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Discourses of social change in contemporary democracies: The ideological construction of an Ecuadorian women's group based on "solidarity economy and finance"¹

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the discursive construction which a women's movement (MMO) in Ecuador presents to the public as an alternative to the Government's proposal on the issue of "solidarity economy and finance". The MMO's proposal and that of the Government are not exactly two conflicting voices, but they are somewhat divergent in the process of building the *sumak kawsay* ("good life"), the central idea of the new constitution. The analysis of the selected MMO's speeches reveals that the pragmatic-argumentative resources connect their position with the country's recent crisis. However, the Government proposal is presented discursively, decontextualizing the issue from the country's socio-economic situation.

Ethnographic methodology is used to collect the data, and to relate these data with the local and global context. As for the method of analysis, the pragmatic approach has provided useful tools at micro-analytical level. However, this level places limits at macro-analytical level, on the analysis of complex strategies and arguments; in this case, this research shows how discourse analysis needs to be complemented with studies of argumentation. Finally, the socio-cognitive notion of *frame* has been used at the interpretative level to explain the ideological meaning of the present data.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, pragmatic strategies, argumentative strategies, cognitive frame, feminist critical discourse analysis, discourse of social change.

1. Introduction

This paper is an example of the analysis of discourses involving citizen participation. These are discourses which, in today's democracies, call for radical social and political changes. Furthermore, they have a clear ideological nature because, on the one hand, they are expected to be heard by a country's citizens to ensure adherence to their ideological position, and, on the other, they target government or other key institutions so that their proposals can be incorporated into governance.

My specific purpose here is to present the analysis of the discursive construction which a women's group (the *Movimiento de Mujeres de El Oro* or MMO, located in the city of Machala, in El Oro province, Ecuador) presents to the public as an alternative to the Government's proposal on the issue of "solidarity economy and finance".

These women's discourses are postulated to achieve two concrete political goals: 1) the legitimacy of the feminist movement in the overall socio-political advocacy of the country, as this type of finance mainly arises within women's movements and is considered by them an effective means of achieving their empowerment; 2) the opportunity to present this model as coherently and articulately as possible, in order to contest the Ecuadorian Government's bill which excludes the *Cajas de Ahorro* (the economic and savings model created by women) from the system of public funding.

The overall orientation of this paper connects with the research of Lazar (2005), Martín-Rojo and Gómez-Esteban (2005), among others, which attempts to link gender studies with Critical Discourse Analysis. Their goal, as indicated by Lazar (2005: 11), is to analyze "how gender ideology and gendered relations of power are (re)produced, negotiated and contested in examples of social practices...". In the same vein, the present study aims to analyze the discourses of a women's group in their political struggle for the eradication of feminine poverty.

2. The socioeconomic context: the *sumak kawsay*

The political history of Ecuador during the twentieth century was of great instability, even though it did not suffer the kind of brutal dictatorships existing in other Latin American countries. Following the military dictatorships, democracy was set up in Ecuador in 1979, though it failed to become completely consolidated. Between 1997 and 1998 the devastating effects of *El Niño* and the fall in oil prices drove the country to bankruptcy. In 2000, president Mahuad took the drastic step of making the country's official currency the US dollar, which gave rise to a jump in prices. President Novoa continued with "dollarization", at the same time as he applied tough austerity measures imposed by the IMF, due to the country's external debt crisis. This crisis coincided with the collapse of several of the country's largest banks, together with a series of financial scams affecting the middle classes, who were hoodwinked by promises of unrealistically high interest rates for their savings.

In response to this collapse, the social organizations took to the streets, organising large-scale strikes and demonstrations. The heightened tension led to a situation not unlike the onset of a civil war. In spite of this, the macro-economy became more stable a few years later due to the very effect of "dollarization". In 2002 the former coup leader, Lucio Gutiérrez, managed to obtain the support of the indigenous population with promises of ending corruption. However, once in power he made a U-

turn in his policies and followed IMF dictates, giving rise to fresh popular protests which led to his removal in 2005. In November 2006, Rafael Correa (centre-left) was elected, promising to draw up a new constitution. The Constituent Assembly drafted this new *Magna Carta*, which was clearly social in nature and endorsed in a referendum in 2008. This forced fresh general elections to be held, in which Correa was once again elected president. This has been the most stable period of democracy in the recent history of the country, although in September 2010 there was an attempted coup by groups within police and air force, which was quashed the same day it occurred.

