

## “Us” and “Others” in Ecuadorian president Lenín Moreno’s speeches during 2018

*El nosotros y los otros en los discursos del presidente ecuatoriano Lenín Moreno durante 2018*

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### Abstract

The article analyzes speeches of the Ecuadorian president, Lenín Moreno, regarding the process of building up the concepts of the *prodestinatarios* and the *contradestinatarios*: that is, a binary representation of “Us” and “Others”, implying positive and negative depictions. The study explores the president’s discursive strategy in the Ecuadorian political realm during 2018. That year, Moreno adopted a political frame of consensus to articulate his administration with powerful groups. And, in doing so, his former political partner and ex-president, Rafael Correa, became Moreno’s new opponent. Political attacks, then, targeted Correa relying upon and rewriting what was such administration. There is, also, an erasing allowing to put together an “Us” in Correa’s “Citizenship Revolution” turned into Moreno’s “Government of everybody”.

**Keywords:** discourse analysis; political speech; Ecuador; politics; consensus Government.

### Resumen

El artículo analiza los discursos del mandatario ecuatoriano Lenín Moreno (2017-2021) a partir de la construcción de los *prodestinatarios* y los *contradestinatarios*, es decir, de un nosotros y un otros, con sus representaciones positivas y negativas. El estudio indaga en la estrategia discursiva del presidente en el contexto de Ecuador durante el año 2018, cuando Moreno asume una lógica política del consenso para su articulación con grupos de poder y que su nuevo opositor sea su excorreligionario y ex-mandatario Rafael Correa, a quien se dirigen todos los ataques mediante las entidades del imaginario y con una reescritura de lo que fue ese gobierno. Los resultados del análisis del discurso político evidencian un abandono de categorías aglutinadoras del nosotros en la “Revolución Ciudadana” de Correa a “El Gobierno de todos” de Moreno.

**Palabras clave:** análisis de discurso; discurso político; Ecuador; política; gobierno de consenso.

## 1. Introduction

This article analyzes the President of Ecuador, Lenín Moreno, speeches as broadcast on television networks and interviews during 2018. The objective is to study the President's discursive strategy (Verón, 1987), which includes building a new *us* and *others*, based on a strategic switch to a logic of political consensus. For this purpose, we emphasize content analysis looking for its effect on meaning over linguistics.

The time of discursive production (2018) came after Rafael Correa's 10 years in office, for whom Lenín Moreno served as vice-president (2007-2013) and fellow party member in Alianza PAIS<sup>1</sup>. Moreno claimed that his ideology was leftist (for example, he was a member of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria —MIR— in the 70s), but that he had a progressive parting of ways from his antecessor ever since he assumed the presidency on May 24, 2017. Said parting brought about a breakdown of political order in the country (Ganuzá, 2019) due to Moreno distancing himself from Correa's confrontational logic. The allied opposing coalitions made the change even more radical in efforts to gain the support from even the right-wing and traditionally powerful economic groups in Ecuador.

Maingueneau (2012) states that the relevance of discourse analysis lies in "understanding the discourse as articulation of texts and social places" (p. 4). On political discourse, Van Dijk (1999b) concurs that it is defined contextually and should not be limited to the text's structural properties. "Discursive" is understood as a broader term than Linguistic or verbal, given it is related with the process of social construction of meaning, as considered by, for example, Ernesto Laclau (2005).

This article is organized in the following way: first, a discussion of theoretical framework and discourse analysis methodology. Then, a description of the control of political-mediatic context in Lenín Moreno's administration, depicting how the communicative situation was managed; the targeted audience's construction of an *us* and an *others* is also discussed and, lastly, we show how President Lenin Moreno portrays the past and present.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The field of politics has an antagonistic dimension via which hegemonic social order is devised product of decisions made within a determined social context, resulting in no fundamental or absolute order. These hegemonic practices are a means with which to assemble and configure social contexts as an expression of power relationships (Mouffe, 2014).

