



Forest-based Bioeconomy in Argentina: identifying social actors and discursive struggles of ongoing bioeconomy policy process

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INTRODUCTION

- The concept of bioeconomy has spread worldwide as a floating signifier leading to a panoply of bioeconomy-based policies and strategies.
- Prospects of bioeconomy policies will result from each country's structural conditions and particular political and social contexts, but moreover through the discursive struggles around its meaning.
- Exploring the field of discursivity remains crucial for the critical comprehension of ongoing bioeconomy policy processes.

Against this background, our study aims to identify discourse coalitions and explore the discursive struggles of Argentina's ongoing forest-based bioeconomy policy processes.



Fig 1. Different stakeholders of Argentinian forest-based bioeconomy.

METHODS

We apply social network analysis techniques and discourse analysis on the base of data gathered through documental analysis, direct observation, and semi-structured interviews.

The gathered analysis corpus was systematized in the software Discourse Network Analyzer (Leifeld, 2017) and discourse analysis and ethnographic methodological tools were used to identify the current bioeconomy's dominant and alternative visions.

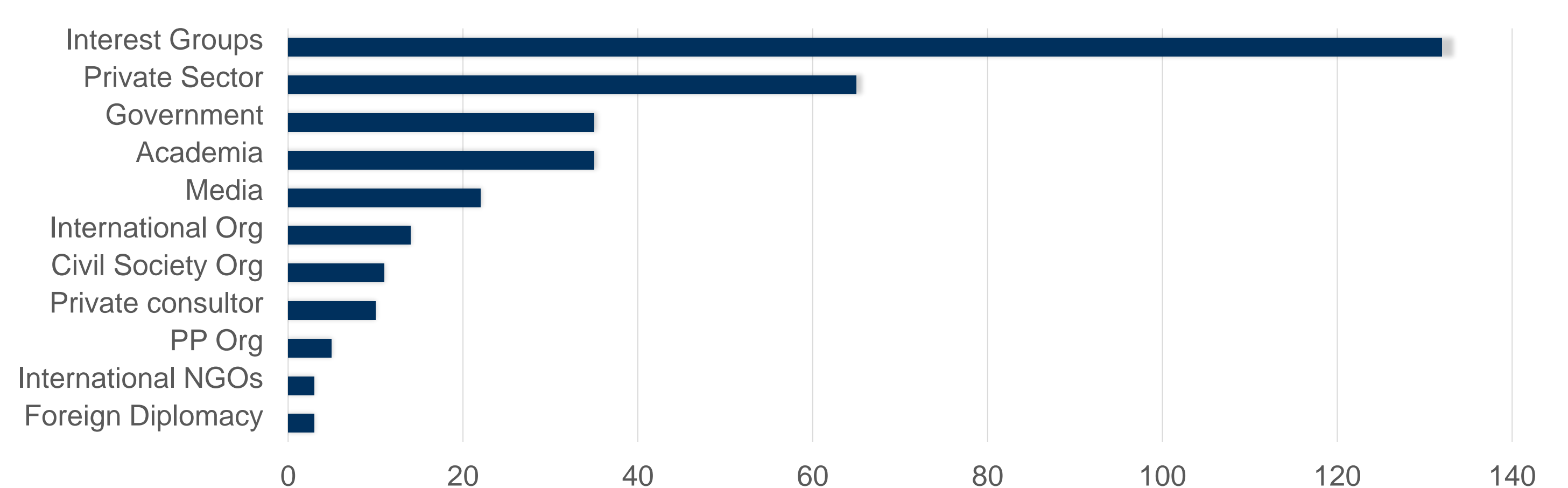
DISCUSSION

Our analysis indicates that as with other mainstream, ambiguous, and contested global sustainability concepts, bioeconomy can be analyzed through the category of floating signifier. This implies that bioeconomy policy process outcomes are to a great extent influenced by the discursive struggles over its meaning.

In that frame, we identified the different dominant political demands articulated to a particular meaningful configuration through a discursive operation aiming to partially fix bioeconomy's meaning and influence policy making. At the time, discourse networks were useful to identify and study discourse coalitions as well as actors' structural power. Excluded actors and their visions should be further studied to complement these analysis.

RESULTS

Our results indicate the public debate in the media arena is mainly promoted by the private sector and its interest groups. In predominant discourses, bioeconomy signifier operates as a nodal point articulating a series of public policy demands associated with further intensification of forest resources' use and economic growth. This relates dominant visions to what literature refers to as a bioresource-based pro-economic growth vision.