Summing up, though the country is making strides towards democratic consolidation, doubts still hang over it, such as a severe problem of corruption, which has taken root in several layers of society, and the precarious work situation of broad swathes of the population. Among those most affected are women, who have to put up with high rates of poverty and exclusion. Almost 30% of Ecuadorian women are single mothers raising children alone, and they are also those with the highest percentage of casual employment and with low wages in subsistence-type jobs.

The system of “solidarity economy and finance” was created by different social groups as an alternative model to the economic and financial activity carried out by private and/or traditional public banks, whose main focus has been and remains economic returns through the interest charged on loans. The former system (solidarity economy and finance) offers a variety of solutions: microcredit, savings, community cooperatives, etc., aimed at groups traditionally excluded from conventional banking because of its requirement to provide guarantees, which are beyond the reach of the most marginalized sectors of the population. With this purpose, the MMO created the *Cajas de Ahorro y de Crédito* (‘Savings and Credit Banks’) in the 1990s to provide small loans to its members.

The current Ecuadorian Government is also trying to support these solidarity financial initiatives with a more uniform model, in order to offer public funding. The MMO applauds the Government for wanting to regulate the *Cajas*, but does not agree with their definition (which I refer to later). This is why this women’s group organized different events to explain both to its own members and to other Ecuadorian women’s groups its disagreement with the Government and the need to articulate their ideological position in a more effective way. The data analyzed in the present paper are an example of this purpose.

The discursive expression of these differences by women's organizations also needs to be understood in the context of the current political situation in Ecuador. As mentioned, in September 2008, a new constitution with a greater social focus was approved by referendum, and President Rafael Correa won another term in office. Currently, the Government is continuing the process of drafting new legislation consistent with the new constitutional text.

The MMO is a very active group in presenting alternatives in favor of women's new rights, very much aware that the proper expression of their communicative practices is an essential part of their political activity (as explained in Fairclough 2001: 181-182); in fact, they seem to be aware that any struggle for hegemony, whether social, cultural or political, always starts at the level of discourse (Blommaert et al. 2003; Vos 2003).

In addition, these women groups' practices must be placed within the broader context of the pursuit of initiatives that are emerging in many developing countries, and which in Latin America are seen as an alternative to both colonial Eurocentric ideas (Quijano 2005; Sousa de Santos 2009) and the dominant capitalist system, a "historical system" in crisis (Wallerstein 2001: 152). This is the case of the general framework of *sumak kawsay* ('the good life' in Quichua), a term which summarizes the main goal of the new Ecuadorian Constitution, as stated in the preamble: "Women and Men, the Ecuadorean sovereign people, decided to build a new form of peaceful coexistence, in diversity, and harmony with nature, to achieve the good life, the *sumak kawsay*".²

3. The theoretical approach

I consider discourse as a socio-cognitive construction (Castells 2009; Varela et al. 1990; [Morales-López 2011](#)), inextricably linked to its participants, and formed within its socio-cultural and socio-historical context ([Duranti 1997](#); Wodak et al. 1999; Scollon and Wong Scollon 2001). In this sense, my theoretical purpose is to study communicative situations, focusing on the analysis of participants' interactions (or interventions, in order to include different kinds of data), because they are the standard means by which social forces emerge (Gumperz 2001: 215-217). A key concept in my research is Goffman's (1974) notion of participation framework. The framework (or frame) is the context that participants activate when initiating an exchange, which guides them in their interpretation throughout the negotiation of meaning. Lakoff's (2007, 2008) reformulation of this notion as a cognitive frame seems to me to be interesting

because it emphasizes its function as providing interpretive standards to define the living experience, internalized during individuals' socialization, and which may be constructed and re-contextualized ideologically for political and persuasive purposes.

The analysis of ideological discourses published previously (Pujante and Morales-López 2008, 2009) has revealed that the rhetorical-argumentative tradition is a key complement to discourse analysis (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958; [Perelman 1997](#)), together with Pragma-dialectics (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004). However, I still consider that this rhetorical-argumentative dimension falls within communicative dynamism, as interlocutors present and/or negotiate their constructed meaning through speech acts which create specific expectations (Gumperz 1982:100-101).

4. Methodology

4.1. Empirical data

I used the ethnographic methodology for the data collection. I carried out two research stays with the MMO: an initial short stay in July 2008 and a second three-month stay the following year (October to December 2009). Following the method of participant-observation, during my time there, I was a member of the group, taking part in all of its activities. This is a period needed in ethnographic research to become a legitimate participant, as stated by Scollon and Wong Scollon (2001: 17).

