

## Book review

### **The Development of Social Network Analysis in the Spanish-Speaking World: A Spanish Chronicle, version 2b, J.L. Molina (2006)**

#### **1. Origins, 1991–1998**

Before the Sunbelt XIV held in New Orleans in 1994, Spanish-speaking scholars interested in Social Network Analysis (both in Latin-America and Spain) were a handful of disconnected people. In Spain, a sociologist from the University of Malaga, Félix Requena Santos had published the first article in Spanish about Social Network Analysis (SNA) in 1989, “El concepto de red social”, in the journal *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (REIS) (Requena Santos, 1989). At about the same time (1990), Narciso Pizarro, a sociologist with a physics background at the Complutense University, published an introductory article, “La teoría de redes sociales” (Pizarro, 1990). Requena Santos’s article was followed by more of his publications: a book applying the social networks perspective to the job market, *Redes sociales y mercado de trabajo: Elementos para una teoría del capital relacional* (Requena Santos, 1991b), and an article on the same subject (Requena Santos, 1991a).

Aurelio Díaz, anthropologist, published in 1992 a book about cocaine consumers in Barcelona based on the snowball method and the next year (Díaz et al., 1992), Josep A. Rodríguez, a sociologist from the University of Barcelona, published in REIS an analysis of academic sociology in Spain based on co-citations of the articles published in the same journal (Rodríguez, 1993). Josep A. Rodríguez and his colleague John Mohr, former students at Yale University, had learned from Scott Boorman the theory and methods of social network analysis.

In the same year, Félix Requena published a review of social network items for surveys (Requena Santos, 1993), and in the next year he published another book and an article on friendship and family (Requena Santos, 1994a, 1994b). Also in 1993, Carlos Lozares, a sociologist from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, taught a graduate course on social network analysis, the first one in a Spanish University. He had visited the University of California, San Diego several times and was familiar with the concepts and methods of SNA.

Three Spanish-speaking participants in the New Orleans Sunbelt conference in 1994 organized two Sunbelt Conferences in the following years (Sitges, Spain 1998 – Josep A. Rodríguez and José Luis Molina- and Cancún, México 2002 – Jorge Gil Mendieta and Molina). Jorge Gil Mendieta had been introduced to SNA by the work of Frank Harary and was familiar with the work of Linton Freeman at the University of California, Irvine. In my case, although the early anthropological work of J. Clyde Mitchell was well known in my department, we did not know about the next three decades of SNA development. Before attending the 1994 Sunbelt, I had exchanged some faxes with Alvin Wolfe, the president of INSNA at that time and some emails with Steve Borgatti and

H. Russell Bernard, anthropologists like myself. In fact I had meet with Steve Borgatti to show him my software *Netmanager*, a *DBaseIII* (!) based program for gathering personal network data to be analyzed with *UCINET IV*. I attended the workshop gave by Stanley Wasserman and Katie Faust (and I got the selected chapters of their unpublished manuscript *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*) and saw and heard the keynote speech gave by Barry Wellman under the weight of dozens of Mardi Gras collars.

After the 1994 Sunbelt, SNA become a developing field in Spain. In 1995, Carlos Lozares published “La teoría de redes sociales” as an introduction to SNA while Félix Requena published an article (Requena Santos, 1995) in the same journal (Lozares, 1995). Also in 1995, Josep A. Rodríguez published an introductory book to SNA (Rodríguez, 1995), while José Luis Molina published a programmatic and methodological article, “Análisis de redes y cultura organizativa: una propuesta metodológica” (Molina, 1995). Finally, in 1996 Requena Santos published a book with a review of the main questionnaires used in SNA research (Requena Santos, 1996).

## 2. Sunbelt XVIII and beyond

During Sunbelt XIV (London, 1996) Frans Stockman and Tom Snijders (among others in the scientific committee) and Josep A. Rodríguez and José Luis Molina (local committee) agreed to organize a Sunbelt conference in Barcelona in 1998.