Graph 1. Argentina legitimized actors in the forest-based bioeconomy policy debate according to their participation in media articles.

Among privileged signifiers, bioeconomy policy hegemonization relies on the current silvicultural paradigm based on industrial tree plantations and pushes for economic demands such as further foreign direct investment and export promotion policies.

On the other hand, a counter coalition indicates two main discursive excluded communities: an academic complex related to biotechnology-oriented visions and civil society actors, including indigenous communities and local NGOs, associated with alternative bioeconomy visions where forests provide holistic livelihood, including non-timber forest products.

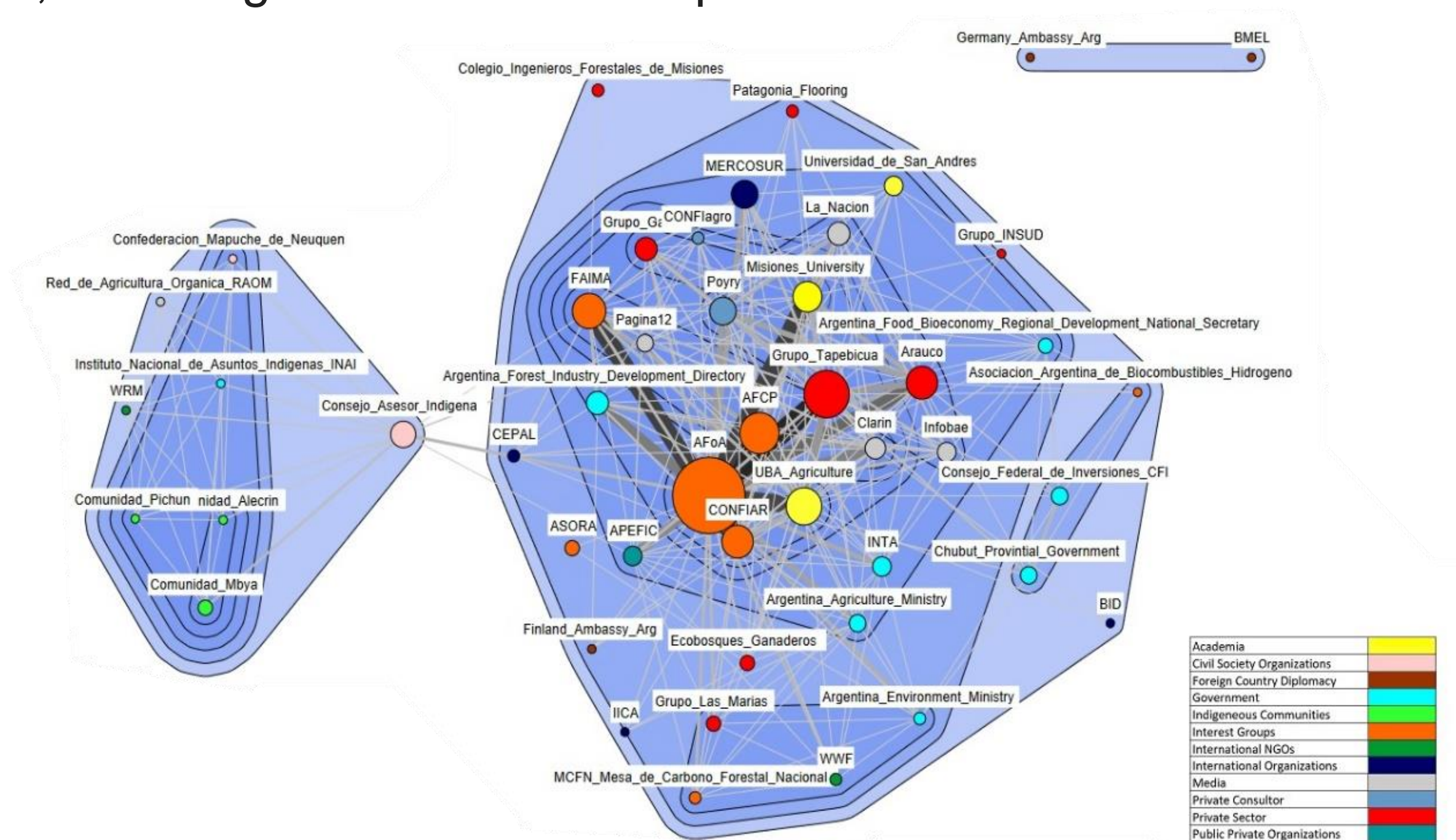


Fig 2. Discourse coalitions identified through Girvan–Newman edge-betweenness community detection represented by the blue hyperplanes



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