The focus on both the local and global contexts of these data was also crucial in determining the relevance of the selected discourses in the ideological process of this women's group (for the importance of context, see also Charaudeau 2009). The above-mentioned disadvantage concerning women when compared with men (30% of Ecuadorian women are single mothers raising children alone) led me to consider discourses on economic issues (in particular on solidarity economy and finance) as a priority for this first piece of research on discourses of gender.

The MMO data related to this topic was audio-recorded and then transcribed (following the orthographical conventions, though splitting the text into information units). For the present paper I have chosen two speeches delivered by the MMO's leader, one addressed to the whole group in the city of Machala (October 14th 2009), and another delivered to a general meeting of Ecuadorian women's groups in the city of Guayaquil (November 5th 2009), in both cases with the presence of the local press. The

main purpose of these speeches was to show the MMO's opposition to the recent draft of the law on "solidarity economy and finance", proposed by the Government.

To understand the dispute in question, the main ideas of this law will be analyzed, as well as some Government representatives' opinions justifying their position.

4. 2. Method of analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively, selecting the main procedures used in terms of both their pragmatic and rhetorical-argumentative perspectives. The pragmatic-discursive approach provides useful tools at the micro level: first, the analysis of speech acts (Searle 1975 [1991]), as basic units in any communicative activity; and then the selection of contextualization cues –“any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the activation of contextual inferences”– as defined by Gumperz (1982: 131).

However, this level places limits on the analysis of complex strategies and arguments constructed in ideological discourses. In this case, discourse analysis needs to be completed at macro level with other resources such as kinds of arguments and fallacies, pragma-dialectical rules, etc. (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958; Perelman 2007; Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004).

Both traditions (the pragmatic-discursive and the rhetorical-argumentative approaches) share what I consider to be two significant aspects for discourse analysis: a functionalist approach (its goal is to establish a dialectical relationship between communicative functions and the forms that convey them) and a constructivist position of knowledge (the idea that reality does not exist independently of discursive practices).

Finally, the socio-cognitive notion of frame (as in Lakoff 2007, 2008) was used at the interpretative level to explain the different worldviews (Bourdieu 1990: 130) or symbolic universes (Berger and Luckmann, 1968 [1986]: 124) that social actors build and try to defend in ideological disputes.

5. Data analysis

I will begin with a brief reference to the Constitutional articles on the economic issue in hand, and the main point of disagreement between the MMO and the Government; secondly, I will refer to the argumentative defense of this group's

economic proposal; and thirdly, to the Government's refusal to include a feminist orientation in its social and economic proposal.

In these phases, my main objective will be the analysis of the pragmatic and argumentative procedures that discursively construct the present conflict between this women's group and the Government.

5.1. The solidarity economy and finance system in the Constitution and the main cause of disagreement

The new Constitution approved by referendum includes a specific reference to the solidarity finance system as part of the country's economic sovereignty (Art. 283). Within this general framework, a section relating to the solidarity finance system was included: "The national financial system is composed of public, private, and popular and solidarity sectors, which intermediate resources from the public..." (Art. 309).³ The text specifically mentions this kind of economy, placing it on a par with other types of finance (e.g. the public and private sector); it will also be a priority for the state if it is geared towards the effective development of the population within the general framework of *sumak kawsay*.

Once the text had been approved, as discussed above, the following political context (in which the country was immersed in during my participant-observation) corresponds to a period in which new legislation was being drawn up in accordance with the constitutional text. Therefore, the advocacy work of the social organizations did not end with the adoption of the constitution, especially as some of these groups, including the MMO, raised concerns about a number of President Correa's actions in the development process of these laws.

The MMO's main position in the issue under analysis is that the gender perspective must be included in the new law of economy and social finance. Thus the *Cajas* (consisting mainly of women) have to be recognized by the Government on a par with other existing savings models. On the contrary, the Government believes that the *Cajas* are merely spaces for the social consolidation of women's groups because they have not shown any great capacity to generate stable employment. For this reason, they can only receive public funding for their social consolidation; and when this occurs, they will be turned into cooperatives (another type of economic and finance model, mainly governed by male workers).

