

There is a group of political tweeters that nobody is studying: the detached

Original study

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Abstract: Through a review of the literature, the present article outlines the interaction forms that happen on Twitter when the participation is political, intending to show that the conversations made by the most significant collective on Twitter which is formed by ordinary users that post tweets 24/7 any given day with the sole intention to make public its political views, are invisible for the social studies. The actual political conversations attended by the social studies are related to parties, civic organizations, street manifestation, social activism, or some political manifestation that requires organization. The subject is important because these ordinary users with no agendas related to the formal or informal forms of political conversations known by the social studies form the biggest sector in the political social network par excellence, and no one is studying them. We propose the adjective 'detached' users to refer to these Twitter users.

Keywords: Political participation, Twitter, ordinary users, tweeters, digital interaction, detached.

INTRODUCTION

Twitter is a political social network that has not gone unnoticed by political agents. It helps candidates to 'actively listen' to citizens through a direct conversation with them and allows a 'personal style of a campaign' with a 'humanized speech away from the institutional'. It has become 'one of the preferred' communication channels for public institutions, political parties, business organizations, and social agents when it comes to establishing communication links with their militants, sympathizers, associates, or clients; and is 'an outstanding' element in communication in a social protest movement (Murcia Verdú 2018; Ortiz Espinoza, Espejel Trujillo 2021; Veenstra et al. 2014; Zamora Medina, Zurutuza Muñoz 2014). In the last decade, political participation and citizen mobilization support their organization in the use of social media has been analyzed. Social media activism offers sociologists the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of how groups form and maintain collective identities around political issues throughout a social movement (Brown et al. 2017; Castro Pérez 2019). For some of these reasons,

Twitter stands as the political social network chosen by researchers. Social studies consider it a network that reinforces political communication, facilitates the rapid spread of brief messages, and promotes the dissemination of informal and spontaneous ideas. No other network allows direct conversations between celebrities, politicians, public officials, and ordinary citizens such as Twitter. From the federal governments to small private organizations spread their opinions and communicate peer-to-peer with perfect strangers on Twitter (Campos-Domínguez 2017; Moya Sánchez, Herrera Damas 2015). Even between sitting politicians and candidates, Twitter has become more and more widespread. Because on Twitter people relevant to public opinion can interact directly with citizens, and for these interactions last over time and extend to other users, some politicians have been advised to transfer the promotion and management of their political image habitually made on television and in the corporate media, to Twitter. Politicians wanting to get their views across to broad audiences

and ordinary citizens use Twitter, which has sparked a shift in election campaigning and voter courting. Twitter was recommended explicitly for women politicians who wanted to practice public relations and gain visibility (Fontaine 2017; Kim, Park 2012; Martins de Souza et al. 2017; Opeibi 2019; Quevedo Redondo et al. 2016).

Some authors on political participation in social networks do not specify a specific platform. Others, even when they select in which network they carried out their investigations—commonly Facebook, Twitter and YouTube—conclude without distinguishing between the different networks, with general comments that cover them all, referring to the networks indistinctly or alluding to the convening capacity of networks without specifications. (Barisione et al. 2017; Brown et al. 2017; Effing et al. 2013; Youmans, York 2012). Authors analyze the effects of exposure to political news with discussions more or less favorable to political participation in networks without distinctions between platforms; others observe differences between the recruitment or the call for mobilization through traditional channels versus what is done on the social networks without telling us differences between those networks (Kümpel 2020; Lee et al. 2022; Serrano-Puche et al. 2018; Van Stekelengurg, Klandermans 2017). There are also studies that do not refer to social networks as applications or platforms but to the interaction that occurs on the internet in generic terms as a media sphere or, in Van Dijck (2013), as an “ecosystem”. This author warned that the like button belongs to Zuckerberg. Every time a user clicks ‘like’ on any of the more than 350 thousand websites that have it installed, their personal data is routed to Facebook even if they don’t have an account on that network.

“For instance, if you discover a movie via a movie database, you can tag it there, and this preference automatically appears on your Facebook friends’ New Feeds [...] All user data collected [...] are automatically routed back to Facebook [...] including nonmembers and logged out users; a Like box allows Facebook to trace how many users and which of their friends have pushed the button [...] the Like button epitomizes the profound modification of a social norm” (2013, 49–50).

Authors who do not indicate which social networks they used to make their observations refer to the Internet or Web 2.0 in general as if it constituted an ecosystem or as a tool that increases political participation and improves dialog between politicians and citizens, again without specifying any network (Brown et al. 2017; Hekim 2021; Kadiri Kehinde Kadijat et al. 2020). Regardless of the different emphases that social researchers give to their work, there is no doubt that the political participation and commitment of users on some networks makes it necessary for academics to investigate and understand the potential inherent in these actions in the various social

networks. In this digital age, there seems to be no politics without electronic interaction. A large portion of the literature has focused on understanding the political actions promoted on Twitter. Or on some network. We are at a point where it is necessary to conceive and use theories in accordance with the digital age to talk about the online phenomenon of political participation. Just as they do not take into account that conversations vary in many ways depending on the networks where they take place, some approaches to the political involvement that consider the electronic sphere use tools that are used to analyze the interaction in traditional media with the result that the specific form of interaction in digital media is ignored or not fully understood and the phenomenon is not properly dimensioned. But today, even social groups that interact outside the digital age rhythms are affected by the dynamics of social networks. “This does not mean that people from all over the world participate in the networks. In fact, for now, most don’t. But everyone is affected by the processes in the global networks of this social structure” (Castells 2012)¹. The degree of Twitter-political codependency is so high that some academics research with questions that in another time would have sounded absurd. For example, Straus and others (2016) wanted to know: “why some Senators choose to use Twitter more frequently than others”. All research questions add to knowledge. The spectrum that the studies describe establishes conditions where it is possible to continue the dialog on these two phenomena: political participation and Twitter, necessary and relevant to understand the reality of our time better. But the question remains to be asked about the daily political interaction that happens 24/7 between ordinary users on Twitter who are unknown to the public opinion.

