Social Movements and Media:  
Unravelling the Communication Practices of Environmental SMOs in Chile

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ABSTRACT. This paper aims to explain how social movement organisations (SMOs) rely on different types of media to enable their communication practices. Existing literature shows that SMOs use the media as communicative resources for their mobilisation, publicity and political influence strategies. However, most of the extant research on the topic has been focused on each new media at a time, and eventually scholars have paid less attention to the role of older media. A few scholars have engaged in a comprehensive understanding of today’s media ecology, describing processes of media hybridity that affect political institutions’ communicative practice. Yet, the application of this theory to the specific case of SMOs is scarce. This piece of research joins these overarching debates by analysing empirical data produced through qualitative interviews with executive directors and communications staff of eight historical environmental SMOs in Chile. Drawing on these data, the paper identifies four theoretical insights about the relationship between these SMOs and media. First, SMOs rely on online media, mobile phones and publications, notably newsletters, to reinforce and coordinate their constituency network. Secondly, SMOs use their publications and website to raise awareness and then command the affordances of social media strategically to mobilise external support. Thirdly, SMOs engage with journalists to receive mainstream media coverage and influence the public and elite agenda. Finally, this paper provides evidence of how SMOs have learned how to command pervasive cycles of intermedia agenda-setting in their communications ecology. The analysis sheds a new light on today’s hybrid media ecology and how it is shaping emerging civil society in a post-authoritarian context.

KEYWORDS. Environmental SMOs; Social Movements; Media Ecology; Political Communication; Mainstream Media; Social Media; ICTs; Chile.

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Introduction

For decades social movement theorists and political communication researchers have been studying the effects of the media on the emergence, sustainability and outcomes of social movements. Existing literature shows that social movement organisations (SMOs) use different media as communicative resources that enable their mobilisation, publicity and political influence strategies (Martin, 2015). Thanks to the media, SMOs can build and frame their inner communities, legitimise their causes, communicate their campaigns, mobilise people, organise collective action and increase their influence on the public opinion and decision-makers (Jasper, 1997; Powers, 2016; Waisbord, 2011). Arguably, the affordances of online media have improved movements’ effectiveness in these objectives (Crossley, 2015). Thus, online platforms, particularly social networking sites, have produced new forms of political engagement and collective action that are cheaper and faster than before (Caren et al, 2012; Gaby & Caren, 2012).

Most of the above research only focuses on each new media at a time. Over time, academics paid less attention to ‘older’ media, such as the press, and their interaction with ‘newer’ media (Chadwick, 2014). This opens questions about how this process works in practice. Despite a vast literature on SMOs and media, few studies have been able to account for the above process. An increasing number of scholars are engaging in a comprehensive understanding of today’s media ecology, describing processes of media hybridity that affect political institutions’ communicative practice (Chadwick, 2007; 2013; Treré & Mattoni, 2016; Van Der Haadk et al, 2012). Yet, the application of this theory to social movements is scarce and little is known about SMOs embedded in complex media ecology. This opens the opportunity to inquiry how SMOs use different media to enable their communication practices, and how today’s media ecology affects the emerging civil society in a post-authoritarian context. In this paper, I used qualitative interview data to understand how eight historical environmental SMOs based in Santiago, Chile, enable their communication practices by using and blending different types of media. The selected SMOs have been operating in the country for more than 20 years. The interviews were carried out face-to-face with executive directors and PR senior staff and then transcribed to generate text material. The data were analysed for insightful themes according to the precepts of constructivist grounded theory under pragmatic parameters.

Based on this analysis, I found evidence that all the studied Chilean environmental SMOs, despite pursuing different agendas, view PR and publicity as an essential work and the media as
strategic platforms for this work. Most respondents stressed the role of their strategic communication planning as an incentive to their reliance on various media simultaneously. Using one medium over another and blending them to reach greater efficiency in their communicational objectives, is what ultimately varies according to the SMOs’ agenda. Based on the participants’ responses, I have identified three SMO agendas: activism, research and conservation projects. Across the participants’ accounts, I have also found four insights that shed light on how the use of diverse media connects with SMOs’ communication practices and agenda.

The first insight reveals that a number of Chilean environmental SMOs open communicative channels with their constituency and supporters in order to coordinate and reinforce the socio-environmental resistance. These channels are enabled with the distribution of publications and the use of online and mobile media. The second insight shows that the selected SMOs also open their channels to a broader audience in order to mobilise external support; their website, digital publications and social media play a central role to open these channels. Thirdly, many SMOs have pointed out the importance of accessing the public opinion and elite actors more directly, in order to set and frame the public agenda and ultimately influence the national decision-making process. This channel is enabled thanks to the mainstream news media.

Last but not least, the most revealing insight for the question of media ecology posited earlier comes from the respondents’ description of both tactical and unintended processes of intermedia agenda-setting, where transfer of salience occur from online to offline media and vice versa. These cycles explain that SMOs use and blend different media because, in their communication practice, they need to enable channels with internal and external publics for activism, publicity and political influence, all at once. For this purpose, many SMOs have learned how to command salience transfer cycles in order to make mainstream news through amplification of posts on social media and to activate and mobilise their constituents bringing mainstream news to their online forums.

There are at least two implications of the above insights to the current state of the art. First, along with the empirical evidence that the emerging Chilean civil society has rapidly moved towards professionalism, it is possible to argue that the media do play an important role in political mobilisation and unrest in post-authoritarian contexts like the one under analysis. Most importantly, this paper timely joins overarching academic arguments about the effects of hybrid media ecology on the communication practices of SMOs. Certainly, the study provides evidence that cycles of intermedia agenda-setting are pursued by SMOs in a tactical fashion in
order to reinforce their frames internally and then command them across more than one layer of publicity. Based on this evidence, Chilean media ecology looks as hybrid as it does elsewhere.

In what follows, I survey the relevant literature on the relationship between SMOs’ communication practices and different media, emphasising findings likely to explain why these actors rely on and blend many media at once. I then discuss existing research on today’s media ecology, and address overarching debates about ongoing technological change and its effect on social movements, before moving to the methods and findings. To conclude, I discuss the theoretical contribution of this paper drawing parallels with extant scholarship on the topic.

**Research on civil society organisations and media**

Decades of research on social movements and political communication show the many links between SMOs of any kind (e.g. NGOs, interest groups, unions) and media. The media have been addressed at large from the point of view of their effects on the repertoires, dynamics and outcomes of movements (Martin, 2015). Existing literature has identified SMOs’ different uses of the media as communicative resources to make possible their mobilisation, publicity and political influence strategies (Jasper, 1997; Powers, 2016; Waisbord, 2011).