Politics are born in these assembled contexts, which also give rise to an *us* and an *others*, a process in which discourse plays a main role. Eliseo Verón (1987) indicates that politics imply confrontation with other statements, the relationship with an enemy, a struggle between declaring parties like a controversial aspect of discourse. In terms of defining the others, Teun van Dijk (1999b) sustains that it is about ideological competitors and adversaries related to the political systems, institutions, processes and actors. Here a strategic principle is applied: political text is limited to a dichotomic evaluation that emphasizes or minimizes in favor or against the *us* and the *others*.

In contrast, if there were a system of identity (agreement) the entire community supports, this would be a logic of consensus, because order would be perfect (equality for all and between all), and therefore there would be no conflict over the social construct. However, this is not the case: the subordinate groups do not comprise part of the social construct, and those in power have resorted to a logic of consensus in an attempt at social immobility to prevent change: "It is the disappearance of all difference between the disputing party and society. It is the disappearance (...) of open dispute in the name of the people and their lack of freedom. It is, in short, the disappearance of politics" (Rancière, 1996, p. 130).

In this point, according to Rancière, there is a "system of opinion" signifying the disappearance of conflict between subjects in public opinion. It would be a simulated reality of a supposed equality of criteria between the parties, which hides injustices and forms of dominance. These actions hide, in reality, the forming of a hierarchical *us* and an

*others*, where the previous have a part to play, and the latter don't (Ranci re, 1996). This is the intersection explored in the present study: a consensus hiding new power organizations, with its consequent construction of allies and opposition.

We also consider "control of context" (Van Dijk, 1999a, p. 27); that is to say, dominion over resources in the communications landscape, its participants and what social actions will be included in media coverage, in official government events and in the framework of other types of dissemination that respond to discursive strategy.

At the center of the argument we have the constitutional construct of the targeted audience. Ver n considers all acts of political enunciation imply an oppositional response; in short, negative *other* and a positive *us*:

*The positive receptor is a receptor that has the same ideas, that adheres to the same values and pursues the same objectives as the speaker: the positive receptor is first and foremost, the supporter. In this case, we will refer to it as the proreceptor (...). The negative receptor is, of course, excluded from the collective identity: this exclusion is in itself the definition of negative receptor (...) we will call it the counter-receptor (Ver n, 1987, p.17).*

We aim to analyze the relevant elements that are maintained throughout the President's speeches. To study how the concept of *us* is built is to find a sense of belonging in the configuration of identities, while the concept of *others* is based on pre-set limits.

Ver n considers these ways of defining oneself and the target audience "discursive strategies". Links are built via collective identities, as well as other relationships with entities of the imaginary. In this study we have added a descriptive component:

- **Entities of the imaginary and collective identity:** shaped by the relationship between the speaker and the proreceptor. This is the inclusive *us*. When encountering the counter-receptor the designation changes to a different, negative term.

- **Descriptive component:** One in which the speaker is also the verifier, assessing a situation using readings from both past and present.

### 3. Methodological Framework

This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze political discourse. In the present paper we research President Moreno's discursive strategy to discover what ties he builds with power blocs in Ecuador through discourse.

Our corpus of President Len n Moreno's discourse is comprised of seventeen televised speeches (from 2018) that were taken —largely— from the official YouTube channel of the Executive Office of the Republic of Ecuador. These official informational broadcasts include: The Government of Everyone, The President reports, national networks, messages from the President, public statements. To the previous we added material from interviews Moreno with regional, national and international media communications. Some of these texts are already available on the official website of the Presidency of the Republic, and the rest were transcribed.

We used, adapted, and combined the categories proposed by Eliseo Ver n and Teun A. van Dijk to design the research mechanism for the discourse analysis (Table 1).

In light of the previously-discussed theoretical framework and the aforementioned qualitative methodological strategy, the study's main purpose was to discover the discursive strategy used to build the concept of *others* and *us*. For this, we analyze the material using the categories described herein. 1) Control of context: the communicational situation and the media resources available to the President; 2) Audience: discourse analysis for proreceptors and counter-receptors in order to visualize the construction of *us* and *others* in conjunction with other indicators such as the descriptive component and entities of the imaginary). Analysis was interpretative and detailed observations allowed us to create analytical categories that we linked to the concepts mentioned above to focus on their content.