1. TWITTER WHO ARE UNKNOWN TO PUBLIC OPINION

Regular users who discuss politics acquired stands and bullhorns on Twitter. This network offers a space that did not exist before to talk and discuss politics daily at all hours. Today, ordinary people can talk about politics not only under certain conditions, not only with people interested in politics, and not only in places where they can speak freely. With simple and efficient portability, they are instantly incorporated into the dialogic dynamics that display the Twitter timeline. Regardless of time and place, they can write, dictate or repeat whatever they are thinking about the political event that triggered their opinion of the moment; they use their digital prosthetics—as Mercedes Bunz (2017) calls to mobile phones always connected and always at hand—to enter Twitter to answer the question “What’s happening?”. Do those not accustomed to giving opinions on politics acquire interest there? Is this how political positions are currently being outlined? Does

1 When Castells made this statement, he took data from 2007 from Hammond and others, but the Statista page consulted on November 24, 2021, estimated 82% of Internet users of social networks in the world for this year. The English translation is ours. <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/512920/numero-mundial-usuarios-redes-sociales/>.

There is a group of political tweeters that nobody is studying: the detached

this thing of commenting on politics on Twitter turn into some action? Are political agents observing these interactions? The questions remain in the air because today, unless it is about research carried out in the context of campaigns, debates, or political elections; on perverse ways of using the network; regarding a topic, hashtag, meme, social cause, mobilization, or activism; about a relevant political situation; on a structural approach, or in comparison with another social phenomenon such as the media; no studies have been found that observe the usual interaction on day-to-day political issues made by ordinary users. With these concerns, the literature review presented here was carried out to map the interests that today occupy the attention of researchers to underline the need and propose a perspective that allows improving our understanding of the phenomenon. Once one understands this form of participation, it will be possible to analyze if it has any social influence, is capable of achieving any public influence, or exercises any power.

2. BRIEF NOTE ON CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY

The results on the following pages are part of an exploratory literature study conducted for a constructivist grounded theory doctoral research on political participation on Twitter. The Grounded Theory concept tends to confuse because it refers to a set of procedures with which a scientific study is carried out whose result is a theory, and it is also the name of this theoretical perspective that proposes a strategy for doing scientific research. The constructivist grounded theory is "an approach to grounded theory that overtly embraced a constructivist stance in qualitative inquiry, including co-construction of knowledge with participants and recognition of interpretation in analysis" (Nagel et al. 2015, 367). This methodology allows generating the theory that will explain how study participants conceive that interaction on which the researcher asks questions. It refers to something that lies at the root, at the foundation of the dynamics of the studied group. In that conception that a group of people has of their interactions, an exchange surprises the researcher, and he wants to understand it, and with that intention, he goes to the people who interact and asks them questions about their relationships to explain those conceptions in the way the studied group understands them. One way in which the researcher can explain this understanding of the phenomenon in such a way that she does not alter or modify it by adapting it to her own paradigms is with a grounded theory. If the researcher uses her deductive reasoning, establishes previous categories, or uses an established theory to explain how the members of the community exchange and communicate, the result of her research will not be a grounded theory. For these reasons, when working with grounded theory, there is no research theory, nor are previous categories or references emanating from verified theoretical bodies used (Charmaz, 2013; Glaser, Strauss 2017).

3. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The bibliography exploration reported here sought to know the objectives of the research conducted on political participation on Twitter. More than a thousand titles were obtained, indicating that the topic is being addressed with interest by the academic community. After filtering the results with date and discipline criteria, half remained, and of those, there is a total of 271 articles in our corpus. To describe this overview, here is referred to a representative selection of such studies. The grouping of the articles was carried out in congruence with the grounded theory method, and the presentation was ordered according to the number of titles in each theme. There are 118 papers on Twitter in the public sphere and only 28 on the relationship between this social network and the media, so there are interesting opportunities for research on this last topic. At the same time, four thematic sets were established, and the order from more to less was incorporated within them. The subject for each group was determined inductively from reading the abstracts of these materials. Interestingly, the first search was done in the UNAM Digital Library, and with the classification of topics already determined, Redalyc and ResearchGate were searched. It was not necessary to add new topics to the groups because it was pertinent to save the latest works in bags that already had labels. However, the increase in the number of papers did require a rearrangement of the index, the most relevant being that the group that was at the end with the fewest elements was positioned in the penultimate place: fewer works were obtained that address the relationship between the media and social networks and more devoted to activism and mobilizations.