5.2. The argumentative defense of the MMO's "solidarity" perspective

The analysis of its leader's speeches (see Appendix) reveals that this group constructs its ideological position through the following arguments and procedures:

5.2.1. *An argument based on the structure of reality: the liaisons of succession* (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958 [1989]). This argument is based on the links that exist among real-life elements, such as cause and effect. The data show that the model of the *Cajas* is presented as being inserted in its political and economic context, as the effect of the private initiative of the poor Ecuadorian women for survival in the adverse situation of recent decades.

In this sense, in the first speech, as an alternative to the traditional banking model that collapsed due to their corrupt practices early in the new century (an example is the Cabrera's case, mentioned in A-3), and which the Ecuadorian Government saved (A-21-22), the MMO's representative puts forward this new proposal as the result of the dynamics of the country's women: "the right to credit –a legitimate right of poor and impoverished women in this country– to analyze [improve] our productive activity" (A-8-11). And faced with the opacity of this traditional banking system ("the corrupt banking", A-21), this new economic approach is described through a metaphorical construction based on parts of the human body: "whose tissue, whose feet, whose arms are all this great number of savings banks..." (A-27-28), that is, a tangible activity with clearly-defined functions that has been established within the country's social life (A-29-30). The parallel structures *why not... why not...* (A-23-24) and *whose... whose... whose...* (A-27-28) highlight the emotive character of the proposal for this group.

The use of lexical items (*persistent... ventured... believed, give way... were stubborn...*, etc.) inserted in other parallel structures (*because...*; and *never + verb*) to describe the women's long struggle to achieve innovative results seems to map these women's effort iconically: "... because they were persistent, because they ventured, because they believed, because they didn't give way, because they were stubborn..." (A-67-72); and "... [the *Cajas*] have never ceased to exist, they never stopped working, they never stopped functioning" (A-73-75).

In the second speech (B), the MMO's representative refers again to the women's initiative with lexical terms that imply effort in the country's continuous crisis: "a joint *struggle*, especially of poor women in this country, that we have had *resistance* to

multiple crises” (B-8-11); a struggle that women have to continue to endure: “we have to *fight*, we have to *wake up*, we have to *think*, that not all is lost” (B-303-306).

5.2.2. *An argument that establishes the structure of reality: illustration.* Continuing with her argumentative defense, the MMO’s representative now resorts to different illustrations (Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca 1958 [1989]). This kind of argument allows us to set up a model or a general rule from a known case or event.

As an example, I have selected the description of a real event that happened to a poor woman in Machala (B-16-60). This narrative – which the MMO’s leader is practically reading – is part of the testimony that a female victim of *chulquería* (or *chulco*, an illegal system of loans) included in her complaint filed in court, after her house was taken over without legal guarantees. This includes the traditional characters of economic oppression, whilst she and her family (who work in the traditional fishing trade) are portrayed as the victims of the economic powers, oppressed under the combination of poverty and misrule, and of a *chulquero*, allied with a corrupt police force, who arrives with a hundred policemen and a group of young African Ecuadorians (the poorer segment of this society). The narrative shows then a situation whereby the powerful take advantage of those working women who have to resort to illegal loans to obtain money. The narrative ends with the *evaluation* and *result* sections (Labov and Waletzky 1967), where the protagonist makes a judgment about the event (B-57-60) and makes explicit her willingness to fight against these cases of corruption (B-73-78).

As in the previous argument, the MMO’s leader uses this illustration to build the social background that explains Ecuadorian women’s poverty, thereby justifying the need for an economy that legally recognizes women’s initiatives.

5.2.3. *The reiterative use of specific lexical items and metaphorical expressions in order to construct their economic model.* It is defended as an alternative to the capitalist economy and as a response to some Government representatives’ negative opinions about the *Cajas* (see section 4.2 and 5.3).

Denying this misunderstanding, the MMO’s representative presents the women’s alternative model with lexical terms that transmit positive values: it comes from a feminist perspective (“women’s look and feel”); it is also an open and inclusive one (the next metaphor reiterates this: “What we can achieve today *opens the doors, windows,*

homes to thousands of *Cajas* in this country...”); and its priority is the solidarity of relationships and people’s effort (“to do well in a country, on a planet like this”).⁴

In the second speech, she refers again to this economy in similar lexical terms: the “[the bonus] as a recognition of the economy of care” (B-154), “sustainability of life” (B-155) and “resistance to the collapse” of the state in previous governments (B-156-158). In the first example, other features of the cognitive framework activated are then completed, namely, equity and compensation for historical inequalities among the country’s lower classes.

