

Libertarian movement and self-management of knowledge in the Spain of the first third of the 20th century: «Questions and answers» section (1930-1937) of the journal *Estudios*

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CONTENTS: 1.— Q&A sections in the press. 2.—The libertarian management of non-experts' participation in the construction and management of knowledge. 3.—Nonexperts' participation in the construction of scientific-medical knowledge.

ABSTRACT: Newspaper Q&A sections reflect and contribute to the social historical context in which they are published, and they may play roles as distinct as becoming a tool to sustain social arrangements or, conversely, being an instrument for social change. In a context of complex relations between experts and non-experts within the libertarian movement in Spain in the first third of the 20th century, the Q&A section («Preguntas y respuestas», 1930-1937) of the anarchist magazine *Estudios* (1928-1937) constitutes a particularly illustrative example of the multidimensional management of knowledge through the effective redefinition of the participation of quite different groups. In this paper, we analyze the exchange between physician Roberto Remartínez (1895-1977), the section coordinator, and its readers, and identify features of the implementation of the libertarian principles of self-management through communication practices in which experts and non-experts jointly take part.

KEY WORDS: scientific-medical knowledge management, anarchism, communication practices, experts/non-experts relationships, contraceptive methods, inclusion/exclusion.

1. Q&A sections in the press (*)

Question and answer sections in the press first appeared with the publication of the first periodicals in the 17th century. One of the original aims of these sections was to foster the cohesion of the social group linked to the particular publication, by publishing advice, leisure recommendations, information and opinions which were developed in response to readers' questions¹.

It is true that not all question and answer formats catered for the participation of all the actors involved in the exchange, including styles such as the catechetic approach, which seeks to impose a particular dogma through the creation of a false dialogue. With the appearance of the press, however, a new tradition emerged, the aim of which was to get readers to participate in the contents of newspapers and journals, and a strategy of exchanging ideas was developed, which set out to do different things: to inform and/or educate, to moralise, or to get people to consume.

The news and educational contents were initially aimed at the most underprivileged classes, whereas the more moralistic material formed part of the configuration of modernity in which the new moral code of the middle classes played an important role. Later on, with the onset of mass consumption, commercial companies advertised their products, mostly related to beauty, in these sections. In the main, it was a matter of offering guidance on how to act in particular circumstances, with advice being given on affairs of the heart, manners and behaviour, legal matters, medical problems, and so on. These aims were not exclusive, something borne out by the presence of advice on how to react to infidelity and how to solve mathematical problems in the same section².

An aspect which would prove to be of relevance in the development of this genre was the participation of women as consultants from the birth of publications with question and answer sections, which

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1. Hendley, W. Clark. Dear Abby, Miss Lonelyhearts, and the eighteenth century: the origins of the newspaper advice column. *Journal of Popular Culture*. 1977; 11 (2): 345-352; Kent, Robin. Aunt Agony advises. *Problem pages through the ages*. London: W. H. Allen; 1979.
2. Kent, n. 1.

were incorporated in «women's magazines» when they were first published at the end of the 17th century. Their success and growth led to them being regarded as «female spaces»³. Indeed, the women's magazines of the late 19th and early 20th centuries made use of this format to spread the new social norms relating to the *new woman*, expressing both their support for, and rejection of them. In this sense, they played a key role in the reconfiguration of gender relationships⁴. This may be why effort was made from the outset to prevent these sections from being limited to a female readership by including them in magazines and general papers for the whole family.

The topics dealt with in these sections reflect the social, political and cultural context of readers and editors, generally in moral terms. Thus, in the second half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century, very restrictive moral values were disseminated, and issues that had been covered in these sections, such as adultery, rape and incest, were censored, and the emphasis was placed instead on giving advice about marrying well, «good manners», or «appropriate» behavior. This censorship reduced the success of these sections, which was only recovered in the second half of the 19th century in magazines for all the family. Moreover, the success of these sections has meant that they have lived on, being adapted to the purposes of different types of publications. Significantly, one of these purposes was the task of popularizing scientific and/or medical knowledge⁵, reinforcing the role of the press as an instrument of maximum dissemination and bringing elite and popular cultures together.

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3. Kent, n. 1; Phillips, Angela. Advice columnists. In: Franklin, Bob, ed. Pulling newspaper apart: analysing print journalism. New York: Routledge; 2008, p. 97-105.
 4. Kent, n. 1; Morris, Penny. From private to public: Alba de Céspedes' agony column in 1950s Italy. *Modern Italy*. 2004; 9 (1): 11-20; Muñoz Ruiz, M.^a Carmen. La construcción de las relaciones de género en el franquismo y sus conflictos: los consultorios sentimentales. *Arenal: Revista de Historia de las Mujeres*. 2003; 10 (2): 219-239.
 5. Questions relating to medical matters gradually increased in number, to such an extent that these sections offered what occasionally amounted to specialist consultancy. Many of these questions touched on aspects of sexuality: venereal diseases, masturbation, unwanted pregnancy, etc. Kent, n. 1, p. 143-163. For information on female sexuality and its use as a source for the analysis of processes of (de)medicalization, see: Jiménez-Lucena, Isabel; Molero-Mesa, Jorge. Good birth and good living. The (de)medicalizing key to sexual reform in the anarchist media of inter-war Spain. *International Journal of Iberian Studies*. 2011; 24 (3): 219-241.

Overall, question and answer sections reflect and contribute to the society of the historical moment in which they are published⁶, and, therefore, reflect and contribute to the diversity of viewpoints which co-exist in any given historical context⁷, which accounts for their capacity to play such different roles, at times functioning as an instrument for maintaining social norms, while at others acting as an agent in changing them⁸.

