2, p. 27). De la acción más descriptiva se avanza a partir de la p. 37 hacia una propuesta de explicación de las variaciones que se dan en los niveles detectados. Aquí es donde se recuperan los tres factores estructurales que se proponen como variables independientes y se someten a contraste una serie de hipótesis (pp. 41-45). Resulta interesante detenerse en dos de estas hipótesis: la H1b (la hipótesis de la primacía cultural), que relaciona mayores niveles de polarización afectiva con disputas sobre temas culturales entre las élites y no con disputas sobre asuntos económicos; y la H2a,

ciertamente novedosa en el acercamiento al objeto de estudio, que une niveles elevados de desigualdad económica con una polarización política más aguda.

Las respuestas a las dos grandes preguntas de investigación mencionadas son realmente interesantes. Primero, se evidencia provisionalmente que la polarización en los Estados Unidos no es comparativamente tan intensa como podríamos pensar; de hecho, no es el país con mayor nivel de polarización de entre todos los incluidos en el estudio. Segundo, y en línea con investigaciones previas como Boxell *et al.*, (2020), se observa que la polarización afectiva parece ser un fenómeno común a la mayoría de las democracias occidentales, aunque ha crecido más intensamente en Estados Unidos que en otros países, especialmente a partir del año 2012. Y tercero, los autores nos ayudan a comprender cómo el partidismo negativo —el desagrado por el partido contrario (Bankert, 2021)— es el principal combustible de la polarización afectiva. Por último, el análisis longitudinal revela que la polarización afectiva no es un fenómeno reciente; al contrario, en ciertos países los niveles de polarización durante los años noventa del pasado siglo fueron superiores a los existentes durante la primera década del siglo XXI.

El valor de este libro reside, por una parte, en su capacidad para aunar de forma concisa y accesible un estudio metodológicamente denso sobre un ámbito incipiente con una narrativa clara, que el lector puede seguir con facilidad desde el principio hasta el final. Además, se aportan estrategias técnicas que pueden servir para futuros trabajos que busquen obtener hallazgos similares en momentos temporales o zonas geográficas diferentes. Esta contribución no es menor si consideramos la falta de consenso existente sobre cómo medir la polarización afectiva, incluso la falta de conexión entre las definiciones teóricas y los indicadores empíricos, lo que dificulta estrategias de comparación de resultados. Asimismo, y sin obviar la fina recopilación teórica y la acertada contextualización del problema en conexión con los efectos socioeconómicos de la COVID-19, hay que poner en valor el esfuerzo de los autores por abrir un nuevo campo de explicaciones de la polarización afectiva más allá de cuestiones como la comunicación digital, los efectos de la identificación con el grupo, la polarización ideológica, la presencia de partidos extremistas, las derivas mediáticas o los modelos de campaña electoral. Aquí se ofrecen explicaciones de especial contenido sociológico y politológico, orientadas al papel de la situación económica (desempleo y desigualdad), el diseño institucional y la acción de las élites. Todas ellas participan de tradiciones teóricas de largo alcance.

Particularmente para cualquier investigador español, la lectura es importante por la radiografía que aporta de nuestro país, que resulta ser aquí el más polarizado afectivamente de todos los considerados (ver figura 1, p. 23). Si somos aparentemente la democracia más polarizada afectivamente y conocemos los efectos de esta situación sobre la erosión de las instituciones, la deslegitimación del adversario y la confianza en los Gobiernos (ver p. 3), la atención de la academia en nuestro país a las causas, los efectos y las posibles respuestas que quepa dar para fomentar un reencuentro cívico debería ser, si cabe, más intensa. Cuatro preguntas quedan para el futuro: ¿por qué España lidera este ranking de polarización afectiva? ¿Estamos realmente tan divididos como los estudios comparados señalan? ¿Siempre hemos estado tan divididos socialmente por lo

político? ¿Es la diferencia entre el agrado por el propio partido y el desagrado por los partidos externos la mejor manera de capturar la polarización afectiva? Además, resulta necesario seguir apostando por la introducción del método comparado en los estudios de polarización afectiva, aunque por el momento su uso haya sido escaso.

