

## The shape of the public sphere in Spain (1860-1899)

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## The Shape of the Public Sphere in Spain (1860-1899): A Dream of Generalities

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, Spain was one of the most established liberal polities on the European mainland. It had been ruled under a continuous succession of constitutional, parliamentary governments since 1834. This overriding fact remained constant even in the often violent instability and civil wars of the years up to 1875, and the frequent changes in the constitutional order. Following the 1868 Revolution, when the Bourbon monarchy eventually fell, destabilization accelerated further, with a failed attempt at installing an alternative Royal family (that of Amadeo of Savoy), and a series of conflicting efforts to create a Republic. The aftermath of the 1868 rising has habitually been seen as a major turning point of the century. The forces unleashed found an unsteady and not always happy resolution in the form of the restoration of the Bourbons within a new version of the constitutional monarchy. Now, the main political parties agreed to permit one another's alternation in power, if necessary facilitating this by electoral corruption, in order to salvage some stability.<sup>1</sup> Even universal male suffrage was eventually reinstated (1885).

As one would expect of a nineteenth-century liberal state, the notion of the *public* had considerable prominence in the Spain of those decades. In this chapter, I will explore some significant aspects of how the public sphere was conceived. The approach taken here is historical, in line with a number of recent studies of other countries in this period (for example, Dalleo (2011) on the specific circumstances of the Caribbean plantation societies, Swaim on the concern with changing the traditional social order of Scotland from within (2009: 17-21), or Välimaa on the centrality of a single university to the public sphere in Finland (2012)). At the outset, I will leave in abeyance any assumptions and theorized debates about what a public sphere involved or was. In particular, I will set to one side the question of whether the authentically public sphere is that which resides between the activities of the state and the private realm (for a useful recent summary of this assertion, see Calhoun 2012: 124-25). Doubtless some will object that not everything deemed a public matter is an aspect of the public sphere, but that rebuke contains within itself the kind of intellectual commitment that I am seeking to suspend. Instead, I will work outward from the notion of the *public* itself, in an effort to trace a hypothesis about the shape of a public sphere as it was articulated in Spain.

The historical approach taken here, even so requires some further explanation. I do give consideration to whether the notion of the *public* was heavily politicized by the struggles for power in Spain or the articulation of rival ideologies. Yet, I have avoided assessing head-on the apparently momentous changes of the period 1868 to 1875, or indeed whether the Restoration period helped or hindered the modernization of Spain and the establishment of political plurality. Instead, I take a longer view of the notion of the *public* articulated in texts over the several decades considered here. The point of this chapter is to attend to the notion of the *public* as such, and to note its explicit connection to specific ideologies only as those links are primarily invoked, which is much less frequently than might be supposed.

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<sup>1</sup>

For a recent brief summary of these developments, see Humlebaek (2015: 17-21).

In fact, the hypothesis presented here is that many aspects of nineteenth-century Spanish politics, economics, and society which have had an important role in interpretation of the period were secondary to the concerns that dominated notions of the *public*. This is not to assert their irrelevance or unimportance as such, but rather to suggest that, so far as notion of the *public* went, they were articulated in relation to and as dynamic variants on other more prominent considerations. It would be reasonable to suppose that nineteenth-century Spanish public life would be framed by a series of apparently striking developments during the century. The destabilization of the old imperial Spanish state had led to a succession of uprisings, beginning with a rebellion in 1808 against occupation by the Napoleonic empire. From 1812 onwards, rival constitutions were launched as ways to re-constitute politics, economics, and society: such documents proliferated through the century. As of 1834, with the establishment of a continuous liberal state, these became the main means by which the political framework was stated. Political parties – largely subdivisions of the original liberal revolutionaries – struggled for power, often violently, and came to be seemingly crucial features of nineteenth-century Spain. A combination of electoral processes, representative government, and parliament, combined with the use of military and revolutionary uprisings, characterised society. Following the civil war with absolutists in the 1830s (the Carlist wars), militarisation of politics led also to precocious leftist radicalisation. From the constitution of 1812 onwards, the notion of a nation state, and that there was a *nación*, seemed to be a founding principle of liberal society. Despite various kinds of censorship, the press emerged as an important force. Ideological and philosophical rivalries loomed large. At the same time, and even with confiscation of much of its land, the Catholic Church remained a powerful force in national life, and, with the exception of a brief republic in the early 1870s, so did the historic monarchy. Once the especially intense revolutionary period of 1868-74 had passed, a so-called *turno pacífico* took its place, with the largest political parties – conservative and more liberal wings of parliamentary constitutionalisms – took turns to rule under a restored Bourbon monarchy, through a corrupt electoral system. Older, distinctive festivities such as bullfighting remained important, as did the legacy of Spain's relationship with Islam and north Africa, even as efforts were renewed to make Spain more alike to its more powerful and prosperous European neighbours, such as France. While Spain lost much of its overseas territory by 1826, with the independence of large parts of the Americas, it remained and asserted itself as an imperial power, with valuable possessions such as Cuba and Puerto Rico, and persistent use of slavery for much of the century. Despite marked economic growth and aspects of an entrepreneurial society, the economy could not rival that of the UK, or in later decades Germany, and the fiscal position and national debt remained serious problems throughout the period.<sup>2</sup>

By taking a step back, and looking at language used in conjunction with notions of the *public*, this chapter suggests that the public sphere in Spain emphasized very specific aspects of nineteenth-century society at the expense of much of the above. On the one hand, this serves