This article focuses on the analysis of the «Questions and Answers» section of the anarchist journal *Estudios* (1928-1937), published from 1930 to 1937. This section was not just a page designed to entertain or satisfy simple curiosity, but aimed instead to be educational or instructive in content. «Questions and Answers» in *Estudios* rejected the commercial and frivolous approach adopted by other such sections in Spanish publications like *ABC* and *Blanco y Negro*, as we shall see, and took up the informative and educational tradition developed by other publications in other cultural spheres⁹. In a context of great appeal for self-management in the Spanish anarchist media of the first third of the 20th century, «Questions and Answers» is a crucial source for developing our understanding of the processes involved in the generation and management of scientific-technological knowledge as multi-dimensional communication practices where experts and non-experts jointly contribute. By analyzing the exchange between a doctor called Roberto Remartínez (1895-1977), who was a regular contributor to *Estudios* and the coordinator of the section, and its readers, but in particular the latter's questions, we examine how these non-experts put into practice the concept of self-management, in relation to the construction of scientific-medical knowledge and taking into account two essential aspects of the libertarian movement. We shall consider, on the one hand, the processes involved in the re-signification of concepts of health and illness, in this case from the perspective of the concerns and expectations of *Estudios* readers, or in other words their everyday experiences, and, on the other, the relationship between these readers and experts, in this case with Remartínez, as a doctor and coordinator of the section, at a

6. Kent, n. 1; Morris, n. 4.

7. Morris, n. 4.

8. Phillips, n. 3, p. 97-100.

9. Like, for example, *Cassell's Illustrated Family Magazine* (1853-1867). Kent, n. 1, p. 15-17.

time when the role of intellectuals and professionals in the revolutionary process was being questioned¹⁰. The relevance of this analysis becomes even more evident if we take into account the importance of the dissemination and influence of *Estudios*, its success in terms of circulation (which reached 70,000 copies) and the size of its readership, and its prestige in libertarian circles¹¹.

2. The libertarian management of non-experts' participation in the construction and management of knowledge

The role played by culture and education in the anarchist movement's strategy of emancipating the proletariat and direct action to bring about social revolution is well-known. The various ways of acquiring, managing and transmitting knowledge among libertarians reached a high level of sophistication thanks to associative networks, which were maintained by the exhaustive use of the standard support systems and means of communication available in the first third of the 20th century¹². A fundamental part of this body of knowledge covered problems related to health and illness, reaching a certain degree of thematic specialization¹³, and was an area in which *Estudios* came to enjoy a prominent position¹⁴.

The relationship of militant anarcho-sindicalists with experts in different areas of scientific knowledge was marked, however, by a high degree of suspicion and mistrust, largely because experts were regarded as another cog in the

10. See in this same monograph: Molero-Mesa, Jorge; Jiménez-Lucena, Isabel. «Brazo y cerebro»: Las dinámicas de inclusión-exclusión en torno a la profesión médica y el anarcosindicalismo español en el primer tercio del siglo XX. *Dynamis*. 2013; 33 (1): 19-42.

11. For more detailed information about this journal, see: Navarro, Francisco J. El paraíso de la razón. La revista *Estudios* (1928-1937) y el mundo cultural anarquista. Valencia: Edicions Alfons el Magnànim; 1997.

12. Navarro Navarro, Javier. A la revolución por la cultura: prácticas culturales y sociabilidad libertarias en el País Valenciano (1931-1939). València: Universitat de València; 2004.

13. Masjuan, Eduard. La ecología humana en el anarquismo ibérico: urbanismo «orgánico» o ecológico, neomalthusianismo y naturalismo social. Barcelona: Icaria; 2000; Barona, Josep Lluís. Ciencia y revolución en la España de Martí Ibáñez. In: Martí, J. V.; Rey, A., eds. Actas del I Simposium Félix Martí Ibáñez: medicina, historia e ideología. Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana; 2004, p. 17-38.

14. Navarro, n. 11.

capitalist support system¹⁵. The mistrust was extended to their written output. According to the anarchist author Felipe Aláiz (1987-1959), the available technical manuals were characterized by «undiluted erudition», which was to say that they contained «excessive allusions of an unknown nature to most readers». This way of writing was not innocent as behind it was a cryptic intentionality which, according to Aláiz, brought technology down to the level of witchcraft. Specialists «who possess diplomas and qualifications (...) instead of socializing knowledge, instead of making it accessible, stick it in a bag (...) at the disposal of the family and professional dynasty»¹⁶. There was a need, therefore, for the management of knowledge to be taken out of the hands of specialists and intellectuals, and to develop a specialist mutual teaching network which, based on militant eclecticism, would construct, re-signify and use knowledge in the service of the social transformation to which they aspired¹⁷.

Autodidacticism and the self-management of knowledge gave rise to the emergence of groups of libertarian workers with a very sound knowledge of subjects which were of concern to the proletariat, or which had a strong social impact, such as those related to health and illness¹⁸. Hence, situations occasionally arose in which the audience of a conference held in the auditorium of an *'ateneo'*, or cultural centre, might already be familiar with the subject matter if the guest speaker based the talk on material from text books which might well have been available in the local workers' centre library. Many of the reviews of these conferences written by workers in the anarcho-syndicalist press consisted of a description followed by the corresponding critique

15. Molero-Mesa; Jiménez-Lucena, n. 10.

16. [Aláiz, Felipe]. Libros de técnica y técnica de libros. Solidaridad Obrera. 29 Jul 1933. Felipe Aláiz de Pablo was a member of the CNT and the FAI and one of the least known Spanish anarchist thinkers in the present day. Cleminson, Richard. Felipe Aláiz, Iberian Federalism and the making of the anarchist intellectual. *Social and Education History*. 2012; 1 (2): 153-171.

17. Jiménez Lucena, Isabel; Molero Mesa, Jorge. Problematizando el proceso de (des)medicalización. Mecanismos de sometimiento/autogestión del cuerpo en los medios libertarios españoles del primer tercio del siglo XX. In: Miranda, Marisa; Girón Sierra, Álvaro, eds. *Cuerpo, biopolítica y control social: América Latina y Europa en los siglos XIX y XX*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, Ed. Iberoamericana; 2009, p. 69-93; Molero Mesa, Jorge; Jiménez Lucena, Isabel. «Otra manera de ver las cosas». *Microbios, eugenesia y ambientalismo radical en el anarquismo español del siglo XX*. In: Miranda, Marisa; Vallejo, Gustavo, eds. *Darwinismo social y eugenesia. Derivas de Darwin: cultura y política en clave biológica*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, Ed. Iberoamericana; 2010, p. 143-164. Jiménez-Lucena, Molero-Mesa, n. 5.

18. According to oral testimony recorded by Anna Monjo, «Social Medicine» was one of the «burning issues» assiduously dealt with in libertarian *'ateneos'*. Monjo, Anna. *Militants. Participació i democràcia a la CNT als anys trenta*. Barcelona: Ed. Laertes; 2003, p. 380.

of the contents. The anarcho-syndicalists had their own view about was «suitable» to disseminate depending on the «character» of the conferences, which shows us that this public did not just passively accept hegemonic knowledge, but expected an alternative interpretation of reality regarding concepts which, in many cases, had undergone a process of appropriation and development which was independent of «official» theories. Thus, these reviews sometimes included comments about what the speaker should have said, and had omitted to say, to the audience.