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Partidismo y (des)lealtad federal en el Estado autonómico español

Javier Martínez Cantó. Barcelona: Fundació Catalunya Europa, 2020, 150 pp.

En la última década, y a raíz de la recesión económica de 2008, la política española ha experimentado una gran convulsión político-social. Una de las grandes consecuencias de dicha convulsión fue la reconfiguración del sistema de partidos tanto a nivel nacional como en algunas comunidades autónomas y las consecuencias que ello ha tenido para la gobernabilidad del Estado. No obstante, el clima de tensión social actual y la crisis político-institucional en la que nos encontramos es consecuencia de múltiples aristas. Por un lado, la aparición de nuevos partidos como Podemos, Ciudadanos y Vox ha fragmentado el panorama político español y han cambiado las actitudes políticas de la ciudadanía. Por otro, el continuo cuestionamiento del modelo del sistema territorial ha fomentado el surgimiento de movimientos sociales y partidos que han retado al sistema político y su diseño territorial actual.

Los estudios, hasta el momento, se han centrado en explicar los cambios en las tendencias, comportamientos y actitudes de la ciudadanía (Cuadras-Morató y Rodón, 2018; Marcos-Marné *et al.*, 2019) o de los propios actores políticos (Rodríguez-Teruel y Barrio, 2016; Coller y Sánchez-Ferrer, 2021). Sin embargo, se ha puesto escasa atención en las consecuencias de la crisis territorial en el funcionamiento de las instituciones y su gobernabilidad. Las cuestiones que se han abordado dentro del eje territorial provienen del ámbito jurídico, en relación con lo cual se ha analizado el estado autonómico y se han presentado propuestas para su mejora (Moreno, 2009; Cámara Villar, 2018). No obstante, no se ha abordado la cuestión territorial desde una perspectiva más empírica y cercanas a la ciencia política, continuando una larga línea de investigación sobre las relaciones entre los diferentes niveles de gobierno y como estas se han visto afectadas por cambios institucionales relativamente endógenos (Chaqués-Bonafont y Palau, 2011; Verge y Falcó-Gimeno, 2013; Falcó-Gimeno, 2014). Muchos estudios apuntan que la falta de institucionalización de las relaciones entre los diferentes Gobiernos autonómicos y entre estos y el Gobierno central, como causa parcial del complejo escenario territorial español actual.

En este contexto, el libro *Partidismo y (des)lealtad federal en el Estado autonómico español*, de Javier Martínez-Cantó, viene a complementar este campo de estudio y las investigaciones anteriores basadas en los comportamientos y preferencias individuales.

La originalidad de la obra es que trata la situación y crisis territorial desde una perspectiva institucional y empírica. Como se menciona, la falta de espacios e instituciones estables para canalizar las relaciones entre los Gobiernos autonómicos y el Gobierno central provoca que estas dependan de otro tipo de vías de comunicación, principalmente intrapartidistas. En este aspecto, el autor se apoya en el concepto «federalismo no institucional» (Colomer, 1998) para vertebrar la obra. Esta obra se divide en tres partes que se vertebran en torno a dos elementos que son punto de referencia para cada capítulo a través, por un lado, de la tesis del federalismo no institucional y, por el otro, la congruencia política interpartidista entre los diferentes Gobiernos autonómicos y el Gobierno central.

En primer lugar, el capítulo introductorio plantea la cuestión de cómo se ha llegado a un escenario político de polarización territorial desde una perspectiva institucional. Es decir, el libro plantea la medida en que los grandes costes de la reforma institucional del Estado autonómico pueden ser uno de los factores que han facilitado el auge del independentismo. Se valoran los trabajos previos desde diferentes ópticas (partidos, élites, votantes); no obstante, el autor entiende que este fenómeno es multicausal y decide conformar un estudio de cómo el diseño institucional ha moldeado la competición entre autonomías por los distintos recursos financieros y competenciales. En la parte final del capítulo se exponen las principales hipótesis del estudio que estructuran y guían los tres siguientes capítulos empíricos que conforman el libro.