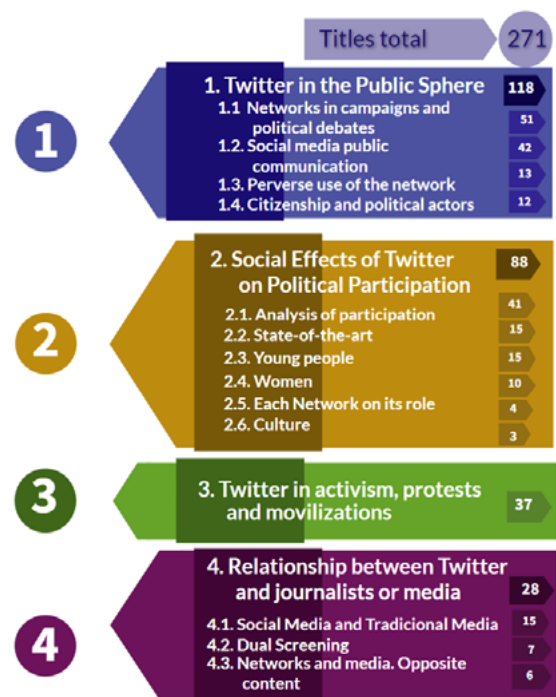


Figure 1. Classification of topics in the reviewed literature

The criteria used to classify this set of publications were: decreasing order in terms of the number of papers, alphabetical order by last name, and chronological order according to the date of publication, moving toward the most recent. The chronological criteria make it easier to observe how quickly these topics have evolved and the emergence of new routes of exploration by social researchers. The first works called on the academic community to take an interest in these topics by describing the characteristics of political participation in social networks and their potential, while the most recent analyze more specific aspects of these dynamics or enter the study from particular perspectives. It is understood that the relevance of studying these phenomena has been established in social studies. The diagram above shows the relationship between topics and titles listed. Only the articles mentioned here are listed in the bibliography.

This bibliography review left out many valuable works because they did not focus—specifically—on analyzing the relationship between political participation and Twitter. Studies that integrated their analysis corpus with political hashtags or algorithms with political variables but investigated phenomena unrelated to political participation or political phenomena with disciplines and approaches other than sociology and communication were also omitted. I apologize to the authors. Before submitting what is here, reviewing the entire document led me to eliminate subtopics, combine others, and also bring out some works with perspectives from psychology, education, or the law. In this corpus, 51 works are framed in the context of political campaigns and partisan debates—this being the most extensive set of texts—and only 3 that analyze the political use of social networks relating it to the cultural particularities of the populations studied. That's the thing.

4. THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION ON TWITTER

According to this literature review, when it comes to political participation on Twitter from a social studies perspective, researchers choose between four themes: [1] Twitter in the Public Sphere; [2] Social Effects of Twitter on Political Participation; [3] Twitter in Activism, Protests and Movilizations, and [4] Relationship Between Twitter and Journalists or Media. The following brief description of the content of some of these articles gives an idea of where social researchers are focusing their attention.

5. TWITTER IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

This first subgroup is made up of 118 articles that indicate the research topics that social academics prefer. Within this set, under the title Networks in campaigns and political debates, we place 51 articles that sought to elucidate how social networks affect campaigns and political debates during elections. Vaccari and others (2015), for example, showed that the more political information users acquire and the more they express themselves

on social networks, the more likely they are to directly contact their politicians or candidates using their emails or their social networks and to attend offline events to which they are invited. Hosch-Dayican and others (2016) affirm that there are very few studies on electoral campaigns that observe the messages that citizens post on social networks; their findings show that citizens use more negative campaigns while professionals try to be persuasive and conclude that users consider Twitter as a network to express emotions. López-Rabadán and others (2016) concluded that the use of photographs and posters on Twitter are of central importance in pre-electoral processes, while Ruiz del Olmo and Bustos Díaz (2016) showed that there is an evolution to a communicative model more in the image than the content and Quevedo and others (2016) observed the tendency to publish photos where 'personalization techniques stand out'. McElwee and Yasseri (2017) studied the financing received by candidates based on the topic and content volume of their social media posts and found that posting more frequent topic-related general content is associated with higher donation only when controlling for a candidate's occupation, status, and information search. Heras and Díaz (2018) found that the Internet has not displaced traditional forms of communication in electoral processes because this does not make any difference in the electoral results. However, Kadiri Kehinde Kadijat and others (2020) found that citizens' engagement in pre-presidential campaigns and the level of discourse on Twitter is predictive of events in the offline sphere. Jensen (2017) previously stated that the uses of Twitter for the empowerment of users are quite marginal and concluded that users' retweets use the same languages as those posted by politicians, journalists, and relevant public figures. Finally, Nicasio-Varea and Pérez-Gabalón (2021) conclude that despite politicians' increasingly widespread use of Twitter, they must learn to exploit this instrument that offers the possibility of reaching the electorate and gaining support at the polls.

The second subgroup of articles under this set is titled Social media public communication and refers to 42 studies on how politicians or government bodies relate with the users of social networks outside of electoral seasons. Nusselder (2013) states that politicians who use social networks seem especially linked or involved in debate and decision-making because the networks offer more significant opportunities for direct communication and public participation and affirm that this participation form privileges a policy of immediate gratification that reduces or annuls the traditional forms of representativeness. On the other hand, Leston-Bandeira and Bender (2013); Martínez-Rolán and Piñeiro-Otero (2014), and Larsson (2015) found that the presence of government bodies in the networks outside of electoral periods is quite limited and that there does not seem to be a defined strategy for government groups to integrate the participation of digital citizenship into their activity. Sørensen's (2016) article examines the presence of parliamentary members