The vast academic production described above can be organised according to each level of communication enabled by a particular set of media. Accordingly, scholars have been historically concerned about the SMOs’ access to mainstream news media, and then shifted the focus to incorporate newer information and communication technologies (ICTs) to the analysis over the last two decades. This shift opened a new branch of scholarship centred on Internet and the affordances of social media. Additionally, few studies have also paid attention to the SMOs’ use of publications, newsletters, mobile applications, emailing and electronic marketing tools. Recently, academics have been quick in addressing ongoing processes of media blending and theorise the hybridity that characterises today’s media ecology.

**Publicity strategies to access the mainstream news media**

The first academic glance at the relationship between social movements and media came in pre-internet times, when the mainstream news media dominated the mass communication environment. Centralising the professional production of news, and enabling one-to-many distribution of information in a short period of time, these outlets had the power to reach large
publics (McQuail, 2010). During the 1970s and 1980s, due to their pervasiveness, social movement theorists found evidence that the mainstream media were used by SMOs as publicity platforms to reach isolated constituents and disseminate their collective action frames (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Snow et al., 1986). Later on, academics found diverse nuances that explained the interaction between SMOs and mainstream news. SMOs want to be on the news because they could amplify their message beyond their inner circle of mobilised constituents (Gamson, 1990; Melucci, 1996; Jasper, 1997). Beyond this circle, the organisations could raise awareness and raise funds among potential supporters, while disseminating information that could mobilise the public opinion and influence on decision-making processes (Gamson, 1992; Van Leuven & Joye, 2014).

Even if the mainstream news media can amplify SMOs’ messages for mobilisation and political influence purposes, their access to this publicity has been particularly restricted due to dominant frames and organisational routines. These restrictions compel SMOs to adopt a strategic approach, so-called newsmaking tactics (McCarthy et al., 1996; Waisbord, 2011). PR efforts, press releases, conferences and seminars, along collective action repertoires with newsworthiness spark, count as SMOs’ main newsmaking practices in the Southern Cone of Latin America (Waisbord, 2011). In times of greater technological sophistication, and increasing use of social media to coordinate action and mobilise people, SMOs publicity strategies have not dismissed the mainstream news coverage. Media coverage persists as relevant because elite debates take place in the mainstream news, and therefore offer a space for SMOs to find/convince potential donors and tell political officers about their demands (Powers, 2016).

The advent of Internet: New modes of communication?

The advent of advanced ICTs changed the media ecology drastically, and the academic production soon found new incentives to reframe much discussion on social movements and communication practices. The new social networking sites – hereby social media – changed the game because they offered large-scale communications, as their predecessors, but with newer possibilities of unfiltered deliberation and coordination between individuals, and a participatory design (Castells, 2012; Warkentin, 2001). Authors contended that mobilisation and organisation became more efficient via online media because of the low costs of building a large-scale communication infrastructure in comparison with producing alternative media outlets and managing the filters of the mainstream news media (Gaby & Caren, 2012). Empirically, these
affordances allowed social movements to socialise (and therefore mobilise) virtually (Crossley, 2015). At internal level, social movements are composed by constituent networks that require an intimate space to explore affinity, negotiate collective identity and facilitate cultural production (Bernstein, 1997; Gould, 1991). Often enabled through face-to-face interactions, with the Chilean case of student assemblies as crucial (Saavedra, 2015), researchers quickly observed how the social media were exploited to generate intimate spaces where activists could foster motivation and togetherness (Gerbaudo, 2012; Jeppesen et al, 2014). Social media have enabled more encompassing cultural production/dissemination because of their large reach (Chadwick, 2007; Reilly & Trevisan, 2016). Due to their interactive nature, they have also stimulated discussion and faster spread of collective feelings (Howard & Hussain, 2013).

Early studies on the interaction between SMOs and online media were focused on organised cyber-activists who engaged in innovative forms of online action such as hacktivism and digital campaigning (Gaby & Caren, 2012; Martin, 2015). Hacktivism has been included in this literature as the empirical disruptive action that occurs online in order to boycott an official website. The most common collective hacker action are virtual sit-ins, when large numbers of users coordinate visits to a targeted website at the same time in order to collapse it (Martin, 2015; Postill, 2014). Another strand of literature addressed the connections between online organising and offline events around the world, including mobs in Bristol and Seattle and the well-studied case of the Arab Spring (Bimber et al, 2005; Howard & Hussain, 2013; Martin, 2015). This stage identified the importance of the emerging citizen journalism as renewed civic engagement (Gaby & Caren, 2012). There is vast evidence of SMOs using blogs, Twitter and Facebook to enable their individual supporters to disclose and share relevant news, often in a viral, interactive and half-anonymous way (Bimber et al, 2005).

This rich field of study has stimulated an overarching debate between techno-optimist and techno-sceptic views regarding the online media’s role in the emergence, sustainability and outcome of social movements (Chadwick, 2007). Techno-optimists stress that the affordances of ICTs explain the increased formation of sociopolitical challenge and rapid pace of protest cycles (Lim, 2013; Postill, 2014). For techno-sceptics, mass mobilisation has existed before and after Internet and the media are not the only tools for collective action as, even under repressive communication environments, social outburst was not impeded (Lim, 2013; Osman, 2014). Most authors agree that calculi of mobilisation and framing have been transformed by newer technologies, but they differ in interpreting the depth of this impact.
The (perhaps overlooked) relevance of other types of media

A number of researchers have been less focused on the mainstream news and online social media duality and offered a better understanding of how other types of media are relevant for SMOs. One of these media is the movement publications – magazines or activist media – that have helped them to bypass the mainstream news media for internal reinforcement and framing purposes. Through these publications, movements have connected with their supporters and raise awareness about their issues (Russell, 2013).

Another strand of SMO literature has focused on newsletters. Evidence from the feminist and LGBT+ movements in the US during the 1970s reveals the crucial role of newsletters to open an intimate space for constituents to organise grassroots activities, convey opinion and foster overarching debates such as the notion of movement’s victories (Lewis, 2016; McKinney, 2015). Strategically, activists have used this space to overcome lack of mainstream media attention to their issues (Araiza, 2014). Their systems of distribution, often via mail and during summits, also offered a level of outreach that was critical not only to keep the movement community regularly informed but also to generate connections beyond the publication that built the movement across cities (McKinney, 2015). Similarly to their US counterparts, for Latin American NGOs newsletters are a regular product, along press releases and conferences, included in their news management strategy (Waisbord, 2011). Furthermore, SMOs tend to think of Web and newsletters as a cluster: the website is used to subscribe people to the newsletter, and the email to circulate newsletters regularly among their database (Davidson et al, 2008).