El segundo capítulo aborda la formación de los Gobiernos autonómicos y la congruencia con el Gobierno central. El autor destaca que la conformación de los Gobiernos autonómicos tiene una lectura multinivel, en la que la coordinación de los partidos se produce entre el nivel estatal y el autonómico. Se distingue entre partidos formadores —que tienen la iniciativa para formar Gobierno— y partidos seguidores —que tienen la opción de no apoyar la investidura, dar apoyo parlamentario o entrar en una coalición de gobierno—. Estas últimas opciones expuestas son las categorías de la variable dependiente del capítulo. En un primer momento, se muestra que la congruencia no explica el apoyo a un partido u otro para formar Gobierno. Sin embargo, la congruencia sí ayuda a entender la forma de apoyo que recibe un partido formador: el apoyo a la investidura o entrar en un Gobierno de coalición. Esto constituye una distinción novedosa. De esta manera, se explica cómo la congruencia tendrá un mayor efecto en la decisión de entrar en coalición de gobierno u otorgar el apoyo en la investidura.

El tercer capítulo aborda la congruencia como factor de estabilidad de los Gobiernos autonómicos. El autor pone énfasis en los elementos que pueden conllevar un adelanto electoral, un cambio de socio de Gobierno o una moción de censura; es decir, factores que rompen la estabilidad gubernamental. El autor confirma que la estabilidad gubernamental autonómica se debe en gran medida gracias a la congruencia con el Gobierno central, ya que los partidos pueden utilizar los canales intrapartidistas para obtener recursos estatales. Por otro lado, las diferencias que puedan existir entre partidos en el eje socioeconómico o en el territorial no parecen incidir en la estabilidad gubernamental. Por tanto, se confirma que el acceso al Gobierno central es un punto clave para

conformar el Gobierno y dar estabilidad a nivel autonómico, gracias al papel del diálogo interno de los partidos ante la ausencia de mecanismos institucionales.

El cuarto capítulo ofrece un test directo de este mecanismo al estudiar directamente las negociaciones intergubernamentales entre el Estado central y las autonomías. En concreto, el capítulo trata de la cuestión más esencial en la crisis del diseño institucional del Estado de las autonomías: la transferencia de las competencias del Gobierno central a los Gobiernos autonómicos. El autor busca explicar las diferencias entre autonomías a la hora de negociar las transferencias de competencias con el Gobierno central. La congruencia entre partidos y Gobiernos vuelve a ser un factor fundamental en esta parte del estudio, pero se añaden como explicaciones alternativas: la proximidad del calendario electoral y al apoyo parlamentario que el Gobierno central pueda recibir de partidos de ámbito no estatal procedente de la autonomía con la cual negocia. Los resultados confirman la hipótesis ya planteada por Aja (2003), según la cual la congruencia política entre los partidos del Gobierno central y los autonómicos tienden a facilitar las negociaciones de transferencias de competencias. Y en relación con el calendario electoral se muestra cómo a medida que se aproximan las elecciones dichas transferencias son utilizadas como arma electoral. Sin embargo, el autor no encuentra apoyo para la popular teoría de «transferencias a cambio de gobernabilidad», pues no hay evidencias de que las comunidades autónomas gobernadas por un partido de ámbito no estatal que apoya al Gobierno central en el Parlamento reciban competencias más rápidamente. Esta última cuestión será una de las líneas más interesantes a estudiar en futuros trabajos. Finalmente, el quinto capítulo ofrece un resumen de los resultados y su contextualización en el escenario actual, y en particular cómo la pandemia de la COVID-19 ha alterado los canales institucionales entre Gobierno y autonomías.