It can therefore be seen that these lexical terms and the semantic constructions with which she describes their proposal build the cognitive frame of the solidarity economy as a framework under the umbrella of the *sumak kawsay* (A-100-103). Some of its traits could be reminiscent of what Lakoff (2007) described as the *nurturant frame*.

5.3. *The Government’s position*

Through the analysis of some key articles of the Bill (pending approval) for a Popular and Solidarity Economy, and of some Government representatives’ opinions on this issue, the following procedures seem relevant in the construction of discourse we are concerned with.

5.3.1. *The argumentative process of the bill: the implicit premise.* In November 2009, the social movement of the country received a preliminary Bill on this topic to be discussed by the National Assembly prior to its adoption. In this project this type of economy is defined as follows: “For purposes of this law, popular economy and solidarity is understood as all collective forms of economic organization, [...] in order to earn an income or means of life in efforts aimed at achieving a good life, without profit or accumulation of capital” (Art. 1). Further on, it says that traditional forms, such as “cooperatives, community banks, savings banks, solidarity funds, among others, which constitute the Community Sector” (Art. 2), are part of these economy. As can be seen, the *Cajas* (saving banks) are included in this list. However, in two subsequent articles the following clarification is made:

“... When economic organizations of the community sector meet the social, geographic, operational and economic conditions of the General Regulations of this Law, by necessity, they must be constituted as organizations of the associative or *cooperative sector* and must be reviewed by the superintendency in order to continue receiving the benefits granted by the State” (Art. 23).

“The solidarity funds, savings banks and community banks will operate as *spaces for the promotion* and dissemination of experience and knowledge of education, health and other aspects related to the socioeconomic development of their territory, an activity that will be linked to state policies to promote and transfer public resources for the development of those capabilities. They will also serve as a means of channeling public resources for social projects, under the accompaniment of the Institute [of Solidarity Economy and Finance]” (Art. 105).

The State recognizes the *Cajas* as spaces for social promotion (Art. 105) and to this end, they may be able to receive public funds, but they must be established as cooperatives and be regulated by other standards when they extend their activities beyond these goals (Art. 23). In other words, when they have reached a higher level of organization, they must disengage from the women’s movement from which they arose.

Consequently, a divergence is found between the constitutionally approved text (the *Cajas* as an example of one of the three financial models recognized in Art. 309, see Section 4.1) and the proposal presented by the Government in this bill (the *Cajas* as spaces of social promotion). At no time are there explicit reasons for this change or why the *Cajas* are separated from the rest of other productive initiatives of a popular and solidarity economy.

It seems then to disregard, in pragmatic terms, the maxim of quantity (not enough information is provided to understand the argumentative process); it also violates Rule 9 of the critical argumentative discussion proposed by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004: 151-152), namely, that “... the protagonist has conclusively defended an initial standpoint... if he/she has successfully defended both the propositional content called into question by the antagonist and its force of justification or refutation called into question by the antagonist.”

5.3.2. *The use of an argument based on the effects.* An explicit reason for the Government’s refusal to consider the *Cajas* as having a standing in their own right within the solidarity finance sector was detected in the opinion of a government representative during a meeting with social groups, at which I was present (approximate transcription): “[...] They [the *Cajas*] also have structural problems: they operate in isolation and in a disorganized way, with limited access to productive assets, financial services [...]”.

Firstly, the speaker had highlights the contribution of the *Cajas* to the informal economy and thus to solving the country’s problem of poverty (excerpt not included), but then he also specifies their structural and organizational problems: they operate in a

disorganized way and have little access to capital goods. So, for this government representative, limited access to production is the result of their own economic model of *Cajas*. He is thus constructing an argument *based on the effects* (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958 [1989]: 405-409), which allows for the appraisal of a particular fact by its consequences.

In contrast, for the MMO, the problem has a clear cause: the socio-historical context that has led to the current situation and that the institutional representative has done away with. In the midst of this adverse context, the *Cajas* are presented as an imaginative solution created by the poor women of the country. So the MMO's argument includes a more complete process of *liaisons of succession* (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958 [1989]), which is absent in the Government representative's statement.