Blending cycles and practices that prove today’s media ecology is hybrid

Extant literature has shown how SMOs rely on the affordances of different types of media to communicate with their publics. Nonetheless, for a number of researchers this academic production has a big shortcoming: By focusing on each new media development at a time, the broader picture has been missed, ignoring that empirically the communication environment is much more complex. These scholars argue that newer online media did not replace older media, and the mainstream media firms continuously explore offline and online formats and sources simultaneously. This premise led to the theory of hybrid media ecology, which has allowed understanding media innovations in their interaction with older media (Chadwick, 2007).
Media hybridity connects with recent developments in the literature on agenda-setting. Grounded in nearly five decades of research, the agenda-setting theory posits that the mainstream media agenda has an impact on issue salience and the public agenda (McCombs et al, 2014). The widespread adoption of ICTs has pushed the agenda-setting theory towards new directions, and now researchers observe processes of intermedia agenda-setting. These processes refer to the transfer of salience between many different kinds of agendas beyond the traditional interaction between mainstream news and public agenda (McCombs et al, 2014). Intermedia agenda-setting occurs in today’s multimedia environment because of pervasive journalistic structures such as the production cycles of news and the role of influential media outlets over others as agenda-setters (Vonbun et al, 2016). Social media play a role in diversifying the ways to impact on the public agenda. There are two specific cycles: Hot issues discussed by citizens on social media that trigger a spike in the news and the public, and the mainstream news stimulating citizens to converse about them on social media (McCombs et al, 2014).

Empirical evidence suggests that major news websites influence the agenda of the online wire service, and this trend ultimately affects local newspapers that follow mainstream coverage (Lim, 2011). There is also evidence of media firms becoming multi-format hubs with interactive websites and a more regular use of social media to post breaking news (Parmelee, 2014). This is particularly true in South America because of its historical trend towards a multi-format media market (Mastrini & Becerra, 2011; Scherman et al, 2014). Several studies show that news reporters have included the monitoring of citizen journalists practices on social media in order to find stories and contrast information (Van Der Haadk et al, 2012; Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012). Journalists access online forums and extract quotes, poll data and find emerging frames (Parmelee, 2014). In this context, despite the dominant use of Internet for activism, the mainstream media are still relevant to bring about change under repressive rule (Osman, 2014).

In the age of traditional journalism, the distribution of news has been monopolised by the publisher firms (Van Der Haadk et al, 2012). The interactive and user-generated contents disseminated via online networking sites have disrupted the calculi of this logic, and today non-elite actors have found inexpensive ways to produce information and contest mainstream news (Chadwick, 2011). This is supported by vast evidence of the active engagement of citizens in alternative news production and correction of published contents through Facebook and Twitter (Bennett & Toft, 2009; Jha, 2008; Lester & Hutchins, 2012; Weyker, 2002). While media professionals still have influence on the mainstream news agenda, this influence is today
challenged by diverse non-elite fronts (Chadwick, 2011; Van Der Haadk et al, 2012). Journalists scavenge around Twitter for sources and news information, and this has been ceased by many non-elite actors to affect the political agenda from their online communications (Parmelee, 2014).

Within this umbrella concept of non-elite actors, our knowledge of how SMOs deal with media hybridity in particular is still scarce. Chadwick (2007; 2012; 2013) has paid some attention to NGOs and mobilisation processes in his work. Mattoni and her colleagues (2010; 2012; 2016) have been examining the nexus between media activists and hybrid ecology in a consistent way. These explorations shed light on the fact that activists navigate across a diverse array of media by experiencing salience transference processes between mainstream and online networking sites. On the one hand, activists can exploit the affordances of social media to drive the coverage of elite press and broadcasters (Howard & Hussain, 2013). One concrete case is the mobilisation of online and offline events that attract the attention of journalists (Chadwick, 2007). Another case is the use of social media to contrast official narratives (Jeppesen et al, 2014; Treré & Mattoni, 2016). On the other hand, activists tactically monitor the political agenda through the mainstream news and share this information among their online members and adherents to affect engagement and collective action patterns (Chadwick, 2014). Scholars observe at least two possible transformations of social movements in light of their media ecology: more horizontality in their communications and newer opportunities to diversity their repertoires of action (Chadwick, 2007; Cottle, 2008).

Data and methods

This section outlines the methodological design that guides the data production and analysis of this study. The paper intends to generate original understanding of the relationship between environmental SMOs and media in Chile from empirical material rather than testing previous hypotheses. The data were produced by carrying out face-to-face semi-structured interviews with executive directors and communications staff of eight historical SMOs based in Santiago between May and September 2016. SMOs are civil society organisations embedded in the broader environmental movement that have the status of legal entity (in Spanish 'persona

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1 The data analysed here are a segment drawn from a case study included in a larger PhD research project on the communication practices and uses of media of environmental and LGBT+ movement networks in Chile.
Organisations obtain this status by registering in their respective city council\(^2\). ENGOs, non-profit foundations and corporations, and citizen associations are the most common organisations in Chile that qualify as SMOs. Historical is an adjective used here to identify environmental organisations that have been operative for at least 20 years. To illustrate this point, it is worth mentioning that two of the selected SMOs were founded in the late 1970s. In most sessions, I managed to talk with senior management staff. In other instances, I interviewed communication officers and management staff members.

The interview script encompassed three main themes: (a) SMO’s organisational information, target publics and communication practices; (b) campaigning, production and use of different types of media; and (c) communicational choices and effects of facing media diversity. When interviewees stressed the importance of certain media for their routines, follow-up questions were asked in order to explore their communication practices in detail. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they suit both theory induction and deduction. This format enables participants to actively construct meaning in relation to the research topic, and posits a set of questions to all informants while opening a space to follow up on themes emerging during each session (Della Porta, 2014; Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Silverman, 1997; Weiss, 1994: 48).

