

**REPORT ON THE “SUBSIDIARY CONFERENCE”
OF SPANISH-SPEAKING NETWORK RESEARCHERS
IN BUDAPEST (BUDAPEST, 25 APRIL 2001)**

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¿Cuantos polacos necesitan para comer un burrito? – This is the first part of a joke in an episode of South Park. Thus the makers of the series, basically targeting middle-class white American youth, could expect their audience to understand (though with difficulty) the joke. Spanish has become the second language of the States, which is understood (poorly) by most Americans. Apparently nowadays a similar process is taking place in academic life too where it is becoming increasingly habitual to organise a limited, subsidiary conference in Spanish, parallel to the official English language of major conferences. The aim is not a cultural mission but a practical consideration: the researchers of various countries, whose mother tongue is Spanish, find it easier to make their presentations and to have discussions in that language. The organisers may also expect that those participants whose Spanish is a second language would listen to the presentations.

The *Sunbelt XXI* (in Budapest), that is the international conference of network analysts, also housed a similar event, the meeting of network analysts with Spanish as their mother tongue. Of the 200 participants of Sunbelt, 13 of us gave a talk at the Spanish subsidiary conference. Based on the initial registrations for the conference, we could expect three times as many Latin Americans, but ultimately several people could not come. On the other hand, it turned out that several presenters whose mother tongue was English did speak Spanish as a second language, like, for instance the creator of the UCINET programme, Stephens Borgatti of California, or Thomas Valente, engaged in the research of diffusion, or Javier Simonovits, dealing with Israeli industrial networks, and others.

Formerly the participants of the conference had mostly known one another virtually, from a mailing list moderated in Barcelona. Institutionalisation was a result of the subsidiary conference: the Spanish network analysts had founded an autonomous association which would work for aims and with means similar to those of INSNA,¹ only on a different language. The ability of the organisation in asserting its interests is demonstrated by the fact that it had succeeded in nominating Mexico City as the venue of a similar event to be organised in 2004.

¹ International Network for Social Network Analysis.

Naturally a more significant result was the exchange of ideas and the answers of a specific network outlook to specifically Ibero-American issues. The political sensitivity of the region is indicated by the fact that almost half of the presentations dealt with some kind of political or minority researches. *Jorge Gil-Mendieta* is engaged in mapping the Mexican political networks. His database contains the bibliographic data of 5,400 personalities of Mexican public life, and he can analyse the confidence networks of personal contacts. One of his earlier works, which presented the mechanisms of bequeathing power in the political family trees between 1920 and 1990 (Connections 1997/II.), can be read on the Internet. For the Budapest conference he succeeded in mapping the survival of the economic hegemony of the old Mexican political elite, divested of its political power by democratic elections (the PRI, which used to be in power for 70 years), and presented the interpenetration of politics and the economy. *Samuel Smith*, *Jorge Castro* and *Jorge Gil* gave further presentations drawing on the same database at the section of political science of the Sunbelt.

The study of the capital of connections of households has proved to be an equally important issue. *Larissa Adler-Lomnitz*, who is well known in Hungary too (and would be the visiting professor of Collegium Budapest from 2002 onwards and presumably would spend a longer time in our country), studied the relationships between the phenomena of formal and informal economies on the basis of Latin American and East European examples. (The author published an article on a similar topic in Hungarian in the 1998(29) issue of *Replika*). *Isidro Maya Jariego* studied the influence of contact capital of immigrants in Spain on their adjustment. Among others he stated that the adjustment of the most populous immigrant group (the Moroccans) is more difficult than that of the other groups because demonstrably the other groups maintain narrower ego-networks (individual acquaintances), and at the most they keep up contacts with one another.

The UAB University of Barcelona has been a leading intellectual workshop of Spanish network analysts for a long time. *José Luis Molina*, the organiser of the Spanish section, studied the scientific networks identifiable on the basis of co-authorship. *Carlos Lozares*, *Joan Miguel Verd* and their co-authors dealt with content analysis, or, more exactly with the analysis of relationships among the content elements of texts.

Alejandro García-Macías had studied the north Mexican textile industry, and drew the conclusion that no meaningful contact could be identified between the personal network of owners and the economic relations of companies, which means that firms gaining strength were trying to avoid that family, relatives and friends should ask for their assistance. I myself (apparently contradicting it) presented such observations according to which beginner entrepreneurs prefer to use their personal contacts during the course of their enterprise, thus trying to substitute for the missing money and capital of knowledge. *Javier Simonovich* had studied North Israeli companies applying high technology, and drew the conclusion that capital of company contacts, measured by board membership, may be an important factor of success.

Unfortunately, a number of presenters who had formerly registered, could not participate in the Budapest conference, such as *José A. Rodríguez*, editor of the first

Spanish manual on network analysis, *Aldo Panfichi*, professor of the PUCP of Lima, dealing with urban contacts, or one of the active members of the list of network analysts, the young *Ainhoa de Federico de la Rúa*.

An important side product of the organisation of the Spanish section was the compilation of a professional vocabulary. Its first variant was presented by researchers from Barcelona, and since then an extremely fertile virtual discussion has unfolded about the interpretation and Spanish version of expressions on the REDES list. The compilation of a similar collection may be a good idea for the Hungarian network analysts as well, partly to unify professional language, and partly to launch a similar virtual discourse.

Collection of links:

<http://listerv.rediris.es/archives/redes.html> (materials of the Spanish mailing list)

<http://seneca.uab.es/antropologia/redes/redes/htm> (the Spanish REDES home page)

<http://members.es.tripod.de/redes/redes.htm> (REDES home page)

<http://seneca.uab.es/antropologia/jlm> (home page of José Luis Molina)

[http://222.analytictech.com/connections/v20\(2\)/cover.htm](http://222.analytictech.com/connections/v20(2)/cover.htm) (Jorge Gil at al Connections 20. 1997/2)

<http://132.48.82.108/rms398/lomnitz.html> (Larissa Adler-Lomnitz et al Revista Mexicana de Sociología 60. 1998/3)

<http://www.up.edu.pe/editorial/APanfichi.htm> (Aldo Panfichi et al, publications of the UP University)