There is a group of political tweeters that nobody is studying: the detached

on Facebook and Twitter. It states that, unlike in other countries, in Denmark, parliamentarians have a high degree of participation in conversations with citizens. In contrast, citizens follow their politicians, read their publications, and discuss with them using social media resources. Straus and others (2016) wanted to know why some senators use Twitter more than others and found correlations between income, ideological intensity, and staff dedicated to social media. Alvidrez (2017) analyzed how the partisan identity of users affects the evaluation they make of a candidate on Twitter based on her interactivity: better ratings are shown with more interaction; Kruikemeier and others (2016) had already reached the same conclusion. Tromble (2018) found that the demands that citizens make of politicians do affect the commitments that politicians make to the public; Kurt and Karaduman (2012) had already reached the same conclusions: they stated that the effectiveness of social networks in the public sphere is increasing, that politicians recognize this and have already started using them, and that these apps allow officials to reach ever-wider audiences. Komodromos (2015) also stated that, in times of crisis, social networks stimulate citizen participation, reshape creativity and offer forms of communication that facilitate interaction between politicians and citizens. The study by Williamson and Ruming (2017) agrees with the latter; in their article, they not only affirm that the use of social networks by a community that opposed a project was significant but that the networks allowed them to appropriate the arguments of the counterparts and use them to support their own arguments.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, researchers have found that interactions on Twitter between politicians or public officials and users do not vary concerning forms of communication prior to confinement. Chaves-Montero and others (2021) analyzed the tweets published during the confinement and observed precariousness in social services and the need for a management and financing model that satisfies fundamental social rights. Another study on this topic is that of Arbaiza and others (2022), who observed an increase in the activity of the social network of a former president before and during the pandemic but unidirectional communication, since the politician only published information and did not interact with users.

The third subgroup of articles under this set is titled Perverse use of the network and refers to 13 studies that review the introduction or non-introduction of fake news, bots, or algorithmic biases in social networks to manipulate public opinion. For example, Wells and others (2016) analyzed the concept of 'hybrid media' in Trump's strategy to secure the nomination and found the use of celebrity culture and a mix of politics and entertainment. Slaughter (2016), meanwhile, studied the participation of social networks in political speeches in the 2016 US campaign after the announcement of Donald Trump's candidacy and found the influence of political rhetoric on access to information. In a vision

contrary to these perspectives, Bail, and others (2020) state that Russia intends to increase political divisions in the United States but that, although a growing number of studies analyze the strategy of such campaigns, it is not yet known whether they shaped the political attitudes and behaviors of the United States Americans. Another study that accuses Russian disinformation strategies is that of Richard (2021) who states that Western political leaders accuse the Russian government of "organized disinformation on an industrial scale, designed to undermine the democratic process" (2021, 95) and that the Kremlin provides various types of aid to far-right groups to intervene in political processes. Chirwa and Manyana (2021) affirm that Twitter and Facebook are critical agents for the dissemination of news extracted from the media, political discourse, and public opinion, and denounce the use that a former president made of the networks taking advantage of this characteristic, by introducing false news; the authors explain fake news and its effects on post-Covid-19 society, using articles from the main newspapers and news channels. In this same line, Igwebuikwe and Chimuanya (2021) used Van Leeuwen's discourse legitimation approach and discourse analysis to analyze 120 fake news posts shared on Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp during a general election and found that expert authority and role modeling are most often used to validate fake news.

The last subgroup of papers under this set is about Citizenship and political actors and contains 12 works that made theorizations or models for the study of the interaction between citizens and political actors on social networks; it is the case of the work of Papacharissi and De Fatima Oliveira (2012) that presents a theory of affective news to explain the distinctiveness of content produced by online audiences in times of political crisis. Sánchez Sánchez and others (2013) investigated theoretical and empirical references about framing, political culture, and social networks in more than 7 thousand tweets from political leaders, opinion leaders, and users. They found that the political culture is framed in discourses directed towards positive or negative conflict, referring to political elites and social problems. Robles and others (2015) studied the sociopolitical use of social networks based on a model of methodological individualism and concluded that attitudes towards the political possibilities of the Internet constitute an essential factor for this type of political action. Hemmings-Jarret and others (2017) present a communicative model to understand event stimuli that trigger user engagement in political discourse before, during, and after significant events occur where changes in engagement may be affected by choice of words in discussions on social networks. Hopp and Vargo (2017), based on the stimulation hypothesis and the notion that communication with other people can motivate rudeness, found that the relationship between negative political advertising and citizen impoliteness in social networks is conditioned by socioeconomic status. Santander and others (2017)

used a computational intelligence model to monitor the interaction of tweeters with the candidates for a primary election. Faria da Silva and others (2021) propose and validate criteria and guidelines to evaluate the quality of argumentation on Twitter in the field of politics, where the relevant aspects are clarity, arrangement, credibility, and emotional appeal.

6. SOCIAL EFFECTS OF TWITTER ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In this second set of works, 88 articles study the effects of the political use of social networks in the different areas of analysis proposed by the researchers. The first topic, Analysis of participation, grouped 41 titles that refer to the motivations for participating or not politically in the network or the context in which such participation arises in studies not related to citizen mobilizations or political campaigns. For example, Campbell and Kwak (2011) found that mobility-based discourse is positively associated with political participation but this relationship is moderated by the size and heterogeneity of the membership network. Olof Larsson (2014) concludes that while everyday political discussions can serve as a potential channel for citizens, the influence of established and political extremist actors is clearly perceived. Hyun and Kim (2015) investigated whether receiving, following, and disseminating news on social media have differential and interactive relationships with political participation and show a positive association between political conversation and participation. Alvidrez (2017) analyzes how users' partisan identity affects how they evaluate a political candidate on her Twitter account based on its interactivity. Halpern and others (2017) state that Facebook affects collective efficacy while Twitter does so internally, and discuss the various possibilities that open up for social sciences scholars about the different network ties that these platforms present. Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2017) compare the results of calling protests independently (self-organized) against doing so using the routes of an organization (organization-centeRed). Irak and Öztürk (2018) confirm that Twitter is used as a relevant means of communication that stands out as the only channel for democratic discourse. Marcos García (2018) analyzes the main uses that political actors and citizens make of Twitter and Instagram and concludes that while parties and politicians use the networks to promote themselves, citizens do so to criticize and show discontent with politics and its representatives, and states that the dialogical potential of these tools is not being used. Serrano-Puche and others (2018) analyze the phenomenon of incidental exposure: even though users come across news without looking for it on their social networks, for example, when they use it for entertainment or social content, this exposure is related to their understanding of public affairs and their political participation. Towner and Lego Muñoz (2018) analyzed the increase in political participation in baby