5.3.3. *The strategy of delegitimation.* A third source of Government opinion comes throughout an MMO leader's speeches, where she recontextualizes some Government representatives' negative assertions on these women's economic initiatives. They construct a delegitimation (Wodak et al. 1999: 31) of the *Cajas* with the following procedures:

- A comparison between the *Cajas* and the Cabrera case (A-1-4). She refers to how this initiative was considered by some Government representatives as an illegal activity similar to the country's biggest case of fraud in ten years.
- Metaphors (attributed to institutional members) with which the *Cajas* are presented negatively: "newborn child..." (B-203) and "organizational spaces that are crawling".
- A Government representative's comment expressed by a non-agentive subject: "The *entire public bank* in this country insists on not doing much to deliver resources to the *Cajas*...". The use of an abstract entity as subject allows the veiling of the real agent, thus eluding responsibility for the change of the Government's position on this issue.
- Assertive speech acts to express their ignorance regarding the role of the *Cajas* as financial institutions: "They didn't know about the *Cajas*..." (A-31-38; B-160-161).

These discursive procedures function, as stated above, as a strategy of delegitimation of this economic system: it is presented as having scant significance for

the country's economic system as a whole. This strategy confirms what the Bill has already stated: the *Cajas* initiative will receive support as a way of consolidating their users' social empowerments, but will be excluded from public funding as an economic activity.

6. Discussion and conclusions

Having completed the analysis, two divergent views of the subject in hand are observed. On the one hand, there is the position of those with the power to make policy decisions and laws on this subject (the Government, in presenting its Bill) and, on the other hand, a social movement that aims to be the voice of *popular* Ecuadorian women and that advocates radical economic changes.

As for the MMO, its argumentative thread has been constructed through the use of arguments based on *liaisons of succession* and *illustrations*, and through the reiterated lexical and semantic expressions that describe their economic model. These procedures reconstruct the history of the struggle of poor women in this country who have stood up against corrupt public figures and a male chauvinist society which left them to care for their families alone. With that experience of *resilience*, this group proposes an economic and financial model opposed to the capitalist market.

In this struggle, the Government has a different view. Nevertheless, the voices are not totally opposing (both appear to advocate a social-based economy), but instead somewhat divergent in the process of building the *sumak kawsay*. To explain this difference, which actually corresponds to two ideological proposals of social change, we believe that the aforementioned analytical methodology needs to also rely on the cognitive notion of *frame*. Both sides defend their positions by constructing two cognitive sub-frames:

1) The MMO's view, which gives priority to including the gender perspective in this proposal of a solidarity economy and finance, is that of strengthening the existing savings banks or *Cajas*, which were created primarily by women within the social movement; public funding for the *Cajas* is seen as crucial in order to achieve this.

2) The Government's position is that it does not consider the need for a specific gender perspective because the social economy's goal is essentially to generate employment through providing support for cooperatives (which include both men and women), in order to produce jobs and bring about significant economic change.

We could consider these divergences as mere differences that arise in all argumentative processes and ideological positions. However, when analyzing the Government's position in detail, three significant issues in its discursive construction emerge.

Firstly, the Government *builds* its position, fully *decontextualizing* the subject of the *Cajas* from the socio-economic situation the country has experienced in recent history (which is made explicit by the MMO). For this reason, the Government justifies its refusal to provide public funds to the *Cajas*, focusing solely on an argument based on the *effects* of the model: a contribution of little relevance for production and the creation of employment. Thus, for the members of the Government, the cause-effect argumentative nexus (present in the women's frame) has been reduced. They therefore separate this initiative from the troubled history of Ecuador, therefore ignoring the political responsibilities that may stem from it.

Secondly, through the argumentative scheme (following van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004) of the draft law on the aforementioned solidarity economy and finance, one of the initial articles recognizes the existence of the savings banks or *Cajas* as a popular financial model, as indicated by the current Constitution. However, later on, an implicit premise is noted at the heart of the contentious issue: the *Cajas* will be different from other popular models of economies and will therefore receive different treatment; but at no time is any reason for this differentiation offered. Since this is a totally unacceptable difference from the viewpoint of the MMO (a group that also has significant political weight within the totality of women in the country, as explained in Section 2), this divergence would have deserved a more explicit argumentative premise from the Government.

Lastly, the Government representatives delegitimize the system of the *Cajas*, without mentioning the fact that they have been mostly created by women. Therefore, they are offering a differential treatment (again, without giving a reason for this decision) to an economic solution created by women and that most of them consider valid.

It can therefore be seen that the Government's entire argument has clearly violated both the maxim of quantity and Rule 9 of the series that van Eemeren and Grootendorst propose as essential in any critical argumentative discussion if people wish to move towards a cooperative solution to their differences. This rule proposes that the protagonist has conclusively defended an initial starting point if he/she has successfully

defended both the propositional content and its illocutive force called into question by the antagonist (2004: 151).