In October 1935, Martín Zabiña published a review in *Solidaridad Obrera* of a talk given by a doctor called Ramon Torra Bassols in the Centro Fraternal de Palafrugell, which was titled «Should the people be concerned about the problem of venereal diseases?». The review summarised the talk and raised several objections. First of all, it highlighted the «deficient explanation of the anatomy and sexual physiology of both males and females *convenient* to this conference», the lack of any explanation of «contraceptive methods for preventing contagion», and the fact that the mercury and silver nitrate recommended by the speaker for treating venereal diseases «could cause other disasters in the organism which were sometimes even worse than the disease itself». It also warned the speaker that if he were to address them again, he should make sure that they might «hear about the areas alluded to, which we consider to be *essential* to the *nature* of these conferences»¹⁹.

This way of managing scientific-medical knowledge was not restricted to correcting or attacking opposing ideas for the sake of ideological reaffirmation, but also permitted the use of traditional communication formats to subvert the order of the message, transcending the functions of «self-training» and «cultural extension» attributed to anarchist cultural centres²⁰. We are referring here to the use of speakers themselves as propagandistic media to influence society. In 1916, José Salvat wrote for *Solidaridad Obrera* about a talk on syphilis given at the *Centro Obrero* (Workers' Centre) in Calle Mercaders, Barcelona. Apart from bemoaning the fact that the talk had only «left an imprint on the brains of conscious men» who were already aware of the social problem

19. Zabiña, Martín. Una conferencia. Objeciones. *Solidaridad Obrera*. 1 Oct 1935. The italics are ours.

20. Navarro Navarro, Javier. El papel de los ateneos en la cultura y la sociabilidad libertarias (1931-1939): algunas reflexiones. *Cercles*. 2005; 8: 64 103.

that this disease represented, he proposed that this kind of event should be organized on a mass scale in workers' centres and that the texts of conferences should be published in *Solidaridad Obrera*, so that

«speakers would come more often, we would be able to strike up some sort of relationship with doctors, lawyers and other men who go to make up the different areas of knowledge, and who after *becoming familiar with our nature and way of thinking*, would seal with their presence in *Centros Obreros y de Estudios Sociales* (Workers and Social Studies Centres) the cultural work being carried out in them, thus refuting all that bureaucracy which just tends to distort our work with defamation, presenting us to the stupid and ignorant masses as criminal beings who should be crushed»²¹.

This message was not intended for the workers who attended the centre to listen and be informed, but for the speaker, in this case a doctor who had unwittingly become a medium for a communication practice which served the interests of anarchism. These communication practices and strategies used in the dissemination of scientific knowledge acted as mechanisms of social/group inclusion-exclusion, depending on the interests of the affected parties. Felipe Aláiz argued in 1933 that «the immense majority of specialists, teachers, journalists, engineers and doctors» were completely unaware of anarchist thinkers' works, because they lived in the «environment of books», the academic contents of which portrayed anarchism as a utopia, and considered «free association and help divorced from the State to be absurd». Practices of «spontaneous coexistence» were left out of this literature or were minimized and presented as being not very efficient²². Hence, cultured individuals who were educated to serve the common good of the community, and whose cultural level was on a par with or superior to qualified people, were portrayed as criminals, much to the anger and indignation of workers who were aware of the problem²³.

21. Salvat, José. El Dr. Marsal en el Centro obrero. *Solidaridad Obrera*. 27 Dic 1916. The italics are ours.

22. [Aláiz, Felipe]. La cuestión de los intelectuales. *Solidaridad Obrera*. 2 Nov 1933. A well-studied experience of libertarian self-management is: Marín Silvestre, Dolors. Anarquistas y sindicalistas en L'Hospitalet. La creación de un proyecto de autodidactismo obrero. In: Oyón, J. L.; Gallardo, J. J., eds. *El Cinturón Rojinegro. Radicalismo cenetista y obrerismo en la periferia de Barcelona 1918-1939*. Barcelona: Ed. Carena; 2004, p. 125-146.

23. See, for example: Otra vez los bárbaros. Peligran las escuelas racionalistas. *Solidaridad Obrera*. 30 Jun 1934 or Catalán, Juan. Patria. *Solidaridad Obrera*. 8 Mar 1917.

The dignity acquired through manual work was enhanced and justified, in anarchist thinking, by the cultural dignity which stemmed from the acquisition of specialist knowledge. This helps us understand the importance and impact on the working class of popular journals like *Estudios*, and the need to search for formulas of direct communication, such as the «Questions and answers» section, which was already the format used to set the agenda of the CNT unions plenary sessions and congresses.

Estudios was fundamentally pedagogical in nature, in accordance with the view that education and culture were inescapable revolutionary premises. The explicit editorial interest in eclecticism (its subtitle, *Revista Ecléctica*, was inherited from its immediate predecessor, *Generación Consciente*, 1923-1928) translated into the effective practice of covering a wide range of subjects, thanks to the involvement of highly diverse contributors, without ideological restrictions. From the outset, therefore, the work of *Estudios* was based on a crucial modification with regard to participation in the construction and circulation of knowledge, the aim of which was to foster the contrasting and debate of multiple approaches to the questions dealt with²⁴.

In terms of subject matter, the journal focused particularly on sexual education (with special emphasis on female sexuality), art, science and general culture. Science and medicine, taking into account the journal's pedagogical orientation, its commitment for debate and its efforts to re-signify scientific-medical knowledge, were presented as conflictive from the perspective of different standpoints, though within the framework of going beyond dichotomous thinking. Thus, they were used either as subjects of analysis or as the source of arguments in the exploration and discussion of very wide-ranging topics²⁵. In any case, its approach

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24. Martí Boscà, José Vicente. *Estudios: educación sexual, arte, ciencia, cultura general*. In: Faxímil. *Estudios*. *Revista Ecléctica*. [Internet Publication]. 2007 [cited 27 Jul 2012]. Available at: <http://www.numerossueltos.com/news/cat/faxdocs/post/faxdoc23/>. Navarro, n. 11; Jiménez-Lucena; Molero-Mesa, n. 5; Cleminson, Richard. «Science and sympathy» or «sexual subversion on a human basis»? Anarchists in Spain and the World League for Sexual Reform. *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. 2003; 12 (1): 110-121.
 25. Taberner, Carlos. La sección «Preguntas y respuestas» de la revista anarquista *Estudios* (1930-1937): generación y gestión multidimensional de conocimiento científico-médico. In: Porras Gallo M. I. et al., eds. *Transmisión del conocimiento médico e internacionalización de las prácticas sanitarias: una reflexión histórica*. Ciudad Real: SEHM y Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha; 2011, p. 407-411. On the overcoming of dichotomic thought, see: Jiménez-Lucena; Molero-Mesa, n. 17.