boomers based on their attention to the media and social networks and found that television does not modify their political involvement, while presidential candidates' websites do increase their participation in digital and physical environments. Koivula and others (2019) examined the relationship between online political activity and personal participation in online identity bubbles and showed that political activity was positively associated with identity bubbles. From linguistic studies, Muro-Ampuero and Bach (2019) had already considered Twitter as a resource for empowering citizens, and as an alternative to traditional forms of political participation, they affirm that the characteristics of Twitter, seen as text, allow understanding the dialogic space where users interact. Lynn and others (2020) suggest that Brexit discourse on Twitter can largely be explained by calculated audiences organized around the two political parties and campaigns. Zumárraga-Espinosa (2020) examines the relationship between the political use of social networks and participation in protests at the individual level, in addition to the moderating effect of socioeconomic status and membership in political groups, and shows that users who use their social networks for political activities tend to participate more frequently in political protest actions.

The second subgroup in this set is about 15 State-of-the-art articles that reflect academic production that deals with the relationship between political participation and social networks. Effing and others (2013) conclude that the expectations of public participation by the appearance of the Internet were not met, but that can change with social networks. Nascimento and others (2013) present an exploratory study of the Brazilian literature on the uses and potentialities of Twitter in political communication to draw a map of trends and research paths and delineate the limits of this search field and observe an enrichment in the use of Twitter by political actors. Feixa (2014) observed the evolution of the forms of political participation of young people in a bibliographic review, using a triangle formed by 1) political cultures, 2) social movements, and 3) digital networks. Moya and Herrera (2015) integrated a decalogue that emphasizes issues of transparency, horizontality, and civic participation in social networks.

The third subgroup of papers contains 15 articles where young people constitute the studied population and articles whose central axis is the political participation of youth in social networks. In his article, Martínez Rodríguez (2011) presents the political, legal, and educational foundations for the participation of adolescents and young people in public and political matters from the perspective of e-participation. Briggs (2017) concludes that Web 2.0 in general, and Facebook and Twitter specifically, facilitate and encourage greater political participation among young people. Marguart and others (2020) document a process of de-mediation of politics which means that the traditional media are losing their influence as primary sources of information for citizens: young people turn to their social networks

There is a group of political tweeters that nobody is studying: the detached

to find out about politics, and since the platforms allow direct communication with officials, the interest in the media decreases. Previously, Sveningsson (2015) reached similar conclusions: found that young people are apparently less interested in political news than previous generations, but concluded that the decrease in the consumption of traditional media does not indicate a lack of interest in content, but rather in mediation; young people appreciate the immediacy of the news on their networks, but at the same time, they consider it not real. Omotayo and Folorunso (2020) conclude that the use that young people make of social networks to participate politically is relevant and that they serve to motivate citizens to get involved in political activities: young people participate for reasons that have to do with the ease of use and the effectiveness of the various platforms; Valenzuela and others (2014) had already reached these conclusions. Another study by Valenzuela that observes how the use of Facebook and Twitter is related to political participation is headed by Scherman and others (2015); these authors confirmed the positive relationship between the use of networks and street demonstrations. Valenzuela and others (2018) affirm that Facebook is characterized by the communication of networks with strong links, while Twitter is effective in weak links and invites the academic community to carry out more studies of political participation that look at the different forms of participation related to these platforms. Contrary to these conclusions, Kholid and others (2015) do not report differences between the different networks. Lee (2021) analyzes the relationship between the social capital of young people and their civic engagement in their use of Facebook and Twitter and reveals that social capital on Twitter is associated with participation in political organizations, while on Facebook is associated with participation in charitable organizations.

The fourth subgroup includes 10 titles that reflect on the role of women in political participation in social networks. Dashti and others (2015) relate the spiral of silence theory to Arab women's online political participation on Twitter to analyze whether the theory is still useful and show that the spiral of silence does not explain women's behavior either face-to-face or online. Fountaine (2017) affirms that women in public office or electoral campaigns find Twitter a platform for their projection and visibility. Sánchez-Duarte and Fernández-Romero (2017) conclude that social networks are configured as inbred spaces and not completely conquered by feminist groups. Ofori-Parku and Moscato (2018) affirm that in Nigeria, government regulations, politics, and the context itself, modify the angle from which the issue of women is presented in nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States. Zhuozhi and others (2018) find that campaigns on Facebook or Twitter, along with electronic petitioning and online political activities may have caused underrepresentation of women's and ethnic minority causes in the political system, as well as pragmatic obstacles to effective participation. Bickerton and

Löfgren (2021) affirm that public participation is a gender experience reflected in the use that women make of social networks; they explored the experiences of politically engaged female Twitter users and concluded that gender influences the ability to participate and engage politically. Parsloe and Campbell (2021) studied how Twitter has facilitated indigenous women's activism in North America. Foster and others (2021) also studied women's social media activism. They found that women's social identity, collective action intentions, and behavioral collective actions are strengthened due to tweeting against sexism.

The fifth subgroup in this set is called Each Network on its role and refers to 4 investigations that analyze differences in the forms of political participation concerning the different networks. Van Cauwenberge and Broersma (2017) compared Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp on political participation and concluded that, except Instagram, the use of news from social networks is not directly related to the political participation, but that there are positive indirect relationships between the use of news and political participation on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, when political conversations happen online. Haro-de-Rosario and others (2018) compared Twitter and Facebook to determine which achieves the highest commitment between citizens and their government and showed that Facebook is preferred as a means of participation in local government affairs.

