WHEN NEGATIVITY IS THE FUEL.
BOTS AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN THE DEBATE
ABOUT COVID-19

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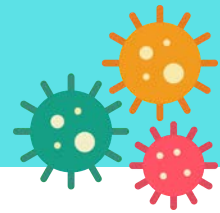Dra. Belén Casas-Mas; Dr. Daniel Gómez

INTRODUCTION

«Bots»
Key agents in the processes of social and political polarization

COVID-19 pandemic
Public debate on social networks about the Spanish government's management of the first months of the crisis
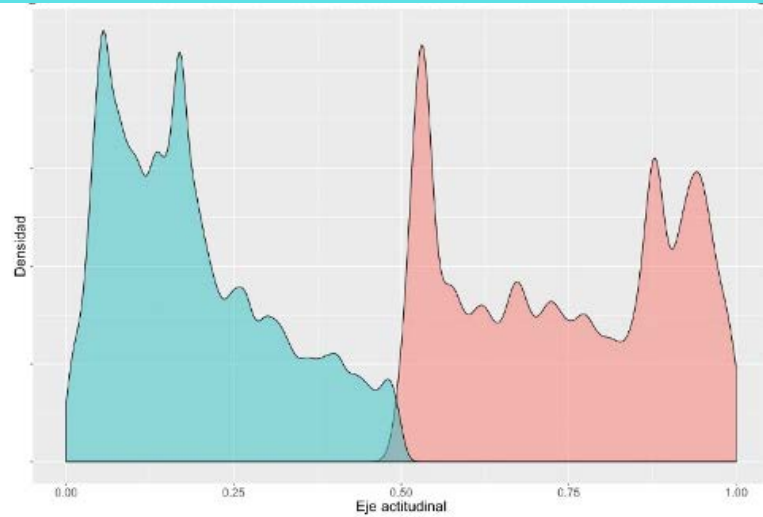
METHODOLOGY

Social Big Data Analysis techniques

Machine learning algorithms to know the positioning of users; bot detection algorithms

Topic modeling techniques to learn about the topics of the debate on the web, and sentiment analysis

RESULTS

The political "bots" identified in the analysis have a greater tendency to polarize public opinion than non-bot accounts

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The use of "bots" does not seem to be oriented to inform society about the risks of the pandemic or to promote prevention dynamics but mostly focused on mobilizing, negativizing, public opinion against the government

CONCLUSIONS

The "bots" could have been used to design a political propaganda campaign initiated by traditional actors with the aim of increasing tension in an environment of social emergency

These agents are not the only actors that increase polarization, but they do help to heighten the debate on certain key issues, increasing negativity

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