The interviews were transcribed to generate text material and analysed for emergent themes according to a pragmatic adaptation of the precepts of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005; Thomas, 2006). Two procedures result from this approach: a) the use of previous theory to ask certain questions to respondents, and b) the iterative application of insights obtained from early interviews through memo notes to calibrate subsequent data collection. The incorporation of deductive analysis becomes a pragmatic decision when dealing with data on human communications that feature insightful – and hard to ignore – connections with prior knowledge (Biesta & Burbules, 2003; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Similar designs have been applied in contemporary studies of NGO publicity, and social movements and media (Mattoni, 2014: 24; Powers, 2016). Themes were systematised by clustering together contextual

\(^2\) This information was retrieved from two sources:

(a) The Register Office (in Spanish ‘Servicio de Registro Civil e Identificación’) publishes a full list of legalised non-profit civil society organisations per year. This list is available online at: www.registrocivil.cl/Portal01/transparencia/index.html [Last access: 17/03/2017].

(b) The Chilean Association of NGOs ‘Acción A.G.’ publishes a list of its current members. This list is available online at: http://accionag.cl/ong-asociadas/temas/agro-y-medio-ambiente [Last access: 17/03/2017].
references, theory and memo notes identified across the 10 interviews (Corbin & Holt, 2005). From this analysis, I have identified four insights, discussed in the next section, that illustrate SMOs’ way of using different types of outlets and platforms to enable their communication practices in today’s media ecology. Below, I explore each of these insights by describing first SMOs’ organisational dynamics, and then discussing the research findings regarding the SMOs’ uses of different media, and the reasons to blend them in their regular communicational practice.

The case of Chile: Media ecology and organisational dynamics of selected SMOs

This section aims at describing the case of Chile in terms of its political communication patterns and then accounts for the organisational dynamics of the eight SMOs included in this analysis. In general, there is little knowledge of how Chilean SMOs relate to the media. Chile is a post-authoritarian country that outstands in the Southern Cone of Latin America because of a particular duality. In some aspects, Chile is very similar to developed countries because of its sophisticated commercial media system and high rates of adoption of newer technologies (Arriagada et al, 2010). In some other aspects, Chile is the most recent democratised country in the region (Garretón, 1989), and would still feature weak associational ties and a fragmented civil society that could not recover during the transition to democracy because of repressive devices inherited from the dictatorship (Collier, 1999; Jara, 2012).

Due to its slow democratisation process during the 1990s, the Chilean political and communicative landscape has been characterised for multiple restrictions (Garretón, 1989; Jara, 2012). The mainstream news media constitute an oligopoly business and the two dominant media holdings are related to elite interests (Bolaño et al, 1999; Mastrini & Becerra, 2011; Mellado & Van Dalen, 2017) in other businesses such as mining and retail. The country features a completely private media system that features highly monopolistic and politically biased press and broadcasting, with the exception of one state-regulated TV station (Fuenzalida, 2002). Furthermore, Chile leads the use of ICTs in Latin America; nonetheless, this extensive use has not translated into rapid effects on online mobilisation and deliberation in comparison with other experiences in the region (Millaleo, 2011). As a result, the Chilean mainstream media fail to provide quality sustained coverage of civic and social issues (Larraín & Valenzuela, 2004).

The Chilean civil society has been defined as an emerging one, featuring weak associational ties (Iglesias, 2015). Sepúlveda & Villarroel (2012) have suggested paying
attention to the effects of the political process rather than mobilisation to explain changes in policy. They argue that single cases of environmental resistance have not been able to explain change to the same extent that accumulation of socio-environmental movements over time (Sepúlveda & Villarroel, 2012). Another strand of literature asserts that there has been a noticeable trend of professionalisation across social movements in South America. This is what Ulianova & Estenssoro (2012) label as their “process of NGOisation”. Southern American NGOs have been particularly keen to adopt strategic publicity approaches that try to access the mainstream news (Waisbord, 2011). Chilean SMOs, in particular, do not depart from this regional trend towards professional communications (Millaleo & Velasco, 2013). This is something that I have empirically observed in the case of the selected environmental SMOs for this study, as discussed below.

Internal dynamics are central to incorporate the differences between civil society organisations into the analytic exercise. The premise is that organisations’ different purposes, representation roles and status reveal their position regarding socio-political change (Grant, 1995). This position, alongside their funding scheme and intended audience, determine their PR strategies (Powers, 2014). The SMOs included in this analysis have many internal dynamics in common. Besides their status of legal entities and decades of history, the eight organisations have a clear organisational chart and divide their labour according to specific activities. These SMOs share a common view of communications and media as a central priority in their work. Five SMOs have a communications department run by PR professionals. Two organisations do not have specialised personnel but engage their multi-task staff in press service and media management. One SMO has outsourced these activities for specific projects.

Despite the above common dynamics, the eight SMOs encompass a range of agendas and funding parameters. Relying on parameters in existing literature, three main agendas can be identified in this group: activism, research and conservation (Grant, 1995; Powers, 2014). An overlapping rather than sharp distinction between these three profiles is observed in practice, although each organisation tends to prioritise one objective over the others. The activist profile refers to a focused effort on fundraising, recruitment and mass membership campaigns (Grant, 1995). Many activists – but also conservationists – provide services to their members and beneficiaries and often can engage in marketing and publicity strategies to gain mainstream media coverage (Grant, 1995; Powers, 2014). Research-oriented SMOs often seek to participate in policy-making and invest resources in elite press publicity (Powers, 2014). While some of
these organisations are regarded as legitimate by the government and consulted on a regular basis, others avoid or are unable to gain this insider status (Grant, 1995).

Five out of the eight SMOs under study are predominantly focused on activism. Two of them operate in Chile as national branches of international ENGOs, have unrestricted access to funds and limited organisational autonomy. Their communication departments have more than two levels of hierarchy and follow top-down orders from international headquarters. The other three activist organisations are national ENGOs concerned about facilitating the emergence of territorial resistance. Their work is organised according to projects, have restricted access to funds, and their PR efforts are less professionalised. Two other SMOs of this selection produce and disseminate research, taking the form of think tanks. In collaboration with other private and public actors, who normally fund them by project, they attempt to set the policy agenda and advance legislation proposals. The remaining SMO is focused on biodiversity management projects in collaboration with companies and the state and its budget depends on fundraising campaigns. Both the researchers and conservationists point out the central importance of counting with PR personnel, either hired or outsourced.

Findings

In this section I analyse the data retrieved from the interview material by reporting four main themes that could explain how SMOs configure their communication practices in today’s media ecology. Previously, I identified at least three main environmental SMO agendas in Chile: activism, research and conservation. It is evident that these profiles do not determine whether strategic communications are important or not, as all the interviewees have stated the relevance of PR in their work. What is less clear is whether these profiles configure specific communication practices enabled by different types of media.