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<sup>2</sup> For a recent summary of much of this outline, see the "Introduction" to Ginger and Lawless's edited collection *Spain in the Nineteenth Century* (2018).

as a significant corrective to emphases in recent historiography, diminishing the importance of some phenomena (such as political parties) and bringing others, identified in some of the historiography) still further into prominent relief (such as a focus on collective life). On the other hand, it suggests an objective, cherished by many educated Spaniards, which is not entirely consonant with those other historical realities, or which treats them as means to or instances of that ultimate objective. I seek to take a distant approach to a corpus of texts, identifying and attending to concepts that seem to dominate over others. Through the analysis ventured here, a series of negative findings relegate some apparently prominent concerns: the notion of a nation state and of nationalism or even an historic notion of a *communitas*, the role of political parties and contests, the concern with the public debt, the succession of constitutions, allegiances to philosophies and ideologies, among others. Prominent factors in other versions of European liberalism – the individual and the public-private division – are likewise relegated. In the shift of perspective, attention turns to matters that are less overtly to do with cultural or ideological allegiances, or even with more granulated realities of Spain's situation, such as its debt. What comes to predominate is an interest in a geographically located administrative entity and its population (Spain and Spaniards), in terms of general laws and obligations, of a state apparatus and other institutions (such as academies) that realise them, and with a particular view to instructing and, to some degree, cleansing its people. Such obsessions persist in spite of all else, and all else serves them. This is a Spain where public functionaries and didactic teachers would prevail, less a nation state than a dreamt-of exemplar of ordered existence. In part, this perspective brings sharply into relief a well-known aspect of nineteenth-century Spanish society, described long ago by Raymond Carr as the numerous "sections of the underemployed urban middle classes who were dependent on government posts for a livelihood [...] a class educated [...] to pretensions and prospects beyond the absorptive capacity of [...] society" (Carr 1982: 167). Equally, there is something visionary here. While an analysis across centuries lies beyond the scope of this present essay, there is something reminiscent here of what John Elliott discerns in Imperial Spain: an "organic conception of a [...] society dedicated to the achievement of the common good", envisaged in a vast bureaucratic apparatus [2006: loc. 7815, 7122].

Ultimately, in adopting the methods used here, I seek to reach a conclusion, however tentative, about the aspirations instantiated in a public sphere as it was articulated in Spain. It is in this way, via an indirect and implicit path, that I will address the question of whether enquiry into the notion of the *public* as expressed historically gives us a vision of the public sphere. On the one hand, I will seek to trace what notion of the public sphere held centre stage during the revolutionary and Restoration years, at this apparent high point of liberal Spain. On the other, I aim to articulate what vision of a public sphere liberal Spain might offer us.

### **“Public” at a distance**

One of the challenges in understanding the public sphere in late nineteenth-century Spain – as elsewhere and at other times – is to grasp what people most had in mind when they addressed “public” matters. Any such empirical enquiry comes up against the sheer vastness and plurality of discussions of “public things”: the corpus is huge and diverse. Our habitual

methods – the close analysis of texts and artefacts, contextualisation across and beyond these, the examination of their relationship to theories – falter before its scale. A simple search of the Spanish National Library catalogue for works with “public” in their title throws up many pages of bibliography, hundreds of items for the period covered here (1860-89) alone. The problem is a familiar, more general, and intractable one. The approach I take here is a form of “distant reading”, to borrow and rework a term famously advocated by the comparative literature scholar Franco Moretti (see Moretti 2013). That is to say that, rather than considering a necessarily rather limited corpus in detail, we should attend to features analysable and visible across a much larger corpus as a whole. In truth, the “distant reading” approach, by definition, does not “solve” the problem: it cannot do what close reading does. Rather it provides additional and much lacking layers of perspective by giving us viewpoints across a considerably greater number of texts.

The present chapter draws heavily on a distant reading of over 350 Spanish texts, using software (AntConc) that assists linguistics specialists in detecting trends across large amounts of language usage. In particular, I make use of lists that indicate the frequency of use of specific words across the corpus (word lists), and related evidence of collocations, that is words used in the vicinity of a specified word or words. I have made some use of key-word-in-context (KWIC) – that is, examining a word in the immediate phrasing in which it is used – , largely by way of a check on the other searches (for example, whether *escuela* refers mainly to a place of education or to a school of thought). The chapter makes no pretence whatsoever to methodological innovation or subtlety in the use of the software itself: these are very basic functions and outputs of a widely used package. The essay’s contribution lies rather in its assessment and use of such evidence as ways of characterizing the public sphere in Spain at the time.<sup>3</sup> It is important to underline that this chapter does not follow the methods used in corpus linguistics proper, and does not seek to. Rather, it uses frequently occurring words as a way of reading a large corpus of texts. I take the patterns of most used words and treat them together as a text that can be interpreted in relation to hypotheses about the ideologies of nineteenth-century Spain. Put more strongly still, I experiment in treating them as a form of collective dreaming: that is, as embodying an ideological aspiration – neither alien to the facts on the ground nor reducible to them – which is shared through its variants across a multitude of publications and authors. Evidently, such a method involves a gambit, as – from a pragmatic perspective – does any method of reading: that the results of such an endeavour might turn out to illuminate something of the past. The proof of such a pudding lies only in the eating. My hypothesis here is that this experiment in reading leads to results that appear sufficiently plausible insofar as they echo with other empirical evidence about nineteenth-century Spain, while challenging the way in which that evidence is sometimes prioritised and

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<sup>3</sup> For my purposes here, I ignore in my analysis words that are in common use, and whose frequency is to be expected. *De* is the most commonly used word, for example. There is a necessary element of human judgment here, in assessing which words are specifically relevant to the notion of the *public*.

interpreted. That is to say, the outcome has the characteristics of a provocative piece of historical argument.