**Table 1: Methodological Outline**

UNIT OF ANALYSIS	VARIABLES	
Lenín Moreno's Speeches in 2018	Discursive strategy using a logic of consensus: control of context and audience	
Control of context (Van Dijk)	Communicational situation Actions and capability of dissemination Relationship with communication media	
Audience (Verón)	Proreceptor	Entities of the imaginary: collective identities, singular collective goal, Explicative nominal forms
	Counter-receptor	Descriptive component

Source: Own elaboration

#### 4. Control of Context: Communication in the Lenín Moreno Administration

In 2018, Ecuador experienced economic difficulties stemming from public debt, low economic projections and numerous investigated and reported cases of corruption involving Rafael Correa's administration. As a result, Moreno's government shifted in terms of economic policy which similarly affected all relationships with power structures in Ecuadorian society. This shift required the support of various sectors and actors to promote the change, one of them being media industry.

Teun van Dijk (1999a) sustains that it is necessary to consider how elite groups link and interlock with discourse to exercise power against others. Their resources give them access to public discourse with which they can influence the public sphere. According to Van Dijk, in order to control public discourse, one must control the context, which implies defining the communicative situation, which is to say: space, time, the actors and their action in progress, their mental representations and knowledge. On this last point, we will use some of the arguments developed by Waisbord (2014) to analyze how Moreno's government has deployed its communicative model.

First, in regards to government communications, due to significant cutbacks to the fiscal budget Moreno's government eliminated the Secretary of Communications and created the replacement Adjunct Secretary to the President, without the structure or the funding it previously had. The government eliminated the Saturday television and radio program "Citizen Outreach"<sup>2</sup>, which was key to Correa's communicative strategy. In its stead, the Moreno government created two briefs via which it informed of projects, actions and opinions on specific topics. The first is "A Government for Everyone", broadcast on Mondays and lasting 7-8 minutes. The second is the "Message from the President" (lasting 3-4 minutes) in which Moreno presents his official stance on events occurring in the country. National television networks were eventually added to the previous.

Second, in terms of the media under the President's control or influence, Lenín Moreno ordered the closing of the government-subsidized television channel Ciudadano TV, as well as the ANDES Public News Agency. Then, they merged public-news-medium Ecuador TV and the seized<sup>3</sup> private company Gamavisión to form Telediario; editorially aligned to following government mandate. In the newspaper El Telégrafo,<sup>4</sup> the government made numerous changes to its upper management: they

filled these positions with executives from the private sector and who had even been opposers or critical of Correa's government.

Third, Moreno's government re-established its relationship with private media. Given the change to consensus politics, the relationship turned less belligerent than it was with his predecessor, Rafael Correa. In this context, Moreno called owners and representatives of communication media companies to private meetings. Economic loyalties were repaired and the State returned to designing an advertising plan for communication media that had not been included in said financing. In terms of private media with nationwide coverage, the field explicitly explaining the government's role or action (in addition to referring to the President directly) generally outlined the following: no challenges to Moreno's government, broadcast the president's speeches, and emphasize attacks on the previous administration under the moniker of "The People's Revolution".

Four, in terms of the building of the President's public image, Moreno's direct media presence is low in comparison to the personalization of politics previously embodied by Correa. Under Moreno's administration other figures have stood out, such as Vice President Otto Sonnenholzner<sup>5</sup>, ministers and presidential advisors that have acted as spokespersons.

Finally, in terms of the laws that regulate communication, in what has been interpreted as a response to the pressure of political power and media groups, Moreno's government reformed the Communication Law<sup>6</sup>. The law continued to contain sufficient mention and acknowledgment of rights, but the reform suppressed the role of the Superintendancy of Information and Communication as regulatory entity of content, stipulating compliance with law in terms of administration. The change weakened existing instruments used to ensure compliance with communication rights, and also implied modifying the reserve of radioelectric bandwidth, prioritizing private media while maintaining (on paper, at least) space bandwidth for community media. The reformed law also failed to increase public media participation<sup>7</sup>, confining them to a much smaller role.