El estudio elaborado por Javier Martínez-Cantó confirma empíricamente investigaciones anteriores. En primer lugar, la obra refuerza los aspectos en los que se basa como el concepto de *federalismo no institucional* de Colomer (1998). La carencia de espacios institucionales estables entre el Gobierno central y las comunidades autónomas ha llevado a una situación de competición por los recursos financieros y competenciales, que se explican en parte a través de la congruencia partidista entre los diferentes niveles de gobierno. Esta última cuestión ratifica el argumento de Aja (2003), según el cual el Gobierno central tiende a facilitar las competencias y recursos a las autonomías más proclives ideológicamente que puedan darle un apoyo parlamentario. Además, el autor desglosa muy escrupulosamente la formación y estabilidad de los Gobiernos autonómicos para entender la importancia que tienen en la transferencia de competencias y, por ende, las bases institucionales de la crisis del diseño institucional.

A pesar del gran ejercicio metodológico y empírico para capturar cuantitativamente la congruencia partidista y estabilidad gubernamental entre los diferentes Gobiernos autonómicos y el Gobierno central, la obra tiene, por un lado, una carencia teórica y, por otro lado, la falta de datos obliga al autor a confiar en indicadores que no siempre permiten captar los matices ideológicos de cada momento y contexto

histórico. Es más, el texto denota un pesimismo sobre la posibilidad de reformar el actual modelo territorial, sin profundizar en los factores que impiden tales reformas ni en posibles diferentes escenarios que se podrían dar en el futuro.

La contribución de esta investigación es esencial para el ámbito de las instituciones políticas, al aportar herramientas muy valiosas para continuar con el estudio de los procesos de configuración y duración de los Ejecutivos subnacionales, y sus relaciones con el Gobierno central. Además, utiliza los mecanismos institucionales para hacer análisis empíricos con datos y el uso de herramientas estadísticas. Por tanto, cabe destacar que todos los capítulos empíricos y los dos apéndices contienen abundantes gráficos descriptivos que serán de interés para los estudios de modelo territorial, conformación de Gobiernos y partidos políticos. Con ello, permite entender mejor cómo se ha llegado a la situación de crisis del modelo territorial en España y el gran descontento social con el diseño del mismo.

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Presupuestos participativos: aportes y límites para radicalizar la democracia

Yves Cabannes, José Manuel Mayor y José Molina (coords.). Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch. 2020, 352 pp.

El libro que aquí se recensiona está constituido por dos prólogos y trece capítulos, y constituye una reflexión teórico-práctica sobre el presupuesto participativo a nivel local, nacional e internacional. Se trata de una obra colectiva que tiene como intención mostrar varios ejemplos de presupuestos participativos que se han desarrollado en los últimos tiempos. Está financiada por el Ayuntamiento de Molina de Segura, institución especialmente comprometida con el fomento de la participación social en la Región de Murcia, que desde 2015 viene implantando los presupuestos participativos con metodologías novedosas.

La publicación se encuentra coordinada por Yves Cabannes, experto de referencia de la ONU en el seguimiento de presupuestos participativos; José Manuel Mayor Balsas, profesor de Ciencia Política de la Universidad de Murcia, y José Molina Molina, expresidente del Consejo de Transparencia de la Región de Murcia. Además, cuenta con la participación de diferentes autores reconocidos internacionalmente en una gran variedad de disciplinas entre las que destacan la ciencia política, la sociología y la economía.

Esta obra colectiva abarca una gran variedad de casos de presupuestos participativos a nivel internacional —incluidas experiencias en Rusia y Asia—, y pone en valor este mecanismo como una herramienta relevante tanto para el fomento de la participación política no electoral como para el impulso de la transparencia y el buen gobierno. Además, para complementar las experiencias presentadas, se incluyen varios capítulos dedicados a los aspectos conceptuales necesarios para entender las diferentes experiencias. Supone un interesante complemento a investigaciones desarrolladas en años previos (Ganuza y Francés, 2012; Pineda y Pires, 2012; Buele *et al.*, 2018; Gómez del Peso, 2014) sobre cómo estaban funcionando los presupuestos participativos en la práctica y cuáles eran los errores más frecuentes que convendría evitar para llevar a cabo dichos procesos de una manera más óptima. En esta línea encontraremos diferentes propuestas de mejora para hacer frente a la falta de motivación en la participación social, metodologías innovadoras para la implantación y la evaluación de los presupuestos participativos o cómo desarrollarlos de una manera más inclusiva. En

resumen, el libro aborda cómo afianzar esta herramienta en diversos territorios gracias al análisis de diferentes experiencias y marcos conceptuales.