The corpus (367 published books totalling over 16 million word tokens; 362 and 363 in two adjusted versions – see below) is made of digitized and searchable items from the Spanish National Library in the period 1860-1899, returned by a title search for *público/a* [masculine and feminine versions of the word *public*, which would include the noun and adjective, and in this search picked up plurals).<sup>4</sup> It thus consists of texts which are presented directly and explicitly as addressing a public matter and/or the public at large. The corpus is correspondingly diverse, ranging from aviary matters (*Las enfermedades de las aves* [Illnesses in Birds] (Balmaseda 1889)) to a *Tratado de contabilidad* [Treatise on Accounting] (González Cedrón 1897). A number of texts concern *ultramar*: Spain's continuing overseas territories in Cuba and the Phillipines. The admission of such a miscellany of sources into the corpus is quite deliberate. It acts as a restraint on prior assumptions about what might or might not properly constitute a public sphere: the shared, more neutral starting point is simply that prominent reference is made to the *public* in the most obvious way that the publication is presented, its title. Moreover, such an approach is consonant with the gambit taken in the method of distant reading used here: that across a wide range of texts there might be a shared dream of the *public*. At the same time, there are manifest limitations to any such corpus, whatever its advantages as a “distant” reading. Evidently, there are other items that would tell us much about how the “public sphere” was conceived. For better and for worse, the practical necessity of using materials that happens to be digitized has a randomizing effect on the search, and in some instances the scanning of particular texts has been far less successful than in others: better because it increases the possibility of our dealing with a miscellany, worse because it may exclude relevant variations that have simply not been digitize. Most frustratingly, from this perspective, Spanish National Library periodical material – despite its manifest importance to the public sphere (see Ortiz 2000; Davies 2000) - does not presently seem, for the most part, to be readily searchable in this form without very extensive manual copying of text from innumerable pdf files.

That said, some effects of the limitations of varying filters on published material, notably those caused by distant reading in general, become a key part of the account of the “public sphere” presented here. This is true too of flaws involved in attending primarily to frequency of word use. On the one hand, the number of occurrences, of itself, provides limited information. For example, it cannot tell us so very much about the variations in how a single term is used. Nor may we assume that, because a term is employed often, it is of special importance in conveying the significance of a given text or the particular thoughts of an author: it may rather be an indication of its generality. On the other hand, I will argue that these very properties of frequently used words, in their own right, may be important in comprehending talk addressing and concerning the “public”.

## Generality

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One fruitful approach to understanding the public dimension of Spanish life has been to look to the shaping influence exercised by key thinkers in the conception of public life and its interplay with the private and state spheres. For a long time, it has been recognized that the German post-Hegelian philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause was a major source for reflection in Spain, in the reworking of his ideas by Julián Sanz del Río. Broadly stated, the appeal of this *krausismo* was its movement away from more speculative veins of Hegelian thought towards a normative and descriptive account of practical social activity and lived experience. This objective was to move beyond Spain's intense conflicts, while enabling opposing elements to co-exist (Capellán de Miguel 2006: 20-23, 171, 198). Among other examples of such figures, scholars have turned their attention more recently to the hygienist Pedro Felipe Monlau, and the role of his work in expressing circulations between private life and wider society. Jo Labanyi's classic study *Gender and Modernization in the Spanish Realist Novel* (2000) highlights the key role of hygienist intellectuals such as Monlau in these terms. When we look at the word list for the corpus studied here, however, such figures occupy a somewhat minor place. *Krause* ranks 26002 for frequency; *Monlau*, with a little more success at position 10689, merits a respectable 82 mentions, on a par with numerous other words such as *vizconde* [viscount]. This is not a matter of Hispanists overestimating the significance of those particular people as opposed to others. Their fate is shared by Hegel (ranked 12030) or Kant with 77 mentions, or Bentham with 41.

By way of comparison, the term *derecho/s* (as a substantive, *right* or *law*) has a frequency of 12853, occurring some 156 times more often than *Monlau*; likewise, *vida* [life] occurs 9218 times.<sup>5</sup> A strong notion of *derecho* – both in the sense of rights and of the rule of law – has an obvious role in common characterizations of liberal society, and in Spain specifically from precedent of the 1812 Constitution onwards, though also in the framework of the organic visions of society conceived centuries before in Imperial Spain. Such terms could be invoked in any number of different intellectual systems, or, indeed, without reference to anything so specific. On this account, the language that predominated across discussions was cast in broad and general terms, rather than being tightly tied to a specific intellectual outlook or narrower school of thought. To put it more strongly, when viewed from a “distance”, the public sphere appears to be woven by a tissue of generalities. The philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah has suggested that, in practice, many shared commitments to ethical positions do not necessarily depend on any deep level of agreement about the foundations of those beliefs. This is not evidence, Appiah avers, that such commitments are not shared in compelling ways (2010: 252-53). In fact, given their appeal to people of diverse outlooks, it can be taken to show their appeal. We may hypothesize that the same held for the vocabulary of the late nineteenth-century public sphere, and not simply in ethical but even in more descriptive language. Overall, what most kept the public sphere going was that people were talking about rights and law and life, not that they happened to be holding to the views of Krause or Monlau.