## 5. Entities of the Political Imaginary: "The Government of Everyone" and the new "others"

The relationship between the speaker and the audience is forged via entities of the political imaginary built with discourse. Verón (1987) sustains that the "collective identities" are any and all identities that encompass pre-receptor in the inclusive "us". When articulating with the counter-receptor, the relationship takes on a negative connotation. There are also "broader entities" that the collective, that target the para-receptor (the undecided). Lastly, we consider the "singular meta-collectives", which cannot be quantified and are more general identities than the collectives mentioned earlier. In this search of entities, we explore who and how Moreno named and separated proreceptors and counter-receptors.

### 5.1. A reduced, Institutional, "Us"

We also explore how *us* and the *others* are built through enunciation. There were not that many reiterative forms of collective identities for pro or counter-receptors, rather there would be a dispersal based on critical facts. The conception of his political project changed from ideological, to institutional identification.

#### 5.1.1. Us, those from the left and some ambiguities

In early 2018, journalists were putting pressure on the president and the executive office to clarify their ideological stance. In the following excerpt he emphasized an inclusive *us* (Verón, 1987) in relation to his administration:

*We are a progressive and democratic government, socialist, solidary with those who have little. Never, listen well, we will never disrespect the people or deny them their rights. We will not become a tool for those who have had power throughout history. We are born revolutionaries and we will remain firm in our convictions (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018a).*

Moreno uses lists to emphasize his ideological stance: the socialists, progressives and revolutionaries are part of *us*. Thus, his proreceptor is included in the same collective identities. In light of his approach to the opposition and economic power groups in the context of the dialogue that he promoted, the leader explained the relationship with those who would initially be his counter-receptors: Not entering into political and ideological confrontations with them, nor resorting to —as van Dijk indicates— a negative hetero-representation, despite using a metaphor to place them in an opposing role: “We and the Ecuadorian right wing are on different sides of the street” (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018b).

However, Moreno also argued that there is no better ideological identity than that which, in practice, offers the best results (CNN de Chile, 2018). In other words, the concepts of the left and right would be eliminated, as if political practices lacked ideology. The right wing remains, thus, without a definitive position: neither in the *others*, nor with the *us*. As Albán and Velasco (2018) state, there is “a strong discursive transformation that puts aside ideological or fundamental political positioning” (p. 11). According to the revision and analysis of discourse for this study, at least after comprising the new cabinet with authorities from the right-wing business sector in May 2018, Moreno never again referred to his ideological stance during that year.

### 5.1.2. “A Government for Everyone”

The only constant collective identity was “The Government for Everyone”, although lacking the strength of “Citizens’ Revolution” used in the previous administration, which relied on constant reiteration. On the contrary, with Moreno “these categories lose all overall meaning. In fact, reiteration does not exist, given that a high percentage of the meaning translates into action, into intentions and purposes” (Albán & Velasco, 2018, p.12). The decreased emphasis on collective identity shows that there is no need to generate a sense of identity with an *us* for a political project, it only needs to rely on critical action from the government.

“The Government for Everyone” tends to be equated with consensus or dialogue becoming an ins-

titutional slogan for national networks used to close speeches, or as an argument to justify his decisions. It has no proreceptor, the collective identity is excluded and the “Everyone” takes its place. It is described as a responsible, progressive and democratic government of the people (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018a). It also opposes confrontation and polarization and ensures to be a transparency (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018c).

We studied pronominal construction in Moreno’s speeches, focusing on the conjugation “are”, where he names, for example, that “we are”: fellow countrymen, colleagues, brothers, diverse, extremely emotional, sentimental and solidary. In these elements, aspects of emotion and identity stand out, not those of political order.