The last subgroup in this set is about Culture and contains 3 articles that analyze the differences in the political use of social networks linked to the country, language, or ethnicity of the users. The researchers found that institutional environments and technological possibilities play a role in the political discourse of social networks; that institutional and non-institutional political participation is significantly stronger in established democracies than in third-wave ones; that the content of the posts of the English-speaking communities, compared to those speaking in Malay, differ both in the way they use Twitter and in the users with whom they interact, and that social media platforms are likely to increase ingroup political participation, but also chronically decrease outgroup engagement (Vaccari et al. 2015; Ahmed et al. 2018; Workneh 2021).

7. TWITTER IN ACTIVISM, PROTESTS, AND MOBILIZATIONS

This third set of works contains 37 articles related to activism, mobilizations, and citizen participation in general linked to a cause or its triggering factors and their links with social networks. Demirhan's (2014) study sought to understand the role of social media in the Gezi Park and Taksim Square movement in central Istanbul where politicians, protesters themselves, the public, and the media agreed that social networks were the reason for the movement. Veenstra and others (2014) compare Twitter posts based on the device on which they

were launched and suggest that there are significant differences between tweets posted on mobile devices and those posted on computers and affirm that Twitter stands as a new platform for citizens journalism. Romanos and Sádaba (2016) studied the participation of 15-M activists, seeking to assess their contribution to the transformation of formal politics in the development of new political parties and in democracy in Spain. Brown and others (2017) analyzed the content of more than 400,000 tweets with the hashtag #SayHerName, a dialogue focused on black cisgender and transsexual women who were victims of violence. Cunha (2017) studied the emergence of progressive evangelical political activism in Brazil and concluded that the relationship between evangelicals, politics, and social networks constitutes a watershed in Brazilian politics: traditional media choose conservative voices and referents to build a concept where evangelicals are an organically articulated block. Macafee (2018) states that there is no connection between political expression in social networks and physical participation, or that the relationship mechanisms are not yet understood. Hale and others (2018) state that social networks have caused users to have access to a large amount of information on social issues and that this exposure stimulates political participation in mobilizations that gain popularity while discouraging or depressing participation in causes that seem less popular. Coppock and others (2016) observed differences in the amounts of support given to causes that appear on the Twitter timeline versus causes that are sent directly to users' WhatsApp. Mercea (2018) analyzed the collective identity in the social protests in Romania against the largest open pit gold mine Roșia Montană; she concludes that transnational activism achieves a cohesive collective identity in social networks while maintaining local organization. Agbozo and Spassov (2019) affirm that social networks are hope in creating social awareness, but they clarify that not all cases are successful. Terán and Wendpap (2021) affirm that folkmedia activism creates mechanisms of reading, identification, and actions in its own channels, capable of overcoming post-truth.

8. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWITTER AND JOURNALISTS OR MEDIA

The fourth and last set of titles group 28 articles that relate traditional media with social networks. The first subgroup is called Social Media and Traditional Media, and refers to 15 studies that analyze relationships and distinctions between traditional media and social networks, with respect to the role they play in the political participation of citizens. Mwendu Maweu (2013) compared the use of Facebook and Twitter by Kenyan users in the 2007 general election that culminated in violence, with that in 2013, where there was no post-election violence, to verify whether claims that traditional and new media-fueled ethnic hatred was correct.

Parra Gómez (2016) analyzed how journalists use new technologies to disseminate content and the use made of Twitter by newspapers specialized in politics that produce news in electoral campaigns and concludes that Twitter is a tool that they use daily, that it becomes an extension of the newsroom, and that the information in the newsrooms goes beyond the paper or digital editions. Justel-Vázquez and others (2018) quantified how many times statements posted on Twitter are used by journalists and concluded that the network is already a source of press journalists, not only in electoral contexts. Casero-Ripollés (2020) states that the exercise of influence on Twitter within the media system is being profoundly reconfigured and that globally the media obtains intermediate and low values in authority, which calls into question its power to condition the political conversation on Twitter effectively. Raynauld and others (2016) claim that little has been studied about the role of social networks in the general functioning of social movements; their finding is that media reporting fueled the online movement because protesters frequently used media coverage to support their positions. Results similar to those of these authors, but interpreted differently, are presented by Trillos Pacheco and Soto Molina (2018), who investigated political activism and public opinion on Facebook and Twitter and in traditional media and concluded that activists in social networks, far from acting on their own, are manipulated by opinion leaders who appear in traditional media, and affirm that the media, together with the networks, form a circuit that mediates relationships of power and social transformations. McCargo (2017) has another interpretation of the relations between traditional and new media, analyzing the rise of partisan television channels closely associated with mass protest movements and concludes that traditional and new media have empowered citizens and deepened popular political commitment, but they have also caused divisions and splits that have even translated into violence. Anastasopoulos and Williams (2019) state that much of our knowledge about participation in political protests derives from data collected on violent protests, because the traditional media, due to demands from audiences and advertisers, focused on the violence of social mobilizations and claimed that the digital revolution had diverted attention from traditional news sources to social networks. Gehrke and Benetti (2020) invite the use of Twitter as a source in data journalism with the reservation that, since Twitter is mediated by algorithms, it is conducive to the spread of disinformation. Jaraba Molina and others (2020) analyzed the tweets published by twenty journalists and concluded that the topics they address on Twitter are more extensive than those presented in traditional media. From the users' perspective, the findings of De la Garza Montemayor and Barredo Ibáñez (2017) support these conclusions: they identified that young people use networks more than conventional media and observed a close relationship between networks and their online and offline political

There is a group of political tweeters that nobody is studying: the detached

participation. The work of Rodríguez Cano (2017) also enriches this topic; he shows that traditional media took trending topics from social networks and that this practice covered almost all media spectrum.