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<sup>5</sup> A check on KWIC results confirms that the use of *derecho* as an adjective is a rare usage; what predominates is the use of the substantive.

On the initial face of the evidence, the one thing that lends the choice of vocabulary more specificity is the amount of reference to Spain. The single word *España* [Spain] occurs 6473 times,<sup>6</sup> and the variants of *español/a/es* [Spaniard or Spanish, masculine, feminine, and plural] combined have a frequency of 6470. Taken together, this amounts to over 12500 mentions. This picture finds some further backing in a solid, if not especially remarkable, amount of reference to nationality: *nacional/es* [national, singular and plural] occurs 3531 times, and *nación* [nation] 1913. On this account, it appears that the public sphere was conceived, to a considerable degree, within a wider effort at, or debate about, the consolidation of a Spanish nation, following the collapse of most of the earlier empire. What predominates is the notion of a single polity primarily conceived as Iberian Spain. This evidence seems to lend weight to the view, widespread among historians of culture, society, and thought, that nation-building was a primary and pervasive preoccupation among educated Spaniards. Public discussion concerned, and was a matter for, the *communitas*, as Portillo Valdés and others have stressed: the national community. This was a key legacy of the uprisings of 1808 and of the Constitution of 1812: the enterprise of creating a state around a collective national subject (2000: 153). On the face of it too, the corpus gives only limited succour to historians concerned to emphasize transnational dimensions of public life (notably with implications for the Spanish-speaking world, Brickhouse 2004: 27-30), and less still to those (like myself) who seek to revisit universalism and internationalism in Spain (for example, Ginger 2012). The highest ranking reference to another independent country, France, has a frequency of 1905, and with the variants of *francés* [French] totals just short of 3000 mentions, a mere quarter of those to Spain and things Spanish. Seemingly, relationships with other cultures and societies, even neighbouring ones, were at best a secondary preoccupation. *Universal/es* [universal, singular and plural] trails behind things French, with just over 1200 mentions, *internacional/es* [international, singular and plural] merits only 452, and *cosmopolitismo* [cosmopolitanism] a mere 69.

Even on a “distant” reading, there is much that is deceptive about this impression. References to things Spanish are about equal in frequency to those concerning *derecho/s*. Those to *ley/es* (13636; laws whether of society or other phenomena) vastly outstrip those to *nación* and *nacional/es*. While one could conclude that mentions of laws and rights are being characterized here in local terms, one could as easily deduce that Spanishness, while undoubtedly important, was just one concern among many that were less particular to the country. More still, it is as much as anything a matter of a Spanish community being articulated in generaliseable terms, for example as a society of laws and rights. Such a view is only reinforced by the fact that, were we to alter the terms *España* and *español/es* to those referring any other country or nationality, there would be nothing untoward about how the result sat with the other most frequent terms found in the corpus: the law and rights could as well be important matters for France as for Spain. Put at its most provocatively, from this

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<sup>6</sup> This is an adjusted figure. The word “Biblioteca Nacional de España” are embedded through the digitized documents, occurring 2721 times. As with *nacional*, I have discarded these references.



perspective, the Spanish community seems to be interchangeable with any number of other societies.

Stated more strongly still, nationality is less something with any specific content than it is a way of talking that is replicated across multiple polities. In weaving together the public sphere, Spanishness - like *derecho* - entails, in and of itself, few in-depth commitments to any specific cultural or intellectual outlook. Such observations beg to be reconciled with the relative reluctance to speak explicitly of other cultures and societies, or outright of universalism, internationalism, or cosmopolitanism. It is likely that, in the subject matter under consideration here, a notion of *generality* better expresses the fabric of the public sphere than does, say, *transnationalism* or *internationalism*. The language of the public sphere is committed to things that could be generalized, above and beyond any overt connection either to other nationalities or even to explicit alternatives or supplements to nationalist loyalties. The point, then, is not that the general and the particular are fundamentally at odds with one another, but that the localized national group (the Spanish) articulates things that take the form of generality. We might reword Stalin's famous phrase, and speak of generality in one country.

### **Layers and Instability**

This is far from the end of the story. As we work down the word list for the corpus, we encounter a burgeoning variety of terms, from *ácido* [acid] (2098 mentions), to *animales* [animals] (2216) to *universidad* [university] (1671), eventually even to those very specific names mentioned earlier. Mathematically, this is in part to be expected: the vast majority of words by definition will not feature among the select group of the most mentioned. The basic mathematical fact combines with the generality of the more frequent terms, and the heterogeneity of the language used overall, to create a more notable effect. While the metaphor is not perfect, it is as if the public sphere spoke was articulated – was woven, to continue my earlier image -, through layers of language. It runs from a thick spread of dominant generalities into and out of a diversifying specificity of different degrees. This phenomenon echoes the contours of the corpus itself: a vast range of subjects are presented as public matters and/or as addressed to the public. While the more frequent kinds of generality provide bulk (so to speak) to the mass of language of the public sphere, detailed and variegated trails extend, not only into and out of this core, but at times at quite some remove from it.