## 5.2. The new *others*: the corrupt and their ex-comrades

As Verón notes, when making a public speech there is an inevitable confrontation with other enounced statements. In this case, we identified interdiscursive allusions (Maingueneau & Plantin, 2005) to discrediting action in categories used by Moreno’s previous allies, now opposers.

### 5.2.1. Alianza PAIS, Citizens’ Revolution, and 21<sup>st</sup>-century Socialism

Moreno promotes a meaning different from the meta collectives to which he previously belonged; he maintains a positive denomination of the initial political process, but negatively characterizes other moments of the ‘Citizens’ Revolution’ (calling them “sinister”) and dismisses the use of the same collective identity for his term in office.

Moreno manifested that the conditions changed due to the confrontation caused by former President Correa: “We seemed like those neighborhood thugs, those *hyper-macho guambas* in the school playground that go about elbowing you in the ribs, getting you to react and yell ‘what’s wrong with you’ to then subsequently beat you down”<sup>8</sup> (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018d). In his speeches, Moreno recurs to anecdotal mechanisms, life ex-

periences, popular refrains and words of wisdom (Minervini, 2017).

In early 2018, Moreno discursively portrayed Alianza PAIS as a collective identity, although without frequently naming it. The collective included the proreceptor that considered themselves party members. It is a grouping of people with solid fundamental principles, which reviewed its past, acknowledged its mistakes and corrected them (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018b).

However, this collective identity although originally considered part of the *us*, later lost significance and discursive presence. Alianza PAIS had transformed into a signifier that negatively represented the other from the past: "Alianza PAIS, yes, my party, was also responsible (...) for exacerbating the dispute and allowing anger to dominate arguments" (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018e). Discursively, Moreno "destructively reads" his own former collective identity, as posed by Verón who defines the move as an adversarial stance against his own political movement.

President Moreno also re-signified other meta collective identities, like those of contemporary left-wing governments in the region classified under the label of 21<sup>st</sup>-century socialism<sup>9</sup>. For Moreno, the regional movement also lost any positive connotation, and he links it to the previous government: "Ecuadorian progressivism, Latin American progressivism, that which we call 21<sup>st</sup>-century Socialism unfortunately whored itself out the minute it lent itself to corruption" (CNN Chile, 2018).

### 5.2.2. About the corrupt

In terms of building the new *others*, this is a central topic in President Moreno's speeches. Criticism of the corrupt and corruption is a powerful idea when faced with so many acts of the same, as it becomes a blanket explanation making all these acts easily intelligible in common sense.

First, the corrupt are generalized into counter-receptors just by virtue of being a problem in the country. Moreno uses this element as noun and adjective: the corrupt, corrupt companies, corrupt people, corrupt circles, hierarchical former authority figu-

res jailed for corruption. Nominalizing the term de-personifies those who took part and the factors that led to it.

The President also transcends from generalization to a quantification and enumeration of his counter-receptors: "imprisoned vice president, imprisoned ministers, imprisoned top government officials and a fugitive comptroller"<sup>10</sup> (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018b). In addition, Moreno alludes to those who comprise the group that supports the former president, Rafael Correa, who, at the same time, consider Moreno a "traitor":

*When they said to me: you have to take care of your colleagues, they didn't tell me I had to take care of my corrupt colleagues because I would have said: "no". Because loyalty does not have to do with people, it has to do with principles, loyalty to one's country. It is not a mafia type loyalty (...) in that case I prefer they call me a traitor (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018d).*

Moreno dialogues interdiscursively with criticism from his opposers, he includes them in order to spin them in his favor. He performs a controversial negation (Ducrot, 1984) of the argumentation of those *others* and discredits the discourse upon reversing the conception of loyalty of those who accuse him. On the other hand, Moreno represents those who attack him as a "mafia" and being "corrupt colleagues".

## 6. Components: Erase and Redraw

In accordance with Verón (1987), the components describe how the enunciator develops a network of relations with entities of the imaginary. Verón proposes four types of intertwined components. The descriptive component allows for validation and assesses a situation. The second is didactic and speaks to principles or universal truths. The prescriptive addresses the order of duty and executes deontological imperatives. Finally, the programmatic represents the references to future in the political discourse.