to medical-healthcare issues rested on a defense of self-management of the body, health and illness over the dogmatic morality imposed by bourgeois authority, based on the theoretical objectivity of positivist medicine²⁶. With regard to self-management, discourses and practices were based on a special anarchist vision of three key lines of thought from social, political, ideological cultural perspectives²⁷. Firstly, Neo-Malthusianism, which endorsed the individualised management of sexuality, connected mainly with contraception and population control. From the joint perspective of class and gender, science could play a crucial role in the struggle for equality and was presented as liberating knowledge, an emancipatory tool with the capacity to uncover (and remedy) injustice and social inequality²⁸. Such was the case of contraceptive methods, in so far as «the middle classes have learnt to curb their fertility, and the most scholarly workers also practise the voluntary restriction of births»²⁹.

Secondly, environmentalist eugenics, in which life conditions were the key to re-signifying concepts of health and disease and, therefore, to analyzing their impact on people's everyday life (in social, work, political and cultural terms)³⁰. In libertarian thinking, eugenics, Neo-Malthusianism and sexuality merged with regard to its views on processes of (de)medicalisation, as part of its critical stance on science and medicine, the quality and quantity of populations, individuals and life, and the (self-)knowledge and (self-)control of the body³¹.

26. Molero-Mesa; Jiménez-Lucena, n. 17.

27. Jiménez-Lucena; Molero-Mesa, n. 5; Jiménez Lucena, Isabel. La cuestión del regeneracionismo sanitario y su debate durante la Segunda República: elementos de clase e ideología. *Dynamis*. 1998; 18: 285-314.

28. Molero-Mesa; Jiménez-Lucena, n. 17; Jiménez-Lucena; Molero-Mesa, n. 5; Martí Boscà, n. 24; Tabernero, n. 25.

29. Dra. Pelletier. Despoblación y civilización. *Estudios*. 1931; 9 (99): 18-20.

30. Molero-Mesa; Jiménez-Lucena, n. 17; Jiménez-Lucena; Molero-Mesa, n. 5.

31. Sexuality constituted (and still constitutes) a central mechanism of biopower (in terms of population and reproduction policies) associated with the development of capitalist modernity-coloniality, because the management of the body and the problem of population facilitate the reinforcement of basic dualisms, such as gender or notions of private and public. In the heart of the libertarian movement, inclusion strategies were set in motion, designed to put an end to the double standard on which social relations were based. For example: Austin, Kate. La cuestión de los sexos. *Solidaridad Obrera*, 10 Ago 1916; Lacerda de Moura, María. Procreación y miseria. *Estudios*. 1932; 10 (105): 8-10; 1932; 10 (106): 7-9; Lacerda de Moura, María. Los libertarios y el feminismo. *Estudios*. 1932; 10 (107): 15-17. Please also see: Jiménez-Lucena, Isabel. La inclusión excluyente y la razón que la interpela. La naturaleza de

Finally, naturism, and in particular its application in terms of naturist medicine, as a basis for resignifying concepts of health and disease. The biological and cultural spheres were complementary aspects to this same health-disease process, meaning that Nature could become, in these cases, an ally in the struggle to be free of the shackles of social norms which favoured oppression and exploitation³². Furthermore, the opposition to the dictates of both public and private institutional interests was organised through the explicit promotion of self-management, (individual or collective), not only of health and disease, but in all other areas, and with regard to processes of constructing and managing knowledge.

3. Nonexperts' participation in the construction of scientific-medical knowledge

By analyzing the «Questions and answers» section in *Estudios*, we identify and characterize the diversity and multiplicity of contributions which, in epistemological terms, intervene in the construction and management of scientific-medical knowledge, and also explore the role of non-experts as vital agents in these processes. In this sense, it is essential to examine the processes of generating, managing and applying scientific-medical-technological knowledge as a whole, and in particular the communication practices of *all* the players involved, the discourses, the instruments and the spaces used. The scope of analysis of these processes must necessarily embrace the routines of everyday life. This context, beyond the recognised institutional spaces

«la mujer nueva» en la prensa libertaria española de entreguerras. In: Porras Gallo et al., n. 25, p. 395-399; Jiménez-Lucena; Molero-Mesa, n. 5.

32. Un médico rural [Isaac Puente]. *Medicina subversiva. Estudios*. 1932; 10 (108): 13-15; Molero-Mesa; Jiménez-Lucena, n. 17.

in which this sort of knowledge is produced, is crucial as far as the exercise of epistemological agency on the part of non-experts is concerned³³.

Thus, routine practices of appropriating the media constitute a structural reference for both immediate social life and the long-term construction and projection of human communities. This is not all, however, for people's daily life is also a context in which «countless tensions and social conflicts are projected», and represents, in other words, a set of experiential spaces essential to studying and understanding «the changing nature of authority in the culture of the media»³⁴. In this context, the use and consumption of the media can be understood as a habitual, routine, domestic and social space for informal learning (i.e., unregulated), but also one in which social and cultural skills are obtained and substantially developed, and which therefore have an impact on the way people communicate, consume, work, study, collaborate and solve problems. Hence, all players involved (in this instance, doctors, editors and readers) participate not only in processes of legitimisation and validation, but at the same time in the questioning, rejection or resignification of (scientific-medical) knowledge and the associated systems of authority³⁵.