The point I am making here is not, however, simply a reiteration of a commonplace of patterns of linguistic usage, in which general terms might be statistically more frequent than specific; less still is it an attempt to make a statistical argument of the proportions of such frequency along the lines of Zipf's Law. This is because by *generality* I mean here something other than that the terms concerned are generic and high frequency. After all, *nación* is not, on the face of it, much more or less generic, in that sense, than is *derecho* or *ley* or *España*. Rather, I mean that the kinds of generalizing word that predominate here tend to be those that are less overtly connected to a strong and overt form of cultural or ideological allegiance. (This is not, of course, to say that they do not ultimately manifest such allegiances.)

Ostensibly at least, an assertion of the rule of law and rights carries less commitment to a specific cultural or ideological outlook than does an assertion of national identity or of an express philosophy. Even the word *Spain*, it should be noted, does not tell us much more than that there is a geographically existing state, just as, ostensibly, *españoles* does no more than evoke the existence of a population of that state. It is easy to overlook this when viewing nineteenth-century Spanish texts through the lens of nation building ideologies.

Our experience of the language of the public sphere is inherently mutable, just as the focus shifts about when we move down the word list. This is very apparent when we look at collocates of very frequently used terms. *Público/a/s* is, unsurprisingly, often encountered, with 12475 mentions. When we search for collocates 10 words either side of it, we find a rather different pattern of frequently used terms than we do if we look at the word list for the corpus as a whole. (It should be noted that, while in corpus linguistics a smaller range of collocates might be preferred, I elect here the larger range of +/-10 because it gives richer information about discussions being undertaken in sentences in the vicinity of mentions of the public, and thus better serves the specific purpose of distance reading in this essay. Collocates in the range +/-5 do not enable sufficient "distant reading" of the sentences.) In the corpus as a whole, among the most deployed words are *derecho* and *España* as we have seen, as well as *ley* (8416), *historia* [history] (7233), *ciencia* [science, or knowledge] (5959), and *razón* [reason] (5745). When we look at the collocates of *público/a/s* we encounter instead a dominant presence of *instrucción* [instruction] (2330; overwhelmingly used in the sense of *education*), *higiene* [hygiene] (934), then the familiar *derecho* (434), and further adrift, references to things Spanish (299). Such words echo with the efforts through the liberal period to (re)construct the public education system through state-controlled schools and the Central University from the 1840s and 1850s onwards (Carr 1982: 236), and with widespread, at times intrusive, efforts to improve public and private health (Labanyi 2000). The neglect of things Spanish in this instance is not solely explained by the fact that no-one says *España pública* [public Spain], whereas we do say *instrucción pública* [public instruction]: *el público en España* [the public in Spain] and similar combinations are possible). A world of law and rights, history, reason, science, knowledge, and country, transforms into one of education, hygiene, rights and law. If, rather, we pursue collocates of *derecho/s*, the notions of the *natural* (367) and *civil* (355) come to the fore, alongside references to Spain and the Spanish (471). *España* itself takes us to *historia* [history] (474) and to *Francia* [France] (239). These words echo in turn with the widespread vogue for understanding the country in terms of its history (Moreno Alonso 1979), and with centuries of emulation of and rivalry with the powerful neighbour state, tendencies exacerbated in the nineteenth century through the aftermath of the Napoleonic invasion and the ongoing efforts to mediate the innovations of supposedly more advanced northern state. The very terms that provide the "bulk" of generalities in the public sphere lead out into heterogeneous reconfigurations of what looms large.

Slight alterations to the corpus, likewise, can have notable effects. These reflect the problem that the corpus is itself limited within a vast swathe of texts dealing with public matters: changes in reference points may alter findings in not insignificant ways. One of the reasons

that *higiene* features quite so highly in collocates of *público/a/s* is the presence of a *Curso elemental de higiene privada y pública* [Basic Course in Private and Public Hygiene] (1880 edition) by Juan Giné y Partagás. Throughout that text, the headings *higiene privada* and *higiene pública* appear on page after page. When such items are removed from the corpus, *higiene* remains prominent (246 mentions). However, it slips behind other frequent words such as *administración* [administration] (315). The latter echoes with the long, conflictive efforts through the century to build a functioning, post-revolutionary administrative structure, often against the odds of available resource or real social consensus or social realities (Carr 1982: 235, 347). Rather than being seen simply as a result of erroneous data handling or methodological flaws, per se, such variations may be taken to underline an important reality. When dealing with public matters, our sense of what is predominant - what makes up the “bulk” – is itself susceptible to shift around according to what, in given circumstances, engages our attention.

These points have and had a very practical importance: no person ever attended to the public sphere as a whole. At the level of the sentence and the paragraph, the usage of generalities themselves varied considerably, as becomes apparent within KWIC searches. We can see this in stark but simple terms in two examples of the distinction between private and public domains. The text of the inaugural session of the medical academy in Barcelona for 2 January 1866 describes “interés privado” [private interests] as “siempre egoísta” [always selfish], and calls for it to be reconciled to “los fueros de la humanidad y los altos intereses de la salud pública” [the prerogatives of humanity and the high interests of public health] (1866: 25). In contrast, in his inaugural address to the University of Barcelona, Professor Eustaquio Toledano *Discursos leídos ante el claustro de la Universidad de Barcelona* [Discourses Read before the Faculty of the University of Barcelona] opposed mistrust of private efforts, and celebrated “esa multitud de beneficios, que en otras naciones son debidos a la inciativa privada más desenvuelta” [that multitude of benefits that are owed, in other nations, to the most uninhibited private initiative] (1861: 26). The generalities, then, were locked into – though not exhausted by - disputes and differences of viewpoint, and vice-versa.