When asked what media they use to communicate with their different target publics, and how they command them for these purposes, the participants outlined three communication practices that describe the ways media are used to interact with constituents, citizens, journalists and decision-makers. First, nearly all organisations engage in the coordination and reinforcement of their constituency network, for which the use of publications, websites, emailing systems and group chats is key. This communication practice connects SMOs with the broader environmental movement. Secondly, many organisations seek to expand the movement and look for external
support by engaging with a diverse array of publics. This practice pushes SMOs to mobilise people, which is done through websites, digital publications, social media and mobile applications. Finally, a number of SMOs point out the relevance of publicity through the elite press, broadcasting media and online news outlets in order to generate news and opinion content that might attain influence on the public opinion and decision-makers.

When asked why they need diverse online and offline media simultaneously, and whether they blend them in complex ways, the interviewees have highlighted communication planning as the main incentive to rely on different types of media at the same time. Media blending emerged once respondents explained tactical and unintended processes of intermedia agenda-setting. In the next subsection, I discuss each of these four insights in detail to later show in the conclusion how, together, they support the idea that SMOs use and blend diverse media under a strategic approach because they need to enable both activist coordination and external publicity practices.

**Coordination and reinforcement of SMOs’ constituency network**

Embedded in a larger environmental movement network, SMOs produce/distribute publications, use their website and email networks, and rely on mobile applications to both coordinate movement affairs and ‘speak inwards’ to the already mobilised constituents. Logistical coordination is key to perform group activities, while ‘speaking inwards’ refers to movement framing and emotional reinforcement. Many interviewees stress that the movement network is central to their communication efforts, although they identify different publics within it. For research-oriented and activist SMOs focused on services, communicating with the environmental movement means targeting their beneficiaries: local organisations and grassroots involved in a conflict or campaign. Activist SMOs focused on mobilisation and politics view their own members, supporters or ‘friends’ as their internal publics. Even if beneficiaries, members and supporters are not the same kind of segment, they all support the causes that the SMO represents. Therefore, here these groups constitute part of the broader movement.

Logistical coordination requires online communications to be enabled, because SMOs’ constituents are in most cases physically spread around the country. Keeping constituents regularly updated about ongoing conflicts and actions seems crucial for the sustainability of the links with the movement. Publications such as leaflets, annual newsletters and magazines are mentioned as historically relevant to transmit movement contents. Most organisations have stopped printing material due to budget cuts; still, they look for opportunities to reproduce them
again digitally. Educational SMOs still print publications because their sponsored projects mandate them to offer this communicational service to their beneficiaries. This is the case of print newsletters that circulate around communities with a focus on the conflict in which they are involved in. More than twenty years ago, print material was delivered by hand. In present times, SMOs’ run launch events to officialise and distribute print publications among their constituents. Nevertheless, even if mentioned by some respondents, printed materials are rare and today most SMOs conceive a publication as a digital medium. Digital publishing is a priority because it is less expensive. As such, it requires a dissemination plan that includes producing and distributing news content through online news outlets, especially alternative media and Facebook.

The official website plays the same role as the publications. Websites work as platforms to host information considered relevant for constituents. This information is often formatted as news articles. The email is the most used way to distribute publications and news contents – regularly as thumbnails linked to the web – directly to a specific database of recipients. Many interviewees have been quick to stress the importance of newsletters as both a medium and a communication practice to speak inwards. Newsletters operate under a subscription modality that somehow resembles companies’ customer retention strategies. Their contents summarise salient socio-environmental issues and actions. In some cases, documents and research reports are attached and editorial content is included; these contents can be produced exclusively for the newsletter and website, and/or collected from previous publication on media outlets.

Google Groups, WhatsApp, Skype and mobile phones emerge from the data as effective tools to coordinate efforts remotely with a specific group of constituents. A clear example is the use of group chats on mobile applications to arrange the logistics of an activity and specify each individual contribution. Google Groups is used similarly and illustrates how these private spaces, enabled by SMOs to put constituents in contact with one another, go beyond simple coordination.

“In Google Groups (we can see) how our network operates, because it is where everything is coordinated, and where people lend support to one another and send relevant information”

(Communication Officer of activism-oriented SMO based in Santiago, July 2016)³

³ Original in Spanish: “En el Google Group (vemos) cómo es que la red funciona, pues ahí se coordina todo, y la gente se envía fuerza e información importante”.

By shortening the physical distance between territories, Google Groups configure a private space of information and interactivity where the collective identity is framed. In that regard, a private space of communication is key at an emotional level to motivate beneficiaries, members and supporters, and eventually foster togetherness. These emotional cues reinforce the cause that bring constituents together and, along rational coordination, are responsible for the movement’s sustainability at large.

‘Digital guerrilla’: Mobilisation of external support and effective participation

The previous subsection described the ways certain media, especially online platforms, are used by SMOs to coordinate and reinforce links between people who are already mobilised for their causes. This is an internal communication practice that impacts on the coalescence of the movement. SMOs also target external publics to raise awareness and mobilise support, which impacts on the expansion and influence of the environmental movement at the broader scale. Organisations focusing mainly on mobilisation, conservation and research are more prone to send their messages to a broader audience, although all of them confirm the use of at least one type of media to mobilise people. Even when explicitly asked about the use of mainstream news for mobilisation purposes, the interviewees did not mention any sort of mainstream media. On the contrary, as I outline in the next section, the mainstream news media seem to be relevant to influence the elite audience. The respondents highlight official websites and digital publications, which are employed to raise awareness on socio-environmental issues, and social media and mobile applications, which are central to encourage engagement and enable effective citizen participation. These media uses are described in detail below.

Most respondents assert that web platforms and digital publications are used to frame socio-environmental issues and raise awareness among potential supporters. Somehow resembling pre-Internet print media, SMOs’ websites contain news stories, opinion content and technical information in order to make certain issues salient. Activism-oriented SMOs’ books and practical guides systematise information on existing conflicts and detail organisational and strategic aspects of cases of resistance. These contents are expected to activate people and trigger learning processes. Social media, in turn, are pivotal to attract interest and generate a first engagement with the disseminated information available on websites and publications. This first engagement is often precipitated by the use of emotional cues that push users to share the information. Tweets or posts offer a headline to produce engagement and a link to access further
information. People are also reached out for awareness purposes via short videos and podcasts, which contain socio-environmental contents following a less activist and more journalistic style.