Just before the Sunbelt XVIII held in Sitges (Barcelona) in 1998, Narciso Pizarro and Tomás Rodríguez Villasante another professor of the Complutense University, organized in Madrid the seminar “*Social Network Analysis. Consolidación de un paradigma interdisciplinar*,” with the participation of Ronald Breiger, Patrick Doreian, Barry Wellman and Harrison White. The contributions of those scholars plus some professors from the Complutense University were published some time later in a special issue of the journal *Política y sociedad* (Herrero, 2000; Villasante, 2000). Narciso Pizarro released a manual on social science with a chapter devoted to SNA, while also in 1998, Tomás R. Villasante published a two-volume book that continued his work in Participatory Action Research (Pizarro, 1998; Villasante, 1998).

The *I Mesa Hispana para el Análisis de Redes Sociales* was held in Sitges at the prior to the Sunbelt sessions, with the objective of gathering for the first time the Spanish-speaking people interested in the subject: mostly scholars but also people working in community development planning. Because of the poor command of oral English in the Spanish-speaking world, this type of meeting allowed people interested in SNA to become in touch with the field and develop a community. (Three more *Mesas Hispanas* were celebrated during later Sunbelts in Budapest, Cancun and Portoroz, Slovenia.)

Participants at the Sitges *Mesa* agreed to start a listserv, REDES. To aid this, Steve Borgatti, then president of INSNA, made it the possible to base this listserv at Boston College. In only one month, the REDES listserv achieved 90 subscribers. At the end of 2005, the situation is very different. Now, the REDES listserv is located in the RedIris server (a public service for Spanish universities) and has 450 subscribers. Along with the listserv, the website REDES (<http://www.redes-sociales.net>) offers a repository of self-training materials, papers and news on SNA. It gets a mean of about 250 visits per day.

Another important milestone is the launching of the electronic Journal, *Redes—Revista Hispana para el Análisis de redes sociales* (<http://revista-redes.rediris.es>) in January 2002. By the end of 2005, the journal *Redes* had published 9 issues with 45 articles—some of them translations of American and European scholars (such as Valente, 2005). Its website has about 1500 visits daily. This journal was inspired b the online *Journal of Social Structure* (<http://www.cmu.edu/joss/>)

and, with the support of the UAB and other institutions, some special volumes have also been printed.

There is other publishing activity. For example in 2003, Isidro Maya Jariego (Social Psychology, University of Sevilla) edited a special issue of *Araucaria* devoted to Stanley Milgram, including the first translation into Spanish of his seminal article “The small world problem” (Maya Jariego, 2003). Additionally, other articles in *Araucaria* were dedicated to policy networks as well as to bibliographical sketch of Larissa Adler Lomnitz, the pioneer anthropologist in Spanish-speaking network studies. The journal *Empiria* (UNED, Department of Sociology I) has recently issued a special volume on SNA edited by Lozares and Arribas (2005).

As in the English-language listserv, SOcNET, the REDES community is diverse, with scholars, students, managers and NGO workers (mostly in the community development area) spread throughout Spain, Portugal and Latin America. As in SOcNET, the academic fields represented are mainly from the social sciences (including economics), but also from physics, bibliometrics and computer science.

SNA is currently taught at the graduate program in sociology at the University of Barcelona and the University of Alicante, in the graduate program of sociology and social and cultural Anthropology at the UAB (a joint course by Carlos Lozares and José Luis Molina, with five editions until now). Several universities include SNA in their graduate and undergraduate courses about research methods, including the University of Barcelona, University of Girona, University of Oviedo, and Complutense University. SNA is also present in the 2-year Master’s program, *Tècniques d’Investigació Social Aplicada* in Barcelona (three editions), and in the annual workshop in Sevilla (three editions) organized by Isidro Maya Jariego. Molina (2001) and Requena Santos (2003) have provided some introductory or reference books, with Requena’s including a compilation of 16 classical SNA articles translated into Spanish.