If the Spanish public sphere evoked a particular collective constituted in terms of generalities, it did so through continuously shifting perspectives and across the uneven terrain of argument.

## **Characterizing the Generalities**

### *Private versus Public*

Public matters do not seem primarily to have been articulated in relationship – by contrast or otherwise – to a private sphere or to the lives of individuals. The words *privado/a/s* (at all events, sometimes meaning *deprived of* as well as *private*) muster only 2504 mentions, compared to the thousands more to *público/a/s*. *Individuo/s* [individual] attains 4053, but still appears secondary compared to the attention to the generalities of law and rights. Even as a collocate of *público/a/s* (ten words either side), *private* is one reference point alongside many others. When the corpus is adjusted to remove the effect of texts where the word features

insistently as a subtitle, *privado/a/s* figures 307 times, rather less than *hacienda* [treasury], or *administración* [administration] and far surpassed by *derecho/s* (502). It is dwarfed by *instrucción*. It is not that Spaniards ignored the public/private distinction – we have seen how they debated it, and they are concerned with it, as this data suggests. It is rather that the public sphere seems to be asserted in its own right, rather than dependent on any opposition to things supposedly outside it.

The relative limits to preoccupation with private or individual lives corresponds with the emphasis upon the inherited notion of *communitas* which Portillo Valdés sees as central to the outlook of the historic 1812 Constitution. As Portillo Valdés suggests, the very notion of rights, which among other things protect private and individual lives, is largely cast in collective terms rather than as stemming from the private individual per se (2000: 13-23). The rather middling place of *libertad/es* [liberty, liberties] in the word list might also confirm this (3147). This is, more broadly, consistent with the observation made by John Butt, in his classic essay *Writers and Politics in Modern Spain* (1978), that this is a culture emphatically concerned with collective and societal matters. It is through the latter that the individual comes into view, in a fashion consequent with trends in other forms of continental liberalism, such as that found in France. (With considerable exaggeration, Lucien Jaume famously referred to the result as “the individual effaced”, *L’individu effacé* (1997).)

Even so, the very notion of *communitas* or even *nation* may require some qualification here, at least so far as the public sphere goes. There is little talk of a *comunidad* [community] (329), and, as observed above, actual reference to the *nación* and *nacional* occupies a somewhat similar middling position to *libertad/es*. The word *nación*, the supposed key collective subject in much of the nineteenth-century imaginary, figures only 1913 times, a similar amount to *Europa* [Europe] (1960). The data may invite us here to distinguish more carefully between an overriding preoccupation with and loyalty to a country and its inhabitants (Spain and the Spanish), and a more specific sense of a *nation*. This result cannot be attributed to the predominance of a (supposedly) more antique idea of a *patria* as opposed to a putatively more modern nationalism and its advocacy of a homogeneous culture. *Patria* [fatherland, motherland], with 1832 mentions, comes out not far from *nación*.<sup>7</sup> Even combined these two terms are dwarfed by direct reference to things Spanish. The fate of the more non-committal word *sociedad* [society] (4334), more prominent than reference to the nation, and much less so than to things Spanish, perhaps serves to emphasize the overall impression. Once again, something more general – a broad concern with and attachment to the country and its people – vastly outweighs anything with more specific commitments, such as to formulate that preoccupation in the terms of a nation or a *patria*. The overall combination of evidence seen here suggests that this is not so much because a flawed effort at creating a modern, liberal state structure left Spain without a compelling sense of nationhood

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For a succinct statement of one important version of that distinction, see Violi (1995: 1-17).

(Álvarez Junco 2013: 300). It is, rather, because of the primacy of generality in the shape of the public sphere.

If anything other than its origin (Spain, Spanish) overwhelmingly describes the collective subject, it is the very idea of the *public*, a term used almost exactly as many times as *España* and *español/a/(e)s*. How did this “public” find expression, and what forms did it take? In short, how was the public sphere instantiated?

### *The Instantiation of the Public*

Remarkably, the Spanish public evoked in the corpus is not strongly associated with a notion of public opinion per se, despite the latter’s vaunted status as a nineteenth-century idol – famously appearing personified on stage in Offenbach’s comic opera *Orphée aux enfers* [Orpheus in the Underworld] (1858). This is surprising if one supposes that a liberal public sphere was envisaged as a layer between government institutions and private life, in which critical debate took place among the public, and in which opinion was thereby formed. It is, however, consonant with a notion of the *public* in which overt, ostensible allegiance to ideology and culture is secondary, and in which compelling general laws predominated. *Opinión* does not fare especially well in collocates of *público/a/s*. While far from irrelevant with 212 mentions, it trails rather pointedly behind *ministerio* (289; *ministry* or *government in office*) and *administración* (339). It meets a similar fate in the overall wordlist, with 1939 instances. *Debate* and *discusión* hardly figure at all among collocates, and not much in the word list either. Nor, strikingly, is a broader role for opinion substituted by more explicitly politicized terms of reference, in the turbulent struggles of Spain’s parties and regimes. The word *partido* [party] figures just 834 times, *conservador/a/(e)s* [conservative, conservatives] just 255, *liberal/es* [liberal, liberals] 373 and *liberalismo* [liberalism] 32. Rather, a broader and more general notion of the political takes its place closer to centre stage (frequency of 6431 for *político/a/s* [political, politician(s)]).