The processes of engagement and participation should come after raising awareness and can be measured by the amount of support from the ground to collective action (Mercea, 2013; Scott, 1990; Tilly, 1987). The interviewees view the level of amplification of their SMO contents as necessarily correlated to their ability to mobilise support. In this regard, social media – specifically Facebook and Twitter – emerge from many interviews as the most effective tool to engage people and enable their participation in causes represented by SMOs. In light of the empirical data, three technical affordances of social media seem to explain this statement: interactivity, online forums and amplification.

Instant interactivity enables practices such as cyber-activism. When exploiting this resource, participants say that they target a broad public because what matters is the conversion rate of people into supporters. Thanks to interactivity, SMOs can obtain people’s direct feedback to the information shared publicly, and this feedback builds a discussion forum around the promoted issues. Exposed to information, and able to speak out their opinion, potential supporters get engaged in ‘heated debates’ where can rapidly get convinced and motivated by peers to participate in the movement. The process of amplification of online contents occurs most likely when ‘heated debates’ have been formed. Amplification refers here to the fast and viral dissemination of SMOs’ messages across diverse publics. Since some interviewees observe a relation between amplification and ‘heated debates’, the analysis identifies the emotional aspects of social media. "Emotions, such as indignation or joy, mobilise people to share information” (Former Head of Communications of international foundation based in Santiago, June 2016)\(^4\). Posting controversial news information or placing the blame on authorities or elites for wrongdoing are examples cited by respondents that trigger amplification processes.

Ultimately, social media, along mobile applications in many cases, allow activist SMOs to organise offline actions such as street manifestations, and also coordinate online actions. The latter occurs when SMOs announce an activity such as hacktivism and invite people to participate. One example is using Twitter massively in order to send out the same viral message simultaneously to a MP or government officer. Another clear-cut example are the ‘digital

\(^4\) Original in Spanish: “Todo tiene que ver emoción, manifestada como indignación o alegría; eso moviliza a la gente a compartir.”
guerrillas’, mentioned by the representative of an activist SMO. These guerrillas consist of organising online action through WhatsApp in a viral way. The respondent explains it as follows: A limited number of initiators send a message to their contacts on WhatsApp, and this message contains instructions for a forthcoming action – such as mass emailing to MPs – while requesting to share this information to more people. Often, a single message can be pushed forward by 10 people and end up with more than 140 people participating in the online action. Digital guerrillas are described as a successful amplifying process. Besides these activist experiences, research- and conservation-oriented SMOs do not engage in cyber-activism as such; however, they occasionally lend support to broad online actions via their institutional social media accounts.

*News, opinion columns and socio-political influence*

The previous insights have shown that some SMOs prioritise communications at the small scale while others do so at the larger scale. This does not mean that SMOs send their messages exclusively to either niche or broad publics; certainly, the data consistently show that the organisations engage with both publics through different media at the same time. Proof of this point lies in their use of mainstream news media to gain public visibility and also have some level of influence on a very specific niche: decision-makers. Virtually all the respondents confirm that, despite their active use of diverse ICTs, the so-called ‘older media’ (Chadwick, 2013) are still in fashion for two reasons: counter-framing and political influence. Next, I discuss these two reasons and then describe how SMOs relate with the news media in Chile.

Five out of eight respondents show high awareness of why coverage in the mainstream news media is a leading aim of SMO publicity efforts. These SMO representatives assert that gaining media coverage is a way to access a high sphere of socio-political debate. Once there, they are not only able to insert their environmental issues onto the public agenda, but also to stage a conversation with – often unreachable – decision-makers. I recognise in this emerging insight the relevance of the classic concepts of agenda-setting and framing. According to the data, these processes seem to work at two scales: the large scale, when the public opinion is the target of SMOs’ media publicity, and the niche scale, when the goal is to speak with elites and authorities. In both cases, the most widespread ways to attract journalists’ attention and receive coverage on the mainstream news are writing news stories in ready-to-publish format, especially for online news outlets, and offering hooks such as newsworthy events to a segmented database
of media professionals. Press releases and conferences have very low turnout and have been largely dismissed as newsmaking strategies.

A number of respondents contend that their SMOs target the public opinion for counter-framing purposes. For these organisations, the mainstream news and ideas about environmental policy constitute a hegemonic discourse advanced by authorities and private companies to keep the status quo and demobilise ongoing conflicts.

“Only the official opinion [about socio-environmental issues] is publicly available. This opinion is usually biased and tends to hide certain information. Since we have a very good understanding of how things work in Congress, we are aware that, in practice, laws are not as they are officially described” (Communication Officer of activism-oriented SMO based in Santiago, June 2016)⁵.

Considering the mainstream agenda as biased, these SMOs react by producing alternative contents that they want to publicise at a large scale. They view the same media outlets where elites set the agenda and frame salient issues as a key dissemination platform. The interviewees reveal the importance of having expert spokespersons writing opinion pieces in mainstream news media to gain space next to the elites and offer alternative frames to the public opinion. Often, the organisations address the elites and their decisions in these contents. The above account explains why it is relevant for SMOs to speak along elites through the mainstream news media.

The other reason to seek media coverage is not speaking along but with decision-makers. Three respondents define this objective as a sort of unavoidable route – even if undesired by some of them – to advance or resist legislative reform and produce substantive policy change. Different from the pressure route described in the previous subsection, this publicity route relies less on mass mobilisation and more on the history and accumulated political capital of the organisation’s executive director. Business magazines and legacy newspapers are the SMOs’ most desired type of mainstream media to publicise opinion that addresses or confronts authorities and private companies. However, outsider organisations struggle to get their columns, editorials and letters to the editor published in the elite press. Alternative and specialised news outlets, often online, are the second most preferred option for SMO opinion contents. In some cases, the organisations also seek news coverage in formats other than editorial such as articles

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⁵ Original in Spanish: “Solamente se publica la opinión oficial [sobre temas socio-ambientales], que es usualmente muy sesgada y termina ocultando información. Dado que nosotros manejamos muy bien cómo funciona el Congreso, sabemos que las leyes no son realmente cómo se informan oficialmente.”
and interviews, particularly when they disseminate research and policy proposals. In all the above cases, the ultimate goal is to drive elites’ attention, convince them of certain ideas and have influence on their political decisions. In general, interviewees have observed that this strategy is fairly successful because government officers work with press clipping.