Upon studying the construction of the *us* and the *others*, this study emphasizes the descriptive com-

ponent (without completely ruling out the rest), in which the enunciator analyzes the situation with interpretations of the past and the present. In this component, Moreno lauds himself as the privileged source of information providing unique insight, and disseminates his own assessment of the story (Verón, 1987). This is the section that provided the most information: the goal of Moreno's discursive management would be to robustly reinterpret the past and legitimize his government by fixing what his predecessor had done.

### 6.1. The beginnings of Rafael Correa and his change

Moreno reiterates that there were two stages in the Citizens Revolution and argues it in a relational fashion (Doury, 2016) to establish his own agreements and disagreements. He portrays Correa at the beginning of the process as an idealistic young man ready to change a country in the hands of de facto powers. In that discursivity, Moreno presents a positive representation of that initial stage, in which he ran as a candidate and served as vice president working to benefit the poor. Moreno highlights that there was a change when Correa promoted the possibility of an unlimited number of terms, with the resulting risk of perpetuating his position in power. From that moment on, Moreno was no longer part of Correa's government. Here Moreno shapes said moment as a moral perversion (CNN de Chile, 2018) caused by being in power.

In early 2018, the ex-President was formally referred to as the "economist Rafael Correa", without controversial adjectivization or metaphors. However, Moreno later discredited this earlier opinion in his over-arching telling of events. Months later, Moreno increased direct negative representation of Correa, using interdiscursivity in the face of mutual criticism. For example, Moreno believes that Correa displays signs of "psychological compression" and "internal shortcomings" (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018b). Moreno also made a comparison of Correa with the Nibelung (archetype recreated in the book *Lord of the Rings* as Sméagol/Gollum and later made it universal in the film trilogy of the same name), a character that acquires an evil power and transforms him-

self (CNN en Español, 2018). Thus, he portrays Correa as a monster, a radical *other* in politics.

In terms of a current interpretation (Moreno as president) Correa is portrayed as the perpetrator of political rupture with the former president intentionally leaving the country in poor conditions to return, later, as a "redeemer" (CNN de Chile, 2018).

### 6.2. "The empty table" and inherited problems

"For a year now, we have been discovering every day —unfortunately in amazement and disappointment— that the table was empty. They took it all!" (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018e). This is another rhetorical element used to appropriate phrases said by Rafael Correa ("we are going to leave the table set") and give it a new meaning with which to shape the *other*.

Polyphony continues in the discourse of Lenín Moreno, who explains just what *la mesa no servida* or "the empty table" means: "in allegorical inference to what the former president has done (...) now that we know we are over our heads in debt, that we owe the entire world" (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018b). It is an "allegorical allusion", a representation of the actions of the former leader, to criticize and discredit him. Another topic of interdiscursive debate between Correa and Moreno was in regards to the total amount of public debt. Moreno's story said that, upon clarifying that debt, he discovered he had an "economically bankrupt" country (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018c).

Here we have another metaphoric example, however, to define the present: "It has been a year of cleaning house. (...) The cleaning has been done seriously, transparently, responsibly, democratically. We resorted to popular survey and the referendum so that such cleaning can be done by all" (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018e). Here Moreno alludes to the use of a phrase found in daily conversation: 'keeping one's house neat and tidy'. He equates this to the Government's handling of the issue, "cleaning", via popular survey<sup>11</sup>, an artifice also used by Correa during his term in office.



### 6.3. "Major Surgery" to Fight Corruption

One of Moreno's strongest discursive elements has been the metaphor of "major surgery" (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018f) used to describe his struggle against the irregularities of Correa's administration, who Moreno explicitly calls "corrupt". It is a medical metaphor to remove the "cancer" of corruption that affects the social body of Ecuador.

Moreno's speeches continuously describe irregular acts. In them, the President says that the previous administration strategically committed crime, systematically and in conjunction, with the purpose of not being discovered by remaining in a "dark, sinister and corrupt circle".