Christine Hine (2020) carries out a content analysis of the representations that three British newspapers made of Twitter between 2007 and 2014 to explore the potential contribution of the different journalistic practices in maintaining inequalities in the use of Twitter platforms social media and concludes that there is a complex ecology of intersecting connections between traditional and new media and between the different constructions of media as cultural artifacts which must be explored to understand how people assimilate the variety of representations of what is Twitter and who uses it and affirms that this exploration is important because it is related to the ability to consider oneself with a voice, which is a decisive aspect of digital equality and social equality.

The second subgroup of articles in this set is about Dual Screening and refers to 7 Works where the population studied uses their social networks to express themselves in real time about the political content presented on television. Vaccari and others (2015) state that the practice of dual screening is already routine for many citizens during relevant political events broadcast on television and conclude that users who comment on events on their social networks in real-time and engage in conversations using hashtags are consistent with positive associations and political engagement. Robertson and others (2019) analyzed the second screen during televised debates and show that Twitter comments are mainly humorous and negative towards the candidates but that a considerable proportion of Twitter users were critical and offered alternative interpretations indicating democratic responsibility. Ortiz and others (2017) investigated the characteristics of conversations on Twitter during the televised presidential debate in the first round of Brazilian elections in 2014, identified the engagement peaks at specific moments of the broadcast, and evaluated how the environment could have affected the discourses built around the debate.

The last subgroup of titles in the set, and the last in our complete corpus, is called Networks and Media Opposite Content, and group 6 articles where it is observed that the framing made by the traditional media regarding political power is contrary to the content circulates in social networks. Ausserhofer and Maireder (2013) affirm that the network formed by the most relevant politicians on Twitter in Austria is dominated by an elite of professionals and, at the same time, open to external participation and that niche authorities are emerging whose political speeches on Twitter are opposed to those of the media. Robles and others (2015) analyzed that the activists of the 15-M movement used the Internet to communicate with potential audiences and as a proposal for alternative frameworks to those handled by traditional media; when the movement broke into Spanish public life, the activists tried to control the information about what

was happening in the squares of various Spanish cities against the frameworks developed by the press. Bode and Dalrymple (2016) concluded that tweeters are more interested and engaged in politics in general and less trusting of what is published by traditional media. Hemley and others (2018) state that activists on Twitter are disproportionately on the side of those who affect news coverage and by extension, affect the public agenda because the platform is useful for increasing the audience. Syahputra and Ritonga (2019) studied citizen journalism after the affiliation of the media with political parties and the rise of social networks and found that there is a decline in traditional media and an intensification of social networks and affirm that there is darkness in the news alternating with information and opinions issued by citizens on Twitter.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Differences in the participation of users related to the different platforms they choose for their messages are disregarded in some studies while others do not specify which applications they used to carry out their work. Referring generically to social networks, as in some cases in this collection of titles, avoids the fact that not all applications are the same; as some authors show, this distinction is amalgamated with the economic and political context in which the phenomena are inscribed, so it is important to delineate it. Talking about England is not the same as talking about Nigeria or Mexico. Neither is Facebook the same as Weibo or WhatsApp. It seems that in authoritarian regimes, the differences between the different applications are blurred because the contents of the messages are prioritized over the media used to spread them. Is it always so? Is it like this for all repressive systems? Studies are needed in this regard. Not all social network users can choose the platform they will use to circulate their ideas. The transverse axis that aligns political participation with the dynamics in social networks does not manage to go through all cases. What Western researchers conclude about political communication in the digital age does not apply to the entire globe. Not even in the West is the same in all nations. There is an increase in the interaction between public officials and citizens in the studies carried out in the early years of the 2010s with respect to more recent studies; it would be interesting to verify if this is so. Another interesting thing to prove is whether or not there are peculiarities or differences in the forms of communication and interactions between citizens and government entities that vary depending on the countries and cultures.

In the digital age, the question of whether the media is the message is: it depends. With these studies, it is clear that it is neither prudent nor appropriate to analyze the interaction phenomenon in social networks with the tools that media scholars have sharpened. Not only is it required to specify in which media and which message, but also the context that, as some authors point out, is positioned

as the factor that tips the balance to one side or the other in the possible transcendence of electronic interactions. It is urgent to make distinctions. There is a need to link or associate the elements that had not been associated in communicative study objects to see how they are integrated and what new aspects they manage to show (Orozco, González 2011). Researchers report traditional media describing realities that are not verified in social networks. What happened before the digital age? Are we deceived by the media? Do the networks manipulate us, lie to us? Despite some discrepancies in the conclusions of these authors, the consensus that the traditional media is losing authority and its ability to influence public opinion must be verified. The frames that interpret reality used by the media differ from those used on Twitter. It seems that Twitter currently influences traditional media and not the other way around, and that Twitter's authority and influence on public opinion is greater than that of the business press. Is this what is happening? If this is happening, it is alarming that the traditional media maintain agendas on the national context that are clearly unrelated to the topics that make trends in social networks. The candidates and politicians, for their part, do not use or do not know or do not want to take advantage of the possibilities that Twitter opens up to dialogue with their audiences. This attitude is inconsistent with studies showing how online interaction between celebrities and ordinary users translates into forms of social commitment and manifestation. The latter is another consensus in the motley collection of academic titles.

The possibility of leveraging huge amounts of data with sophisticated software and algorithms is highly relevant, but conclusions should be measured. Wouldn't it be better to observe the phenomenon without theories, as grounded theory proposes, first to explore what the data say? To what extent is the effort to scientifically demonstrate that Russian bots intend to politically polarize Americans the desire of a researcher to insert an agenda presented as a hypothesis? It would be useful to dig by hand to get the data and see it with a magnifying glass. Extensive, very imprecise samples, indiscriminately collecting data on industrial ranges, are acceptable for clients, but how valid is it to use them in academic settings without a qualitative lens that can make a dispassionate approach? The conclusions of big data must be more in tune with its large, vague, and indiscriminate data.