In the corpus as a whole, what really predominates is the notion of rights and jurisprudence (*derecho/s*), again with a very similar frequency to the idea of the public and of things Spanish. On the face of this evidence, this is less a public sphere concerned with collective opinion or political struggles per se, than it is one that takes shape around jurisprudential or quasi-jurisprudential structures. It is preoccupied, on the one hand, with what laws say or might say, and on the other, with notions of reasonable and protected entitlements. Such interests appear far to outweigh any concern with the constitution and what is constitutional per se, again despite the continual and often violent struggles in Spain over what the constitution should be. *Constitución* and *constitucional* [constitution, constitutional] merit 1844 mentions, vastly fewer than those to *derecho/s*.

More frequent even than *España/español/a/(e)s* and *derecho/s* is *ley/es* (13636). Combined with the count for *derecho/s*, the effect is overwhelming in emphasizing the primacy of a jurisprudential outlook. There, is, though, something more still here. While KWIC searches confirm that latter usage of the term *ley/es*, they also, unsurprisingly, bring to light its use to refer to the laws of nature or the spirit. This underlines the broader concern in the public



sphere with knowledge of compelling, even inescapable realities. The frequency of reference to *ciencia/s* (9283, science and knowledge) seems to confirm that preoccupation. The notion of *razón/es* [reason, explanation] – the means of reasoning itself – does rather less well, while remaining very prominent (6903). This perhaps further emphasizes that the primary interest is in the actual establishment (either by their introduction or their identification) of structures of collective reality. The term *causa/s* [cause, causes] – both causes and purposes – plays a key role, with 8199 mentions, suggesting that reasons given are important when these enable us to identify how the structures of collective reality are such as they are. *History* – on which so much ink has been spilt with regards to Spain’s historicist obsessions – likewise has its strong place (7233), but, as it were, in a supporting position like that of *razón*.

The frequency of the term *vida* (9218) – used across the corpus both to refer to human and more broadly biological life – underlines that the public sphere was concerned with such structures as they were instantiated in actual existence, as does the high frequency of the term *historia*. The public sphere is not a disembodied world of laws, as such. At the same time, though, it is a pointedly un-sentimental domain, remarkably unconcerned with feelings per se. The word *corazón* (both the metaphorical and physical heart) has but 1609 mentions, and *sentimiento/s* [sentiment, feeling] a similar 1745. *Amistad* [friendship] does especially badly (326), and even *amor* [love] figures in a relatively lowly position (2159). Nor do the arts come anywhere close to jurisprudence, laws, and entitlements in the public sphere. *Arte/s* [art, arts] has a frequency of 4521, whereas *literatura* [literature] has 1064, and *letras* (letters, that is written works, but also knowledge of reading and writing) musters 1648. The very idea of a *civilización* [civilization] merits only 1147 mentions, *cultura* [culture] far fewer. On this account, the public sphere was much less concerned with overt expressions of affect, and much less bound by overt emotional or aesthetic experiences, than it was characterized by the affirmation of collective structures in which we live and to which we belong. In this respect, the corpus contrasts markedly with the assertions of many nineteenth-century thinkers about both societal and aesthetic matters. Or, rather, it underlines the degree to which such intellectuals and artists were engaged in a forceful struggle to assert the importance of affect in a public sphere more immediately inclined to the identification of laws and knowledge. Feelings, and more prominently history, were articulated within a sphere bound most strongly by the pursuit of collective structures and certainties.

#### *A Didactic, Administrative, and Hygienic Sphere*

When we turn to collocates of *public* itself (ten words either side), it is impossible to overstate the vast, looming presence of *instrucción* (2330 mentions), towering over any other rival concept. To put it at its most extreme, when people said *public*, they habitually said *instruction*. It is also worth noting the specific choice of word here: *instrucción*, not *educación* [education] (81) or even the closely related *enseñanza* [teaching] (272). The emphasis is not just on the institutional availability of education: it is on instructing people in things. That is to say, the emphasis is implicitly, and in a strong sense, didactic. This is of a piece with the insistence on *ciencia/s* in the corpus more widely. What is important collectively is to tell people what they should know: that is the primary public concern. As I have noted elsewhere (Ginger 2008: 122-23), it is an error to leap from an emphasis on



instruction to the conclusion that people ended up believing what they were told. Likewise, and as is consistent with the plurality of usages of general terms, the inclination to instruct may simply lead to a multitude of voices each insisting that theirs is the correct version, and thus collectively creating a pluralized society. The point is rather that the overall focus was on being didactic, and on encouraging institutions that could deliver on that aim.

*Escuela/s* [school, schools] correspondingly features very strongly (484 mentions). However, in line with what historians have observed of the limits to available schooling in nineteenth-century Spain (Humlebaek 2012: 14), we should not assume that this total reflects reference to physically existing schools. The KWIC searches reveal numerous references instead to schools of thought. This is consistent with the contents of the corpus, which contains many instances of pronouncements given by Spanish intellectuals. 154 items in the corpus (some 41%) feature the word *discurso* in the title. To some degree, this will reflect what the National Library happens to have digitized, but the finding also evokes the extent to which the public sphere in Spain was constituted by people giving public addresses, often in academies or other learned societies (such as the influential Ateneo of Madrid), or writing treatises in which they discoursed on their learned opinion for the benefit of the public. Notably, in these collocates, the term *academia* [academy] (229) dwarfs *universidad* [university] (88) and its institutional world of higher education; 148 items in the corpus have the word *academy* in their title. To a significant degree, on this account, the Spanish public sphere was pedagogical above and beyond formal institutions of instruction, oriented towards didactically imparting learning to audiences. Even Spanishness itself is markedly secondary to the obsession with didacticism, marking up 327 collocates to the vast swathe of *instrucción*.