Controversial negation (Ducrot, 1984) is a resource often used by Moreno, given that he cannot negatively represent an entire government which he was a part of. However, he has to negate certain aspects by adding new elements to legitimize himself: "There were great works, without doubt important endeavors, but unfortunately many only served to illicitly enrich those chosen few" (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018f).

Enumeration is key in Moreno's discourse: he brings to light various legal investigations into Correa's administration. For example, inflated prices in projects like Esmeraldas Refinery, Pacifico Refinery, the Pascuales-Cuenca Polyduct, in oil sales, road construction and the hospital in Monte Sinaí (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018e).

### 6.4. Polarization, confrontation, and freedom of expression

"Politics were dividing everyone. It can't go on!" (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018e) were statements that fed into Moreno's interpretation of the past, of Correa's drawn-out fight against various social actors (and Moreno names them: ecologists, indigenous peoples, workers, teachers, doctors, armed forces servicemen, police) (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018d). This is also an opportunity to read what he would like to achieve under consensus politics: eliminate confrontation in politics and govern with tolerance and respect.

Moreno highlights there was a state of propaganda driving confrontation which affected freedom of expression, for which he proposes —as a programmatic component for the present and future— a "State of communication of two-way dialogue", between authorities and citizens (President of the Republic of Ecuador, 2018e).

However, Moreno's discourse has some ambivalence. If on one hand it promotes democratic values, on the other, it discredits social protests that took place in late 2018 in response to different government measures:

*Ecuador is now experiencing a full, legitimate democracy (...) there is freedom, freedom of expression, to protest, freedom to congregate and, above all, autonomy and independence in every aspect. I understand that when there is total freedom -especially after having been denied it for so long- there may be protests and revolt that do not always reflect the feelings of the majority (President of the Republic, 2018g).*

His *us* denotes limits like "the majority" and is restricted to only those who believe in his position (which he considers absolute by saying there is "total freedom" and "full democracy"), discrediting, via controversial negation, the discourses and the political actions of emerging social groups. Therefore, the attempt at consensus is hindered by contention and antagonism in the face of social inequality.

## 7. Discussion and conclusions

Lenín Moreno's discourse strategy during 2018 projects the government's change of perspective from confrontational to consensus politics. This would be the unwavering core —as stated by Verón (1987)— in his speeches. The objective was to broaden his base of support and legitimize his maneuvering of political forces, in general distancing him from the left and the government of Rafael Correa, and in particular from the persona of the former president. Moreno used this to make changes to his economic policies, leading to a weakening of public services.

This logic of consensus led to the inexistence of opposers and counter-receptors beyond Correa and the previous administration. In his speeches, Moreno attributed all the country's economic and corruption problems to his antecessor and his administration, omitting the structural conditions that have led to social inequality in Ecuador. On the other hand, via carefully cultivated consensus by way of governmental discursive production, Moreno's administration caused social immobility and hid his ties to the powerful elites.

The results of this analysis indicate the following phases: in the first, Moreno remains loyal to his ideological stance and party, in this case to the left and to Alianza PAIS. In transition, Moreno increases the number and aggressiveness of his attacks on Correa in an explicit attempt to differentiate himself. In the second phase, his distancing from Correa is radical; he completely separates himself from his ideological stance and party to subscribe to a single institutional discursive stance.

There is a weak trend in creating proreceptors. The collective identity "The Government of Everyone" does not include his co-religionists and in truth becomes a generalization that hides the construction of an *us* and *others* in the political sector. This occurs after leaving out his socialist and revolutionary proreceptors —as he indicated at the beginning of his term— in order to broaden his support base with citizens and leaders of diverse ideological tendencies.