The «Questions and answers» sections in *Estudios* performed as much more than a doctor's surgery. It was created in response to the huge number of readers' questions sent to its editorial office, asking for detailed information about health and disease processes. Remartínez (and *Estudios*), however, conceived it as a space devoted

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33. Thompson, John B. *The media and modernity. A social theory of media*. Cambridge: Polity Press; 1995; Secord, James A. *Knowledge in transit*. *Isis*. 2004; 95: 654-672; Couldry, Nick. *Theorising media as practice*. *Social Semiotics*. 2004; 14(2): 115-32, p. 119; Bräuchler, Birgit; Postill, John. *Theorising media and practice*. Oxford/New York: Berghahn; 2010; Couldry, Nick. *Review article: everyday life in cultural theory*. *European Journal of Communication*. 2003; 18 (2): 265-270.
 34. Couldry, 2003, n. 33, p. 268-269; de Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press; 1984; Martín-Barbero, Jesús. *Communication, culture and hegemony*. London: Sage; 1993; Chaney, David. *Cultural change and everyday life*. New York: Palgrave; 2002.
 35. Tabernero, Carlos et al. *Media practices, connected lives*. In: Cardoso, G.; Cheong, A.; Cole, J., eds. *World wide internet: changing societies, economies and cultures*. Macau: University of Macau; 2009, p. 331-355.

fundamentally to questions directly or indirectly related to hygiene and medicine, and which should be in keeping with the journal's eclectic strategy:

«We quite often get letters from our readers or subscribers asking us questions about various matters, sometimes of general interest, but mostly about questions of Hygiene and Medicine (...) keen to satisfy them, we have spoken to our medical consultant, the distinguished Doctor Remartínez, who, by accepting our proposal, has graciously agreed to be responsible for this new section (...) In order to get a reply, questions should (...) refer directly or indirectly to an issue of Medicine, Hygiene, Physiology, Education, Physical Culture, Naturism, etc., etc.»³⁶.

Shortly afterwards, Remartínez explained (for the first but not the last time) the section's focus on education and general culture:

«In starting this Section of Questions and Answers, it is our aim to spread knowledge of general interest and usefulness to all readers of ESTUDIOS, as a means of bringing to popular culture certain teachings vital to man's mental and physical advancement, which adds up to the principles held by this journal»³⁷.

Although most queries referred to personal problems and concerns related to medical-healthcare matters, the questions covered a wide range of topics³⁸. Very soon, the success of the section exceeded Remartínez's expectations and his ability to reply to everyone, which prompted the inclusion of a reminder in issues 92 and 93 about the type of questions that could be sent in and how they should be formulated, and the general (educational) rather than particular (personalized) character of the section was once again stressed. A clear distinction was also made regarding the strictly private medical consultation offered by several doctors, Remartínez among them, which could be had by sending in a coupon³⁹. From issue number 122 (October 1933) to the end (number 165, June 1937), the section always started with a brief standardised warning

36. La Dirección. De gran interés para nuestros lectores. Una sección nueva en «Estudios». *Estudios*. 1930; 8 (87): 18.

37. Preguntas y respuestas. *Estudios*. 1931; 9 (95): 26.

38. Taberero, n. 25; Jiménez-Lucena; Molero-Mesa, n. 5.

39. Consultorio médico de estudios. *Estudios*. 1928; 6 (64): back cover.

which covered all these points, including the different mailing details for general questions for «Questions and answers» and personal questions for the journal's medical consultation service, with the specification that «Only those questions which are of general interest, and which are in keeping with the informative and cultural nature of this Section will be answered»⁴⁰. In some of these issues, Remartínez also ended the section with more detailed warnings, in which he repeatedly apologised for delays in replying, citing in his own defence the huge number of enquiries received. On occasion, these warnings were explicitly severe, since the reply time could be shortened, according to Remartínez, «if fewer questions were received, the majority of which are inane and totally without interest (...) I cannot devote a whole issue of ESTUDIOS to answering nonsense (...) Others (...) consult me about personal matters or dull questions»⁴¹.

The success of the section reveals the willingness of its readers to take an active part in the processes of constructing knowledge. The constant reminders about the general nature of the section, and the lists of names of people sending in questions published at the end of the section, whose (unpublished) questions required specific questionnaires from the medical consultation service, suggest that a significant number of the letters received contained medical-healthcare queries of a personal nature. Nonetheless, an evolution in both the publication and formulation of the questions may be seen over the years that the section was run. Specifically, queries relating to medical-healthcare matters were gradually outnumbered by questions of a social or cultural nature, or they were formulated (or published) in a way that highlighted socio-cultural implications.

One particular discussion emerged about the technical characteristics of the Ogino method as a contraceptive. It illustrates the process of constructing and disseminating scientific-medical knowledge articulated through a multidimensional exchange among readers and experts. In the section published in March 1935 (issue number 139), a male or female reader who signed as *Caguérnigo*, asked «About the period of infertility in women». In reply, Remartínez mentioned the previous publication in *Estudios* of an article on the subject, without referring to the title or the issue. As it appeared «that

40. Preguntas y respuestas. *Estudios*. 1933; 11 (122): 44.

41. Preguntas y respuestas. *Estudios*. 1936; 14 (150): 22.

for some readers the periods of sterility and likely fertility were not clearly explained »⁴², he attached a diagram to explain things once again (Figure 1).

PREGUNTA: *Sobre el período de infecundidad de la mujer.*—Caguérnigo.

RESPUESTA: Ya se publicó en ESTUDIOS un bien razonado artículo sobre el particular, pero como quiera que parece ser que para algunos lectores no estaban muy claramente explicados los períodos de esterilidad y los de probable fecundidad, creo que lo mejor es explicar en un diagrama este asunto. Helo aquí, pues, para respuesta a las múltiples cartas que sobre el particular he recibido.



Figure 1. Calendar of the Ogino method. Source: Preguntas y respuestas. Estudios. 1935; 13 (139): 29.

42. Preguntas y respuestas. Estudios. 1935; 13 (139): 29.

The impact of readers' everyday concerns on the contents of the section becomes explicit with the reference to the readers and their «many letters about this subject». Questions about contraceptive methods and family planning in general were frequently published in «Questions and answers». In this case, the active participation of readers generated a debate which had repercussions beyond the boundaries of this section. In the following issue, Remartínez published «A CLARIFICATION (...) about the period of physiological sterility in women», in which he argued the following:

«In the previous issue of *Estudios*, a diagram was published which I included to give a better understanding of periods of feminine infertility, and which explained these phases in graphical form, along with those of greater likelihood of fertilization. This diagram seemed to me to be much clearer than the one provided by Doctor Puente in issue number 130 of *Estudios*, in a well-argued article about contraceptive procedures. But it appears, as confirmed by several letters received, that some readers claim to find some contradiction between the two diagrams or between the dates on which the ovulation period should begin to be counted, favourable to the fertilization of the ovule»⁴³.