A lo largo del texto se muestra una diversidad de formas de presupuestos participativos, que además se han desarrollado en diferentes ámbitos territoriales o se han enfocado a diferentes colectivos sociales. Tal vez por ello se plantea la necesidad de tener un equipo multidisciplinar a la hora de implementar esta herramienta. Se destaca la gran variedad de beneficios que tienen estos procesos en la ciudadanía, como el ser una herramienta del proceso circular necesaria en las sociedades actuales, o su conexión con el objetivo 11 dentro del marco de los ODS para un desarrollo sostenible, equitativo e inclusivo. Por ejemplo, en diferentes capítulos se subraya la importancia que tienen los presupuestos participativos en el apoyo a la democracia y cómo fomentan la participación social, y con ello ayudan a generar ciudadanos más activos e informados.

El texto viene precedido por dos prólogos: el primero a cargo de Santiago M. Álvarez Carreño, donde se avanza la importancia que tienen los presupuestos participativos para impulsar el gobierno abierto; en el segundo, Jaume Blancafort Sansó y Patricia Reus Martínez realizan una breve reflexión sobre el contenido de la obra, poniendo en valor su oportunidad al agrupar diferentes experiencias para que sirva así de guía de referencia para la puesta en práctica de presupuestos participativos.

En el primer capítulo, Esther Clavero Mira, antigua alcaldesa del Ayuntamiento de Molina de Segura, destaca aspectos positivos como la transparencia para promover la correcta rendición de cuentas (*accountability*) y que la hiperconectividad que existe gracias a las TIC aconseja tratar a los ciudadanos como «zoon elektronikón» (Lassalle, 2019). A continuación, José Manuel Mayor Balsas y Gloria Alarcón García realizan una introducción teórica básica sobre las diferentes tipologías de presupuestos participativos, las diversas formas que existen de participación y los factores previos necesarios para iniciarse en las prácticas participativas. La profesora González Salcedo recoge en el tercer capítulo diferentes lecciones desde que se comenzó a desarrollar este mecanismo en nuestro país, como la importancia de la cercanía de los gobernantes a los ciudadanos, y también menciona las deficiencias de representación que se pueden generar si no se tiene en cuenta la escasa participación de ciertos colectivos más invisibilizados.

Los siguientes tres capítulos recogen experiencias de presupuestos participativos en varias ciudades españolas. En concreto, Virginia Gutiérrez Barbarrusa aborda los presupuestos participativos en Sevilla y realiza una reflexión crítica de las mejoras del proceso participativo. Destaca también la necesidad de unos principios básicos como la vinculación, la universalidad, la autorregulación, la deliberación, la justicia social y el control ciudadano. En cuanto a la metodología, pone en valor la necesidad de establecer una distribución territorial para favorecer la participación de todas las zonas y barrios.

A continuación, se analizan presupuestos participativos en la Región de Murcia, entre los que destaca la experiencia precursora en Molina de Segura. También se ponen de manifiesto algunas de las claves de su éxito, «habiendo sido un antídoto para

que la democracia en el municipio no se viviera como un encefalograma plano» (p. 139). El sexto capítulo ofrece un análisis de dos experiencias, una en la ciudad de Molina de Segura y otra en la Universidad de Murcia. En este capítulo los autores apuestan por una mejor gestión de los recursos económicos y proponen realizar una innovación tecnológica de la Administración, sin dejar atrás las críticas relacionadas con los escasos recursos económicos destinados a esta herramienta.