On the contrary, what is clear is Moreno's construction of the *others*: Rafael Correa, his allies and his previous administration. In his speeches, Moreno discredits and represents all the collective identities seen by the previous administration as

corrupt, for example the Citizens Revolution and 21<sup>st</sup>-century Socialism. In other words, Moreno gradually transforms his old *us* into his new *others*. This is emphasized by Moreno with his interpretations of the past and present by proposing a re-writing of the country's recent political history. One of the limitations of this article is that it does not include elements of contemporary speeches that are more complex, containing audiovisual material, text, image and sound bites, which, due to media convergence and new technology, play an important part in political communication. This could be addressed in future studies.

This study contributes to the field of political communication because the corpus analyzed shows the discursive transformation of a leader in the context of a region in political upheaval: although Moreno stood out at the beginning for what was dubbed a "turn to the left", he himself embodied the decline of that trend and its gradual abandonment. Moreno discontinued discursive strategies that would seek out and promote conflict with elites and traditional power groups, in contrast to contemporary Latin American left-wing leaders like his predecessor Rafael Correa, or the former Venezuelan president who died in office, Hugo Chávez.

On the other hand, Moreno's strategy was to adopt consensus as principal element of his discourse in order to pacify local subjects in contexts where governments aim to exercise power without the participation of the people. This strategy is now a constant promoted by contemporary governments of different ideologies. They seek to reshape the idea of common sense in their respective citizenry, to legitimize their leadership, and hide the construction of the *others*, and *us*.

## Notes

1. Movimiento Alianza PAIS – Patria Altiva i Soberana was founded in 2006 with a leftist political stance. This party has won the executive office in Ecuador and governed from 2007 to 2020.
2. It was broadcast from 2007 to 2017, on Saturdays from 10 am to 1pm. Here, expresident Correa informed the public about recently-completed public works and projects. It also included spaces for opinion, artists performing live and attacks on the opposition.

3. In 2008, la Agencia de Garantía de Depósitos seized Gamavisión and TC from the Isaías Group, former owner of the bankrupt Filanbanco. The representatives were found guilty of embezzlement and bank fraud during the Ecuadorian crisis of 1999. Seizure was intended to recover lost funds for creditors and the State. For more information, see: Abad G. (2010). *El Club de la Pelea... Poder político vs. poder mediático*. Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Centro para Competencia América Latina.
4. El Telégrafo is property of the State of Ecuador and has operated under a model of officialism in the governments of Correa and Moreno. It was seized in 2008 after being linked to Banco del Progreso, which went fraudulently bankrupt in the crisis of 1999.
5. Otto Sonnenholzner is an economist with postgraduate studies in Germany, communication industry business owner and radio industry union leader. He is the third vice president of Ecuador during Lenin Moreno's term, after the dismissals of Jorge Glas and María Vicuña. In December 2018, Sonnenholzner was appointed by the National Assembly from a shortlist of candidates presented by Moreno.
6. Communication Law was passed during Rafael Correa's term in 2013. Opposing sectors and private communication media referred to it as "Gag Law", as well as accusing the Super-Intendancy of Information of persecution.
7. In 2018, frequency bandwidth was distributed as following: 88.45% to private sector, 5.82% to public sector and 5.73% to local communities, according to the Council of Communication.
8. The word "guambra" comes from *quichua huambra*, meaning: boy, child or adolescent.
9. Ideology of governments and progressive movements in Latin America, trend also known as a turn to the left. For more information, see: Stoessel, S. (2014). *Giro a la izquierda en América Latina del siglo XXI. Revisitando los debates académicos*. Polis (39).
10. In 2018 the former Vice-President Jorge Glas and former Minister of Power Aleksey Mosquera had been indicted, in addition Comptroller Carlos Pólit was a fugitive in the U.S., all involved in Odebrecht's conspiracy of corruption. The former Minister of Hydro-carburides Carlos Pareja Yanuzzelli, and former Manager of the state-run company Petroecuador Alex Bravo were both in prison.
11. The Popular survey consisted of seven questions, some of the most important being: Ban those convicted of corruption from running for office; ban third-term re-election in positions up for popular vote; re-structure members of the Council for Participation and repeal the "Law of Capital Gains". To these seven questions, Moreno's government promoted the "Yes" option.

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