Just as Remartínez acknowledged in the text, the «contradiction» between the two diagrams published had been detected by the readers, and it was the reason behind the «CLARIFICATION» and the continuation of the debate. In this context, it is particularly significant that the readers evidently knew the article by Isaac Puente (1896-1936)⁴⁴ (Figure 2), even though there was no mention of it in the reply in issue number 139, a fact which, if anything, increased the extent of the involvement in the exchange and effective construction of a specific body of scientific-medical knowledge, with a clear and immediate impact on people's everyday lives.

Later on, in issue number 142, Remartínez published a «Collective answer about means of contraception» in which he insisted on the participation

43. Preguntas y respuestas. *Estudios*. 1935; 13 (140): 30.

44. For information on Isaac Puente, see: Fernández de Mendiola, Francisco. Isaac Puente. El médico anarquista. Tafalla: Txalaparta; 2007.

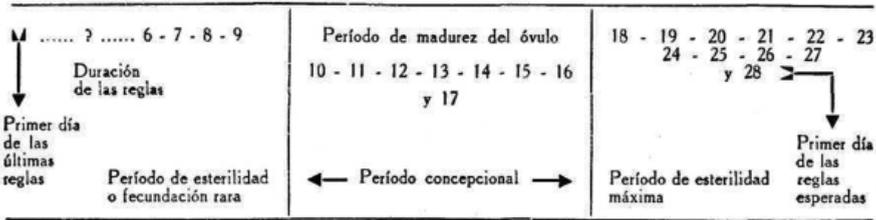


Figure 2. Calendar of the Ogino method. Source: Puente, Isaac. Ventajas e inconvenientes de los procedimientos anticoncepcionales. *Estudios*. 1934; 12 (130): 33.

of readers and linked his «opinion» with articles and answers previously published in *Estudios*: in «issues 130, 132, 139 and 140»⁴⁵:

«The letters I receive on this subject are so numerous that I shall give my opinion on the matter: but for the record, it is just my opinion, since I am repeatedly asked to give it. I will try to summarise as far as possible for clarity's sake»⁴⁶.

Remartínez concluded with a sort of concession to the diversity of opinions on the matter: «This is my opinion, which I know will not be in agreement with others, but is at least sincere»⁴⁷.

In spite of the publication of further questions and answers on the subject in later issues, Isaac Puente tried to settle the debate in issue number 144, with the publication of another article⁴⁸. In it, Puente also referred to

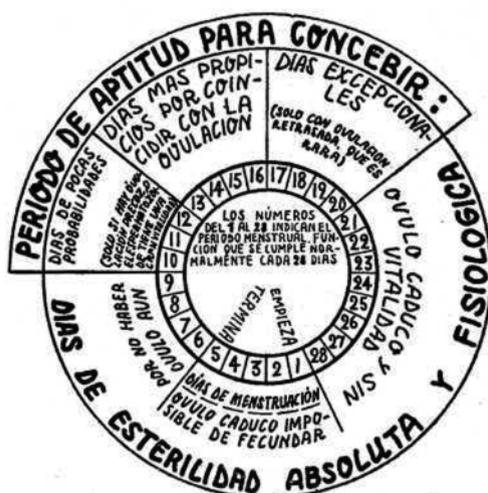
45. Preguntas y respuestas. *Estudios*. 1935; 13 (142): 28. The articles and answers mentioned by Remartínez are: From issue number 130, Puente, Isaac. Ventajas e inconvenientes de los procedimientos anticoncepcionales. *Estudios*. 1934; 12 (130): 33-34. With regard to issue number 132, Remartínez was most probably referring to two articles with which he was making an unmistakable connection between the strictly scientific-medical knowledge that was being discussed and its socio-cultural implications. In the first, the sexual freedom of women was defended as being a key to subverting the «atmosphere of despotism, violence, authority, jealousy and exclusivism» and hence, among other things, «of putting an end to the exploitation of women». Lacerda de Moura, María. Amor y libertad. *Estudios*. *Estudios*. 1934; 12 (132): 18-19. The second article associated the use of contraceptive methods with Neo-Malthusianism. Gallardo, Mariano. Razones fundamentalmente morales, justificativas del empleo de los anticoncepcionales. *Estudios*. 1934; 12 (132): 20-21. From issue number 139, Preguntas y respuestas, n. 42. And from number 140, Preguntas y respuestas, n. 43.

46. Preguntas y respuestas, n. 45.

47. Preguntas y respuestas, n. 45.

48. Puente, Isaac. El método anticoncepcional de Ogino. *Estudios*. 1935; 13 (144): 14-16.

what had been published in previous issues (130, 134 and 140)⁴⁹ and corrected the graph published by Remartínez (Figure 1), «which would have helped to clarify the question, if in it he hadn't made the *slip-up*, which I pointed out to him in a letter» (Figure 3)⁵⁰. Puente described the technical characteristics of the method, relating it to socio-cultural questions, and ultimately recommended it, as had Remartínez. To lend support to his arguments, he added an explanatory graph which described how to apply it in cycles of differing length (Figure 4), taking care to explain differences with other calendars⁵¹.



Pauta para saber los períodos de fecundidad y esterilidad de la mujer.

Figure 3. Calendar of the Ogino method. Source: Puente, Isaac. El método anticoncepcional de Ogino. Estudios. 1935; 13 (144): 14.

49. The articles and answers mentioned by Puente are: From issue number 130: Puente, n. 45. With regard to 134, Puente referred to two articles and, as Remartínez had done (n. 45), established a clear connection between the scientific-medical debate and its socio-cultural implications from the anarchist point of view (eugenics and naturism). In the first, Félix Martí Ibáñez (1911-1972) introduced a new section «Eugenics and sexual morality»: Martí Ibáñez, Félix. Nueva moral sexual. Estudios. 1934; 12 (134): 13-15. And in the second, sexuality was linked with naturism: Llauradó, A. G. Por el sensualismo. Estudios. 1934; 12 (134): 15-17. And from issue number, 140: Preguntas y respuestas, n. 43.