As a sign of its growing institutionalization. SNA was identified by the Spanish authorities in the *Plan Nacional de I+D 2004–2007* (2004) as one of the areas targeted for research. Twelve doctoral dissertations have been written so far, with several more to be defended in the next years.

### 3. Areas of development

The area of *complex networks* (applied to a variety of fields as ecology, linguistics, cancer research) is represented by the physicist and biologist Ricard V. Solé (Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona and the Santa Fe Institute, USA) and the researchers at the Complex Systems Lab (<http://complex.upf.es>). They have published dozen of articles in English in prestigious scientific journals such as *Nature* and *Science*. Another physicist, Albert Díaz-Guilera from the University of Barcelona is working with colleagues such Pastor-Satorras, from the UPC, Barcelona on algorithms for community detection (Guimerà et al., 2002; Boguñá et al., 2004; Arenas et al., 2004) and communication in complex networks.

In economics, the social capital literature has renewed the interest in neo-institutionalism as a way to advance beyond the neoclassical paradigm. The network perspective allows the operationalization of social variables (as, for example, social capital in an industrial district) and it is starting to be accepted by economists. Guia Julve (2000) from the University of Girona and his students and colleagues are working in this direction, as are other young economists (e.g., Casanueva Rocha, 2003; Semitiel García and Pedro Noguera, 2004). The work of statisticians such as Coromina and Coenders (in press) and García Muñoz et al. (2004) from the University of Oviedo also deserve to be mentioned.

Bibliometrics is another area of research. Thanks to the work of the Scimago Group (<http://www.scimago.es/>), based at the University of Granada, Félix Moya-Anegón and his colleagues have provided an *Atlas of Science* in Spain and Latin American countries. This *Atlas* combines network analysis of co-authorship with network visualization as a user interface. The scholars are currently extending their analysis from institutions to authors and research groups. A growing group of computer scientists are related to this area, as they provide ways to visualizing the scientific network of collaborations (de la Rosa Troyano et al., 2005). An earlier work in this field can be found in Molina et al. (2002).

In sociology, Josep A. Rodríguez (University of Barcelona) and his research group Poder y Privilegio (<http://www.ub.es/epp/>) are working on the representation of large cluster of firms and institutions in Spain, Europe and elsewhere. Also in sociology, Lozares (2000), Martí (2000) and Verd et al. (2000), Verd and Lozares (2000) have made interesting contributions to the network analysis of discourse. A special case is Ainhoa de Federico, a young sociologist now professor at the Université de Lille I (France) who has done interesting work studying evolving networks of friendship among the Erasmus students in Europe (de Federico de la Rúa, 2004). She has acted as an active broker between REDES and French and Dutch scholars.

Another emergent area of research is personal networks and communities, an attempt to use personal networks measures of composition and structure as independent variables for a variety of outcomes, such as acculturation, ethnic identification, health or patterns of mobility. Isidro Maya Jariego (US) and José Luis Molina (<http://www.egoredes.net/>), with the support of Chris McCarty (University of Florida) and his Egonet software (<http://www.mdlogix.com/egonet.htm>), are currently developing research in this area (Maya Jariego, 2004; Maya Jariego and Holgado, 2005; Molina, 2005; McCarty et al., in press).

Finally, SNA has the potential for developing social theory. Pizarro (2000, 2004) and Lozares (2003, 2006) are making contributions to understanding social structure by taking social interactions as a point of departure and re-elaborating the ideas of Simmel (1922), Nadel (1957) and Bourdieu (1977), among others.

The growing number of collaborations with American (Borgatti and Molina, 2003, 2005; McCarty et al., in press) and European scholars (Snijders, Brandes) in the last few years are another sign of the maturation of SNA in Spain and, I hope, the basis for an even more active contribution to SNA and social theory.

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