**Intermedia agenda-setting cycles in a hybrid media landscape**

The previous insights described how SMOs rely on the affordances of different types of media to communicate with their publics. In many respondents’ accounts I have observed the use of more than one medium at a time. When asked about their use of ICTs, interviewees were quick to mention offline publications and weight the importance of receiving mainstream media attention. When asked about their engagement with the mainstream media, respondents stressed pervasive processes of news amplification on the social media.

The above insights push the analysis towards an ecological approach, which addresses the fact that media do not exist in a vacuum, or irresponsible to newer technological developments. In fact, most of the SMOs under study have innovated their publicity strategies and readapted or blended older media with new technologies to some extent. Older media do not disappear and are still useful for SMOs; it is their usage what has somehow departed from traditional forms. As an example, redacting press conferences in order to gain access to mainstream media representation has been replaced by other practices such as amplified online contents. Interviewees have highlighted communication planning as a major incentive to use diverse media simultaneously: under a strategic approach, SMOs need to coordinate their actions but also communicate with other actors. The concept of media blending emerged after the respondents suggested intermedia agenda-setting cycles.

Throughout this paper, I have explained that SMOs target different publics, for specific purposes, and how these factors determine their choice of certain media over another. An important aspect to bear in mind is that these different objectives, far from being isolated from one another, intersect in broader PR strategies in order to cover several fronts at the same time.

“We do not conceive communications for the sake of communicating. Communication is a tool to generate and boost our projects [...] It is important to manage a pool of communication tools and
not one tool only. Basically, tools do not invalidate one another, but rather they are mutually reinforced” (Executive Director of research-oriented SMO based in Santiago, June 2016)\(^6\).

Processes of intermedia agenda-setting are consistently suggested in many interviews and constitute the most insightful way to look at the use and blend of media in the context of hybrid media ecology. Three respondents highlight the desired effect of seeing their amplified online contents on the mainstream news media agenda. Some SMOs post contents on Facebook or Twitter designed to attract the attention of journalists and trigger media coverage. Sometimes, tweets tag journalists directly, although this route does not guarantee press feedback. Direct ‘hot actions’ with high visibility potential – such as boycotts and hacktivism – can easily become trending topics on Twitter. When a SMO story reaches a maximum level of amplification on social media, its transfer of salience to newspapers and tabloids is almost guaranteed because reporters regularly monitor trending topics to make news. The aforementioned strategies are successful under very specific conditions: good timing and the design of the collective action. The online-to-offline transfer of salience may not necessarily occur between social and mainstream news media but also between online news outlets and print media. In all these cases, online amplification is a necessary enabling factor.

The inverted logic has been highlighted when some SMOs have used salient issues on the public agenda to foster internal debate on online forums. This is an offline-to-online version of intermedia agenda-setting, which works quite well for SMOs’ framing strategies as it has overall impacted positively on their support base. In practice, the interviewees describe the process as posting press clips on social media groups and opening the respective comments sections. Similarly to what happens with amplified online issues, success here depends on the mainstream salience of the issue. ‘Colder’ issues – as labelled by one interviewee – cannot generate media hybridity to the same extent that ‘hot’ issues would do. Furthermore, issue salience can have a boost by fostering the debate in more than one social media group at once.

“Trying to amplify contents from your own Facebook group in a viral fashion does not have the same result than doing it from all your groups. [If you use all your groups], the boiler heats up

\(^6\) Original in Spanish: “No concebimos la comunicación por la comunicación. La comunicación es una herramienta para potenciar, para generar y mejorar nuestros proyectos […] Es importante manejar las herramientas, pero no solamente una, sino que tener un pool de herramientas de comunicación. En el fondo no se invalidan unas a otras sino que se potencian”.
much more […] When you can do that on Facebook, then you know you are at the [right] moment”
(Executive Director of International activism-oriented SMO based in Santiago, July 2016)\(^7\).

The two intermedia agenda-setting cycles described above can also be unintended. This is phenomenon outlined by interviewees that reveals the influence of today’s hybrid media ecology on social movements and their communication practices. Unintended online-to-offline salience transfer occurs when positioning a spokesperson for their campaigns through social media can end up constructing an official source of a movement for journalists. It also might occur when journalists contact a SMO on one of their social media accounts in order to arrange an interview, which forces the organisation to be reactive and prepare an online press service protocol. An online protocol (e.g. through Facebook) is far from being the standard way to deal with journalists’ requests. Unintended offline-to-online agenda-setting is quite normal because people are constantly exposed to mainstream news, without the intermediation of an SMO. Many times, people comment on mainstream news on a SMO’s online forum beyond the control barriers of the organisation. A number of interviewees view this process as negative because they often get exposed to user attacks and trolling, which undermines their credibility. More positive cycles occur when MPs make fortunate public statements in favour of the SMOs’ and their projects. This material is used to push up certain discussion among their constituents on social media.

To summarise, the participants’ account about intermedia agenda-setting lead to think about two main aspects related to the use of diverse media to enable their communications. First, nearly all the historical environmental SMOs in Chile command media choices strategically, and it is the appropriate blend of them what increases their effective communication in various fronts. Secondly, most participants lend support to the idea of communicating under the influence of hybrid media ecology due to cycles of intermedia agenda-setting, across the online and offline realms, that occur spontaneously. Many participants have learned to command them strategically. The next section summarises the key findings highlighted throughout the section and concludes by connecting these insights back with the research question and existing theoretical frameworks.

\(^7\) Original in Spanish: “Es muy distinto tratar de crecer desde tu propio grupo de Facebook que desde todos tus grupos. Se calienta mucho más la caldera […] Cuando eso se puede hacer en Facebook, sabes que estás en esos momentos [indicados]”.

Conclusion

This paper has analysed how SMOs rely on different types of media to enable their communication practices, with a particular focus on how environmental organisations do it so in the context of hybrid media ecology in contemporary Chile. I have found three sets of insights that provide some answers to the above question. A first set of findings describes specific SMOs’ communication practices and how they are enabled by different offline, mainstream and social media. The second set of findings identifies the plausible reasons why SMOs use all these media at the same time in a hybrid fashion. Finally, a third set of ideas accounts for the empirical data that help understanding how Chilean environmental SMOs operate in a particular context of emerging civil society and post-authoritarian media ecology. I organise the conclusion of this paper according to these three themes and then I finish by suggesting routes for further research.