50. Puente, n. 48, p. 14.

51. Puente, n. 48, p. 15-16.

GRAFICO DE TERRADES

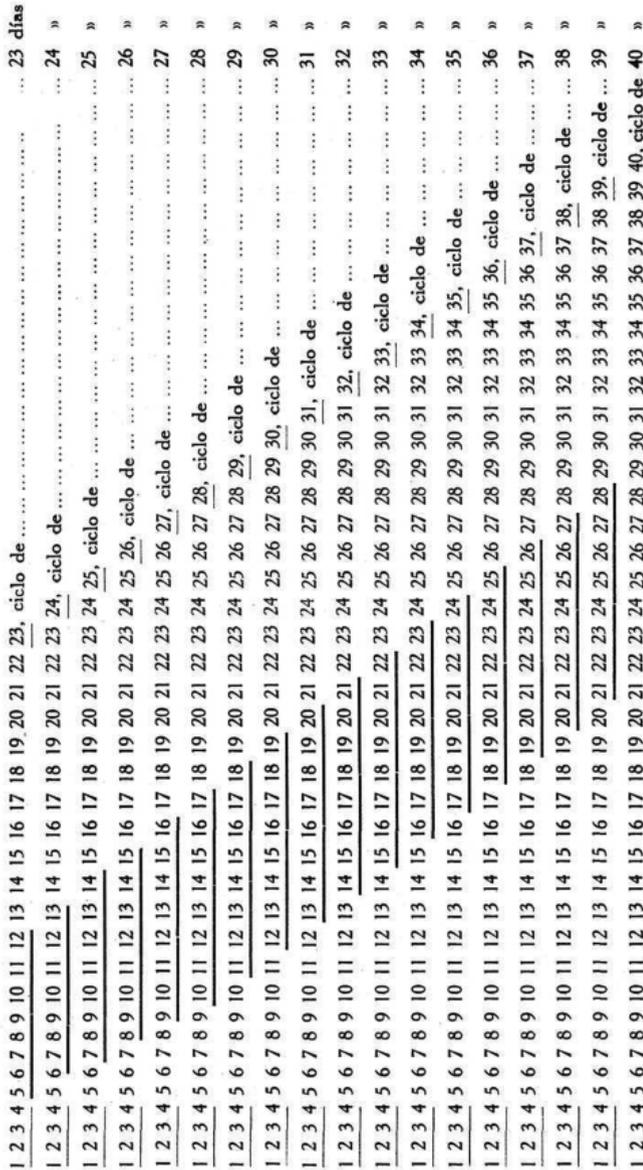


Figure 4. Graph by Terrades. Source: Puente, Isaac. El método anticoncepcional de Ogino. Estudios. 1935; 13 (144): 16.

But this article would not be the end of the matter. Five months later, in issue number 149 of January 1936, Puente published another in which, in the educational, eclectic and debating spirit of the review, he issued a reasoned opinion against the method that both he and Remartínez had defended in all of their previous contributions⁵². Significantly, to round off his pedagogical aim, Puente made an appeal to the readers to participate by sending in no less than their own everyday personal experiences of applying the method, so that a conclusion could be reached over the matter which was not based only on his opinion:

«I should be very grateful if anyone who has some personal experience of the method would let me know the results, in order to have more detailed information with which to instruct those who may be wavering or who have not had the chance to try its effects. And with the same interest with which I today recommend it, I will acknowledge my mistake if other people's experiences or subsequent studies demonstrate the reality of the delusion»⁵³.

After this call for participation, Puente published two further articles on the subject. In the first of them, he revealed the results of his experiment based on the contributions received:

«So far, fifty readers of ESTUDIOS have had the kindness to write to me with the result of their experiments with this contraceptive method. I also have references of a dozen other cases, as well as my own personal one. I recognize that they are as yet insufficient to obtain rigorously scientific deductions, which would require denser and more prolonged experimentation [...] The fifty cases of experimenting with the method that have been communicated to me by readers of ESTUDIOS divide up as follows: forty successful, in time periods varying between four months and three years; ten cases of failure, after a variable time of success, no longer than a year»⁵⁴.

After explaining the characteristics of the failures, he acknowledged that «It would be too boring» to give an account of all the successful cases. The second article,

52. Puente, Isaac. Los periodos de esterilidad fisiológica en la mujer. *Estudios*. 1936; 14 (149): 3-4.

53. Puente, n. 52, p. 4.

54. Puente, Isaac. Comprobación experimental de los periodos de esterilidad fisiológica en la mujer. *Estudios*. 1936; 14 (153): 13-14.

published a year later, included a new graph (Figure 5) together with the corroboration of the results obtained after adding the new contributions from readers:

«Since the article which appeared in the previous issue of the Journal was written, I have received correspondence which, far from changing my opinion about the usefulness of this contraceptive method, reaffirms everything that I have explained about it in these columns and prompts me to go on recommending its practice»⁵⁵.



Figure 5. Calendar of the Ogino method. Source: Puente, Isaac. La esterilidad y fecundidad fisiológicas de la mujer. *Estudios*. 1936; 14 (154): 13.

As this case shows, the questions were about the concerns, expectations and everyday experiences of the readers, and were undoubtedly related to the social, ideological and cultural context of the publication and dissemination of *Estudios*, revealing both the assimilation and questioning or resignification of concepts and practices which were socially accepted and sanctioned by official medicine and science. The readers’ participation was in tune with the journal’s editorial line. Considering that the special commitment to subjects related to sexuality was one of the keys to its success, it comes as no surprise to find exchanges related to education and sex life, and in particular focusing on female sexuality⁵⁶.

55. Puente, Isaac. La esterilidad y fecundidad fisiológicas de la mujer. *Estudios*. 1936; 14 (154): 13-14.

56. Navarro, n. 11; Tabernero, n. 25; Jiménez-Lucena; Molero-Mesa, n. 5.

Furthermore, Remartínez's section, as happened with other publications linked to the libertarian movement⁵⁷, completely shunned the explicit commercial pretensions of some question and answer sections in the bourgeois press of the time, one of the aims of which was to sell products of a specific brand. One example was the «Female correspondence of Floralia» section in *ABC*, sponsored by Perfumería Floralia, which, with various changes of format and adviser, was published from 1915 to 1932, when the radio was starting to be taken seriously as a more effective means of commercial advertising. It also refused to become a platform for more or less frivolous entertainment, as was the case of the «Tell me about your case» section in the *Blanco y Negro* magazine (*ABC* weekly supplement). Its head pointed out when it first came out: «“Tell me about your case” comes into this life without any particular goal. In this, perhaps, lies its only charm (...) passing the time. That's all there is (...) Let the light comedy begin»⁵⁸.