Studies on the relationship between few followers and the impact of messages are lacking. It is logical to say that the number of retweets a tweet receives indicates that many people read the tweet, but it is incorrect: bots could have retweeted it, or real people could have retweeted without reading the tweet. A tweet often retweeted from a visible user, an influencer, a politician or a celebrity with many followers, does not indicate anything. Citizen voices that manifest themselves in the networks can go just as unnoticed by algorithmic leverages as the marginalized hidden under a bridge of the apocalyptic drone that started the revolution. It is impossible to say yes or no about the

potential of social networks in political participation, but we can integrate the political map of the digital world by gathering the studies that specify its coordinates.

Practically all the studies on mobilizations, protests, and activism that I present here were carried out with data collected around a hashtag. There is technical practicality in using this resource for the integration of the corpus and also methodological relevance. In addition to technical-methodological criteria, the fact that academic studies allude to the multiple and diverse hashtags that circulate in social networks to identify social movements makes these causes gain visibility in the scientific sphere as well, which is fair and imperative for democracy. However, I wonder to what extent this practice of circumscribing studies around a hashtag legitimizes a criterion of integration of population samples that becomes hegemonic in social studies, setting aside a portion of reality that is also manifest in social studies. To what extent has the use of hashtags to locate data become an obstacle for analysis proposals that wish to form their corpus by hand and would provide insights into political interaction in social networks without which there would be no completeness in our sciences? Not all the publications that social network users make around a cause are made with hashtags. Not all political posts that social network users make are about a cause. Not all political posts that users make on social networks are about an event, a date, a protest, or a known abstract or concrete concept. Social network users manifest themselves politically daily, not only from specific events and not only concerning them. Social networks give podiums and megaphones to each of their users. No ordinary citizen could before express their discontent with the framing that the media gives their news, but now the social sciences ask them to do it on the street, with an organized group, all concentrated in a specific geographical space, so they can analyze it. Or that he goes to the polls and expresses that rejection on election day so that they consider it valid. Or that use a hashtag or a keyword so they can see it. There are networks: anyone can enter to study what is happening. It is our sciences that must mobilize devising strategies to identify those users and those publications and ask them why and for what they do it. As long as that does not happen, they are only dealing with a portion of what is happening, and it is visible to eyes distanced from political interaction on social networks.

In general terms, I observe a tendency to interpret the research findings by questioning the political commitment of online activists in Latin American authors and optimism and celebratory attitude in Anglo-Saxon academics. I find in some studies a propensity to interpret the data while neglecting the interaction itself. Perhaps it is not the fault of the academics but of the tools they use and the comfort they find in already tested procedures.

I highlight how, with equidistant objects of study, academics arrive at conflicting interpretations. Although another consensus is the affirmation that the use of iconographic images in political campaigns on social

There is a group of political tweeters that nobody is studying: the detached

networks is increasing, some authors conclude favorably about the centrality of this communicative strategy while others detract from these images, referring to them as if they were not texts that carry content that needs to be interpreted by the audience.

I value the conclusions of authors who express their points of view and reflections based on their findings. For example, the case of the administrators of the social networks of Danish politicians who, in an interview with the researchers, affirm that Facebook is only useful for one-way communication, ignoring the interaction that anyone can verify in the timeline of that social network. They believe that users enter Facebook to go through its different walls just as they bored leaf through a magazine. The authors did not limit themselves to expressing the results, but also claimed that this explains the lack of representativeness of Danish politics on Facebook. Different authors, attached to their results, would have affirmed that Facebook is only useful for unidirectional communication of Danish politics, causing zipzaps in their union and with laypeople. Contrary to this is the author who tries so hard to suspend his judgment that makes his academic piece that should contribute to the understanding of a phenomenon, dissolve in the ether of learned words without communicating anything.

Some authors refer to the physical world as “reality” in this collection of documents, which makes me uncomfortable with respect to their bibliographic references. Ink has been spilled over the real and the virtual in the digital age. Although the discussion was not settled, there is no longer any doubt that everything that happens in the online world is real. Castells clarified it before the end of the Twentieth Century:

“When critics of electronic media argue that the new symbolic environment does not represent ‘reality’, they implicitly refer to an absurdly primitive notion of ‘uncoded’ real experience that never existed. All realities communicate through symbols. And in interactive human communication, regardless of the medium, all symbols are somewhat displaced relative to their assigned semantic meaning. In a sense, all of reality is perceived virtually”² (Castells 2020, 406).

In the case of political participation, social movements are studied; organized actions; the manifestations articulated with identity and motor that show evidence of their chronology, legitimacy, and legality, and –as is evident in this collection of titles– the social actions that take place around political events in the form of partisan debates or electoral processes. Hegemonic perspectives have colonized social studies ignoring phenomena that do not conform to their frameworks or do not fit into the taxonomies that keep the forms of political participation in worn cases. What I propose is to observe the detached political interaction on Twitter, that is to say, that it is not inscribed around political parties or hashtags, nor can it be raised with algorithmic levers because it does not meet

relationship or visibility criteria. Their participants do not become influencers, their tweets do not become a trend, their interactions do not exceed a certain number. I affirm that despite these characteristics, this invisible political participation that unfolds among unknown tweeters is part of the connected forms of political participation. As I write these lines, I speak of a participation that exists and is happening. To show what this social group can do or to verify if it can carry out any action or influence any political agenda, we must first be able to see it.

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