From the critical perspective of discourse analysis, the negative aspect is that the Government does not attempt to present all its arguments in an explicit manner. As Habermas (1981: 37) says: “the strength of an argument is measured in a given context for the relevance of its reasons”; in this case, the Government has streamlined its position, apparently wishing to avoid an open debate with the Ecuadorian women’s social movement.

Finally, as a brief final note regarding the theory and method used in analyzing the data, I have shown the need to bring together in discourse studies the analytical tools of various disciplines, i.e., the pragmatic-discursive tradition for the micro-analysis and a functionalist approach on argumentative studies for the macro-analysis. However, since discourse is considered as a socio-cognitive unit, I believe it is essential to pay special attention to the socio-historical context that is activated in the discursive process (which was possible to reveal by means of the ethnographic method). And, at the same time, I have resorted to the cognitive dimension in order to account for mental constructions that actors build through their discursive practices. The socio-cognitive notion of frame (Lakoff 2007) seems most appropriate because it allows for the creation of a continuum between the interactional dimension and the mental representations of social actors.

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Appendix

A) Speech made by the MMO leader during the meeting of the *Cajas de Ahorro y Crédito* (October 14th, 2009):

1. [...] The banking superintendence one day said
2. that the savings seemed like- they were like-
3. like the Cabrera case, the Cabrera notary,
4. that we were doing an illegal takeover.
5. They told us everything.
6. And in Rafael Correa's Government, in his campaign,

7. some female colleagues must have been present,
8. [xxxx] women came back to insist on the right to credit
9. –as a legitimate right
10. of poor and impoverished women in this country–
11. to analyze [improve] our productive activity;
12. because we even noticed that a disempowered woman
13. can't help her situation if she hasn't got any money,
14. money in her pocket,
15. to try to enlist the dependence and inability
16. which she often lives with at home.
17. That access to economic resources gave us independence,
18. autonomy, decision-making.
19. A banking system for women has also been an approach that will serve us;
20. it has been a living approach.
21. If the State saved the corrupt banking,
22. handing over 8,000 million dollars,
23. why not dream,
24. why not think of a public financial institution,
25. of a second type,
26. such as a banking system for women,
27. whose tissue,
28. whose feet, whose arms
29. are all this great number of savings banks and community banks
30. that exist across the country?
31. Then other Ecuadorian institutions came,
32. the National System of Microfinance;
33. and one of the things they told us,
34. when we were there in that directory,
35. is they didn't know about the *Cajas*,
36. how they functioned,
37. what their regulations were,
38. what the financial methodologies were that the *Cajas* handled;
39. and it was precisely in that space where we attained the idea
40. that the national financial corporation
41. could no longer rate the financial institutions in this country
42. with only quantitative indicators.
43. And above all that the State should take over
44. the RESPONSIBILITY
45. not only to give money to the female comrades,
46. to the male comrades, to the banks,
47. but also take over the responsibility of knowing
48. what the final destination of this investment was; [...]

63. Here is a small sample,
64. twenty, twenty-three *Cajas* that aren't,
65. of the thousands of *Cajas* of this country,
66. but have a great virtue
67. because they were persistent,
68. because they ventured,
69. because they believed,
70. because they didn't give way,
71. because they were stubborn,
72. because, despite all the tough times they endured,
73. they have never ceased to exist,
74. they never stopped working,
75. they never stopped functioning. [...]

98. It's very important that you be there [at the Guayaquil meeting on solidarity finance]
because you will be the voices- and your presence will tell
99. the world, this country and its Government,

100. what we want and what we, as women, are stating
101. in economic terms, in terms of improving our quality of life
102. and of exercising that right to the *sumak kawsay*,
103. a good life, which is so much talked about [...]