In *Estudios*, general questions encompassed, as mentioned earlier, a great variety of subjects with a social and cultural basis which required (and usually got) answers related to the libertarian view of society, albeit qualified by the personal opinion of Remartínez. Beyond their subject, however, they are questions which reveal the complexity of the relations among experts and non-experts in the construction and management of knowledge. In this sense, and at first sight, these questions were framed (as was also the case of those of a

57. For example, *La Revista Blanca* (1923-1936, in its second era) offered general consultation between 1933 and 1936 which shared similar characteristics with Remartínez's section, from the eclectic educational approach to the excess of letters received and clarifications and warnings regarding the form and content of questions. In this case, the differentiation between strictly medical consultation, run by a doctor called Javier Serrano (1897-1974), and the general consultancy, provided by the journal's editorial office, should be highlighted. Also, in June 1935, a section called «De unos a otros (*From some to others*)» appeared as part of this consultancy, in which readers themselves replied to questions of a general nature that the editorial office had not been able to answer. This fully participatory section was only run for 9 issues, but confirms the desire to redefine participation within the libertarian movement through communication practices. It should be pointed out that Javier Serrano respected but did not share the postulates of naturist medicine and that the editorial line of *La Revista Blanca* was clearly anti-Malthusian. This reflects the plurality and complexity of approaches that were managed and discussed in the libertarian world.

58. Spottorno y Topete, J. *Blanco y Negro*. 1932; 42 (2119): 143.

strictly medical nature) in a spirit of acceptance of the indisputable authority of the expert (Remartínez), as a doctor, certainly, but also as a multifaceted intellectual, given precisely the broad range of subjects which they covered. The construction of Remartínez's *media profile* as an expert whose education allowed him to tackle and understand a great number of questions essential to knowing the way around the complicated world of capitalist society and the libertarian revolution was reinforced with other elements. On the one hand, the declaration about the section's aim to be educational and cultural and the use of the adjective «distinguished» to refer to Remartínez in the presentation of the section⁵⁹. On the other, the fact that Remartínez went into great detail particularly with many of his answers to questions of a social and cultural nature, which he often supplemented with ample bibliographical recommendations⁶⁰. And finally, there was his use of an ironic, witty tone to answer other questions about superstitions, beliefs and the most colorful of assumptions. He himself explicitly strengthened his status as an expert in an «Open letter to Antonio Conesa», prompted by a controversy over his alleged mercantilism. In it, contrary to what was said in the announcement of «Questions and answers»⁶¹, he stated that «this Section was conceived and established by me (...) with the idea that it would serve anyone requiring some information about or solution to any doubt relating to *scientific and cultural questions*, subjects and affairs that might be of general interest and an instructive tendency»⁶². On this point, we should not forget that this construction of Remartínez's authority also relied on his own editorial discretion (and that of the journal), in so much as the decision to select which questions to publish from the huge number of queries received, as he repeatedly mentioned in his reminders, was down to him and *Estudios*.

Nonetheless, the authority of non-experts, in terms of the explicit acknowledgement of their participation in the construction and management of knowledge, was also clearly laid out. In the first

59. La Dirección, n. 36.

60. Some readers directly requested bibliography on particular subjects. It should also be highlighted that the section sometimes appeared just before that which dealt with bibliographical reviews.

61. La Dirección, n. 36.

62. Remartínez, Roberto. Carta abierta para don Antonio Conesa. *Estudios*. 1932; 10 (107): 37. Italics in the original.

place, this was evident in the acknowledgement of their capacity for understanding, commenting on and intervening in the material published, as was demonstrated by the case of the Ogino method, when readers were credited with the detection of contradictions in the graphs published by Isaac Puente and Roberto Remartínez himself. Secondly, it could be discerned in the judgement and relevance of their questions, which allowed and warranted their publication (and, significantly, we should not forget here the eclectic leanings of the journal), something recognized by Remartínez himself:

«it is of necessity that this section should give greater room for more thorough answers to those matters of real interest (...) The interest of serious readers and people asking questions about culturally important issues demands this»⁶³.

Thirdly, it was apparent in the submission of questions which went beyond a simple request for information about something which was not understood, but which seemed to seek an expert's endorsement of specific ideas (generally regarding the application of principles related to naturism and naturist medicine, eugenics, and Neo-Malthusianism). One of the features of the section was the almost constant repetition of these subjects, evidently the result of the interest and the editorial line of the journal and the according selection made by Remartínez. It also stemmed, however, from the steady flow of this type of questions, formulated in different ways, from the readers, and which were deserving of a frequently lengthy response from Remartínez.

Moreover, many readers showed quite a clear understanding of the dynamics of power (inclusion and exclusion, signification) involved in editorial practices. It was not unusual for the answer to a question of a socio-cultural nature, unrelated to medical-healthcare aspects, to contain a note at the end in which Remartínez pointed out to the reader in question that his/her other (unpublished) question(s) required the questionnaire of the medical consultation service⁶⁴. This might indicate that readers had quite a good sense of the criteria used by Remartínez to choose questions for publication. Thus, the reader could get at the very least this sort of response. This dynamic also reveals, however, Remartínez's respect for his readers,

63. Preguntas y respuestas. *Estudios*. 1936; 14 (150): 22.

64. Above all, in the last third of the period in which the section was published, as Remartínez's warnings about the need to ask questions of general interest intensified.

given that he could just as easily not have published these questions, or failing that, not have mentioned the second part of the query⁶⁵.

In short, the «Questions and answers» section provides a particularly illustrative example of a clear determination, within the libertarian movement in Spain in the first third of the 20th century, to redefine the participation of different collectives in the construction and management of knowledge, especially scientific-medical knowledge. This approach, so unlike traditional blueprints for the top-down transmission of knowledge from a handful of experts to a mass of non-experts, was carried out through communication practices related to the publication and appropriation of a very prestigious journal with a large circulation like *Estudios*. Moreover, this took place in a context of questioning the role of experts in the processes of resignifying knowledge, and revolution leading to the attainment of a libertarian society. This redefinition formed part of the social, professional, medical-healthcare, ideological and cultural inclusion and exclusion dynamics that were involved⁶⁶.

65. It should also be mentioned here that neither *ABC* nor *Blanco y Negro*, the examples cited earlier, published readers' questions, unlike *Estudios*. This fact gives further justification for the «Questions and answers» section being taken as a particularly illustrative example of the desire to redefine participation, in this case using very specific media practices. This is borne out by the fact that Remartínez was implacable with readers who failed to follow the rules and who, as he saw it, betrayed the very ideal of participation simply because they wanted to appear in the section. Hence, for example, his reference to «insipid questions, by which I mean things that everybody knows and are apparently sent in by people with the sole aim of being seen to ask a question». Preguntas y respuestas. *Estudios*. 1934; 12 (126): 45.

66. Molero-Mesa; Jiménez-Lucena, n. 10.