This paper makes a contribution to existing scholarship on SMOs’ use of different types of media to communicate with different publics by identifying three practices. The first practice is the necessary internal communication process that targets SMOs’ constituents: mobilised grassroots, beneficiaries, ‘friends’ and supporters of the environmental movement. This communication channel is key for the emotional reinforcement of SMOs’ support base and the logistical coordination of collective action. Publications and specific medium-scale ICTs such as mobile applications and email/chat groups are the media that activate this internal channel. The second practice is the external communication process with bystanders and potential supporters for mobilisation purposes. This practice is channelled via social media, as well as websites and digital publications, which are used to stage fundraising and awareness campaigns and offer interactive platforms for people to engage and participate in their causes. Finally, another external communication practice targets the public opinion and elite actors (e.g. authorities, MPs and corporations) in order to introduce certain discussions on their agenda and influence their decisions. SMOs try to gain access to the mainstream media, including elite press, broadcasters and online news outlets, in order to have an impact on the public debate.

The SMOs use different types of media in order to open channels of communication with their constituency network, the civil society and ultimately decision-makers. Certainly, this is not breaking news for any political communication or even social movement researcher. The theme described above confirms that existing knowledge of the relationship between SMOs and media applies well to the case of environmental organisations in Chile. Like many South American
counterparts, the media are communicative resources that most Chilean environmental SMOs command in order to mobilise people, publicise their causes and exert political influence (Martin, 2015; Waisbord, 2011). What is less clear is whether new technologies have necessarily made everything better and easier for them, particularly in a context of multiple communicational and political restrictions (Garretón, 1989; Jara, 2012). One hint is that Chilean SMOs rely completely on ICTs, and particularly social media, to engage and mobilise people. ‘Digital guerrillas’ are possible thanks to technological affordances such as rapid amplification of contents and live interactivity. The study reveals that these organisations distrust or totally lack access to representation on the mainstream news media to the extent that they do not count them as mobilisation platforms. As noted earlier, in Chile the mainstream media tend operate as an oligopoly and nearly all of them aligned with elite interests (Bolaño et al, 1999; Mellado & Van Dalen, 2017). I assert that the notion of SMOs using the mainstream media to raise awareness/educate, mobilise support and funds and organise collective action (Martin, 2015; Powers, 2014) cannot be entirely applied for this case.

Even if key for broad mobilisation, social media are less effective at the smaller scale (internal communication); SMOs value more the use of offline publications and niche spaces of communication enabled by mobile technology. Arguably, intimacy is a concept that requires some polishing due to its nuanced nature: There is intimacy between mobilised constituents, who want to coordinate action, and intimacy between potential activists and loosely engaged supporters, who require being motivated. Social media enable cheap possibilities to mount movement assemblies remotely (Gerbaudo, 2012; Jeppesen et al, 2014). I contend that these online assemblies are probably too big already for logistical purposes, and then mobile technologies and email databases fit better the coordination aspects of internal communication.

A second set of insights is directly related to the concept of media hybridity as it addresses the question: Why and how do SMOs use and even blend all the above media simultaneously? Different media are used simultaneously because all the eight analysed SMOs run their communications professionally in order to aim at diverse publics at once. The data show that their strategies are designed not to mobilize constituents, publicise their cause or convince elites exclusively, but for all of the above together. Media blending occurs because many SMOs, in this strategic practice, have learned to command salience transfer cycles of information across diverse media. Tactically, SMOs try to produce intermedia agenda-setting processes by amplifying their online contents in order to attract journalists’ attention and gain
visibility on the mainstream news. In the same vein, SMOs often reproduce news content on their online forums – mostly enabled on social media groups – as a way to stimulate discussion that reinforce certain collective action frames. It is also key that respondents have observed the natural occurrence of these cycles, without their tactical intervention. These findings lend support to the idea that due to rapid technological developments, the Chilean media ecology is hybrid in the sense that online and mainstream news agendas are in dynamic interaction (Treré & Mattoni, 2016). As outlined in the scholarship, these processes have affected the practice of some SMOs that quickly have seen the benefits of media blending (Chadwick, 2007).

There are at least two implications of the above insights to the current state of the art. First, along with the empirical evidence that the emerging Chilean civil society has rapidly moved towards professionalism, it is possible to argue that the media do play an important role in political mobilisation and unrest in post-authoritarian contexts like the one under analysis. Most importantly, this paper timely joins overarching academic arguments about the effects of hybrid media ecology on the communication practices of SMOs. Certainly, the study provides evidence that cycles of intermedia agenda-setting are pursued by SMOs in a tactical fashion in order to reinforce their frames internally and then command them across more than one layer of publicity. Based on this evidence, Chilean media ecology looks as hybrid as it does elsewhere.

The last set of insights discusses the relevance of these findings to the particular case of Chile’s civil society and communications environment. The paper has shown that nearly all the environmental SMOs with historical presence in the country have – often large – PR offices, staffed by professionals. If they do not, they have hired a press service agency, or simply carry out these tasks unofficially. The eight SMOs have personnel in charge of managing their websites, social media accounts and newsletters, as well as conducting PR efforts that include writing/sending press releases and coordinating scoops. Therefore, there is evidence pointing out that, despite their different agendas, Chilean environmental SMOs view the media as strategic platforms to communicate with their target publics (Waisbord, 2011). Strategic planning is what ultimately drives their blending of different types of offline, mainstream and social media. Academics hold the idea that Chilean civil society remains fragmented and weak, despite the substantive advances of the country in terms of democratisation (Iglesias, 2015). Far from this, the emerging Chilean civil society has rapidly evolved towards institutionalisation during the last two decades (Ulianova & Estenssoro, 2012). Seemingly, the advent of ICTs offered ecological
stimuli to push their activism and communication practices toward professionalism (Millaleo & Velasco, 2013) even if some SMOs have decided to pursue an outsider activism agenda.

This paper has generating a better understanding of the relationship between Chilean environmental SMOs and media. The findings presented here address today’s media ecology in order to avoid a techno-determinist approach. Due to its qualitative nature, these findings, if useful to understand the professionalised segment of social movements, cannot be generalised to the whole civil society. Moreover, this paper has been focused on finding common patterns across different SMOs, which opens the question: What is the role played by different agendas and organisational dynamics? Further research can take many of the theoretical insights discussed throughout this work and refine them in light of new data. One suggested path is expanding the empirical cases to include non-institutionalised movement actors such as online activists and grassroots communities. Greater reflexivity could help gaining better understanding of how Chilean civil society has emerged from a dense post-authoritarian version of neoliberalism. This is also true for this particular hybrid media ecology, where the use of social media is vastly extended among the population for both leisure and activism, and where the mainstream news media show one of the highest levels of business concentration of the world.

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