The rather prescriptive outlook of the public sphere is exhibited too in the concern with hygiene (246 mentions on these collocates in the adjusted corpus), as Jo Labanyi (2000) has demonstrated. This is the desire to ensure cleanliness across society as a whole, interlinking public and private spaces in so doing. While hygiene is by no means as looming a concern as instruction, or rights and laws, or even Spanishness, its regulatory and advisory discourse far exceeds that dedicated, for example, to *libertad* [liberty] (57) or *razón* (71) or *historia* (82) among these collocates. The desire to cleanse the collective space came fairly easily to mind when explicit mention was made of things public. The public sphere was correspondingly concerned to instruct people in how to do so, not least through manuals and courses made available to people at large.

Within the group of frequent collocates trailing behind *instrucción*, we find in prominent positions: *derecho/s* again (545), *hacienda* (347), *administración* (339), *gastos* [expenditure](334), and then *rentas* [income] (293), *ministerio* (289). As well as reinforcing the overall concern with structures of laws and rights, this suggests that the public sphere was oriented in a significant degree towards state and state-related administration. Specific political affiliations – *conservador*, *liberal*, *partido* – hardly figure among collocates: it is the administration in itself that counts. In particular, the preoccupation is with the formal bureaucratic and decision-making institutions that manage state and quasi-state structures in the broadest terms (*administración*, *ministerio*). The one branch that is singled out is the

instrument of government finance (*hacienda*, the treasury), in line with a basic concern with the generalities of money in and money out: *gastos*, *rentas*. Again, this suggests a concern with the mechanisms of delivery – basic financing -, not least from the state sector. More still, it suggests that the preoccupation with rights and laws needs to be seen, not so much as a test separate from consideration of the state bureaucracy, but as something wed to it. That is confirmed by the high level of concern with *instrucción pública*: the state education system.

That overall orientation to concern with the generality of the bureaucracy, government decision-makers, financing, and the role of law and rights far overrides the level of interest registered in the specifics of the generation of wealth, or even the chronic fiscal problems of the Spanish state. In some contrast with the understandable emphasis placed upon it by historians of all sorts, from political to cultural, *deuda* [debt] figures in a background position within the collocates of *public*: it has 144 mentions, and just 729 in the overall word list. While clearly not irrelevant, it is overshadowed by the general activity of the treasury and of income and expenditure. *Industria* [industry] features lower still (57), as does *comercio* [commerce] (71); likewise within the overall word list for the corpus, *industria* merits a relatively lowly 1335 mentions, *comercio* 1775, and *agricultura* [agriculture] just 774.

### **Conclusion: A Dream of Generalities**

On the evidence seen here, the public sphere in Spain in the second half of the nineteenth century was oriented towards the consolidation of a country and a people (Spain and the Spanish), more even than it was concerned with anything so specific as a nation or a *patria* or *communitas*. In turn, that country and people took shape in the public sphere less in terms of localized specifics or of commitment to particular ideologies or philosophies, than in the articulation of what I have called compelling generalities. The public sphere was instantiated overwhelmingly around jurisprudence and the articulation of protected rights, and overlapped heavily with state administration and financing as the means of delivery on its concerns. It was legalistic and, to a degree, bureaucratic in its mindset, but also concerned with preventing oppression. The public sphere was conceived in assertively collectivist terms, not primarily defined by reference to contrasting individual or private spheres. It looked less to opinion and debate per se, than to assertions of knowledge of compelling realities that bound the collective in its lived experience. These, which included laws and rights, loomed large even over any loyalty to the country itself. Likewise, the public sphere was overwhelmingly didactic in its outlook, concerned with authoritatively imparting instruction, and, to a degree, with cleansing itself. It was characterized by the strong presence of learned institutions from which interventions were continually made. None of this meant that the public sphere was rigid, monolithic, or that it was particularly resistant to pluralism. Rather, the focus and emphasis of the public sphere's generalities continually shifted, and their usage was disputed. Plurality took shape through the didactic assertions of generality: much more diverse, heterogeneous, and rich concerns were woven onto the thick fabric of the generalities. In practice, the public sphere was a place of multiplicity and even instability.

Some scholars of the public sphere (Habermas (1991)), as of civil society (Alexander (2006)) have famously taught us to identify the high aspirations embedded in societal realities: the

hope for a society governed by public reasoning for example, or the instantiation of liberty and equality. In the Spanish public sphere there lurked a dream too, of sorts. Its sense of its own practicality made it perhaps an uneasy bedfellow of utopias, a word which hardly figures in the corpus examined here. Yet it has about it something of an ideal to be realized. The public sphere dreamt of transforming a single country into a realm of instruction in shared knowledge, a collective governed by directive and prescriptive laws and rights, realised by its administrators. Shimmering on the public sphere's horizon lay a didactic, jurisprudential, law-bound, hygienic, but un-oppressive realm that would be called *Spain*.

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