Los capítulos séptimo y octavo se centran en los presupuestos participativos juveniles. El primero nos expone experiencias en la Región de Murcia, donde los autores destacan que las nuevas formas de participación juvenil deben venir acompañadas de modificaciones adaptadas al contexto porque «las políticas convencionales de participación a menudo marginan a los jóvenes, por lo que las formas de participación entre éstos están cambiando» (p. 171). A continuación, se examina con detalle el desarrollo histórico de la experiencia de presupuestos participativos en Valongo. Ante el problema que tienen los jóvenes para desarrollarse dentro de la sociedad, se destacan los beneficios que tienen los presupuestos participativos para generar un sentimiento de inclusión entre ellos, ya que abre canales para que puedan expresarse e involucrarse en las decisiones públicas.

A continuación, se presenta una comparación de presupuestos participativos en la República Dominicana, Uruguay y España, basada en diferentes indicadores. El resultado de este análisis sugiere la conveniencia de implantación de los presupuestos participativos adaptados a las necesidades contextuales de cada población.

El décimo capítulo estudia y evalúa la consolidación de los presupuestos participativos en Lisboa tras diez años de implantación. También se realizan críticas para la mejora del desarrollo de los presupuestos, con el objetivo de producir una nueva generación de estos más inclusivos y participativos.

En el capítulo decimoprimer, el profesor Cabannes expone las experiencias pioneras en Asia y Rusia. Comenta la capacidad que tienen los presupuestos participativos para mejorar las condiciones de vida, consolidar la democracia e, incluso, en el avance del desarrollo de los ODS. Respecto a los casos de presupuestos participativos en Escocia, objeto del capítulo decimosegundo, el profesor Escobar reflexiona sobre la necesidad de realizar cambios en la Administración y favorecer el empoderamiento comunitario para mejorar el funcionamiento de los presupuestos participativos.

La obra en su conjunto pone en valor las diferentes formas de implantación y desarrollo de los presupuestos participativos. Además, se realiza un análisis desde diferentes perspectivas con un hilo narrativo donde los capítulos se van complementando entre sí, gracias a la conjunción de capítulos teóricos, estudios de caso y estudios comparativos. En la obra, conviven así aspectos teóricos como una variedad de ejemplos de implementación de esta herramienta en diferentes ámbitos.

A lo largo de la obra se realiza un esfuerzo para que el lector comprenda el proceso de la elaboración de los presupuestos participativos. Por ello, cabe destacar que intenta dirigirse no solamente a investigadores y académicos, sino que podría ser de utilidad a los técnicos locales, regionales o nacionales a la hora de abordar la puesta en marcha de presupuestos participativos en sus respectivos ámbitos

Aunque en la obra no se realiza ninguna mención sobre la COVID-19, apreciamos que responden a muchas cuestiones que han aparecido en el debate público a raíz de la pandemia relacionadas con las formas de involucrar a la ciudadanía en la toma de decisiones y desarrollar ciudades más equitativas. Este aspecto es una de las principales fortalezas y virtudes de la obra, y a la vez constituye el punto de partida para recomendaciones de mejora para futuras ediciones del libro; es decir, la inclusión de algún capítulo que cuente la experiencia de los presupuestos participativos antes y después de la COVID-19. Sin duda, ayudaría mucho a los profesionales de esta rama para introducir modificaciones en sus presupuestos participativos y podría ser utilizado como un manual de buenas prácticas.

El título de la obra, *Presupuestos participativos: aportes y límites para radicalizar la democracia*, remarca de manera clara su intención principal, que es fomentar la democracia en la sociedad. El libro es fruto del entusiasmo del Ayuntamiento de Molina de Segura, que pone de manifiesto la importancia que tienen los presupuestos participativos para el impulso de la democracia y el fomento de la participación ciudadana. En esencia, es una obra que será de gran valor para los interesados en la participación ciudadana, en general, y en los presupuestos participativos, en particular.

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