B) Speech made by the same MMO leader in the National Assembly of Popular Alternative Women [Asamblea Nacional de Mujeres Populares y Diversas] in Guayaquil (November 5th, 2009):

7. [...] It isn't an isolated struggle of El Oro,
8. it is a joint struggle
9. especially of poor women in this country,
10. that we have had resistance to multiple crises
11. which is talked about in the country and the whole planet.
12. And I want to begin by telling you a short story
13. but so real and so close to our lives,
14. it's like life itself,
15. someone said once on television.
16. On Thursday, November 17, 2009,
17. in the early morning, 4 a.m.,
18. a police squad consisting of over a hundred policemen
19. reached the artisans' wharf,
20. located in the parish of [name],
21. of the county [name],
22. with an eviction order in favor of the Cuenca *chulquero* [first and last name]
23. and against the family [last name].
24. At that moment, [last names of three people] were asleep,
25. and four minors, including a five-month-old baby,
26. and other people who were accompanying them as an act of solidarity,
27. from the first eviction attempt which occurred on Friday, September 11 [2009].
28. Along with the police were eleven people, who were black
29. and unidentified,
30. foreign to the place, who came to carry out
31. the abuses that our colleague reports.
32. They went in violently,
33. forced the lock,
34. beat the two men in the house
35. while we were sleeping.
36. The black people and the *chulquero* took 10,000 dollars,
37. our working capital for the purchase of a traditional fishing craft
38. and more than 1,800 pounds of shrimp, 18 grams without tails.
39. They searched our belongings, the strange black people
40. took and chucked them into the street;
41. and screamed and told us
42. to get down or they would beat us if we didn't.
43. My husband was beaten and dragged outside,
44. my eight-year-old son hid in the bathroom terrified,
45. my ten-year-old son with only his underwear on went outside desperate
46. and screamed out to me: "get down, mom, the police are going to kill you".
47. They took our belongings out and threw them on the floor
48. and amid jeers they said that we had to have a collection
49. to buy another washing machine.
50. Before the protest of the Association of Craft Women [name]
51. they threw tear gas,
52. they beat us and insulted us.
53. Those hours were horrible.
54. The police protected them-
55. At that time it was drizzling
56. and my children were in the street.
57. We didn't have anywhere to go,

58. we didn't understand how the police were protecting the criminals,
 59. the *chulqueros*, the judges and the prosecutors
 60. who deliver verdicts against the poor people who work honestly. [...]
73. We are not going to move,
 74. we prefer them to kill us all, men and women,
 75. than leave our homes, our houses, our workplaces.
 76. We built them with our hard work every day without rest,
 77. and we borrowed money honestly from the *chulco*
 78. because nobody else gives us money any other way." [...]
152. Sectors of the women's movement in this country
 153. claimed the bonus as a right and not as a handout
 154. as recognition of the economy of care,
 155. that sustainability of life
 156. and that resistance to the collapse
 157. that a state might have
 158. facing the crises one has lived through.
 159. Our colleague [name] has come a long way from the *Cajas*;
 160. the State keeps saying it doesn't know how the *Cajas* work,
 161. where the *Cajas* are, who the *Cajas* are.
 162. We told them that it would be enough just to leave the office
 163. and go around the country to find them.
 164. Thousands of *Cajas* were established in the state,
 165. in Ecuadorian territory,
 166. in all regions. [...]
200. They [the Government's representatives] are asking [the *Cajas*] not only for a double ID
 card,
 201. as our comrade [name] has told us,
 202. they are also saying that
 203. when you give a birth ID to a newborn child
 204. you then don't give him [her] all of the rights to walk. [...]
226. But there is one more surprise,
 227. because in this way and in this struggle we aren't alone;
 228. as we have allies,
 229. We have people who are working in order that the *Cajas* can never have access to that right.
 [...]
293. That is, [in the draft law on solidarity economics and finance] the savings and credit banks,
 294. to receive public funds,
 295. to fund credit to our female colleagues who are part of a *Cajas*,
 296. will be first to become a savings and credit cooperative;
 297. and the *Cajas* will never be able to be regularized
 298. and qualify for public funding by the State;
 299. as has been the struggle for nearly a decade,
 300. together at the national level,
 301. in order for the *Cajas* to be recognized (and) as required by the text of the constitution.
 302. And now as our colleague [name] said
 303. we have to fight,
 304. we have to wake up,
 305. we have to think,
 306. that all is not lost. [...]

Notes

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² “Nosotras y Nosotros, el pueblo soberano del Ecuador, decidimos construir una nueva forma de convivencia ciudadana, en diversidad, armonía con la naturaleza, para alcanzar el buen vivir, el *sumak kawsay*”.

³ “El sistema financiero nacional se compone de los sectores público, privado, y el popular y solidario, que intermedian recursos del público...”.

⁴ Due to limitations of space, sample quotes that are not accompanied by numbers are not included in the Appendix (but are part of the full transcript of the audio-recording). This is also the reason why the Spanish version of the whole data cannot be provided (available on <http://ruc.udc.es/dspace>).