
TIERRA PURA, PRODUCT OF THE PANDEMIC:

A new Spanish-language disinformation
outlet with connections to The Epoch Times ecosystem

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Preliminary remarks: Keeping the record straight.

We never know when we start an investigation who is behind the disinformation network we investigate. This investigation was no exception and began with a very simple question: Who are the people managing a new Spanish-speaking website called Tierra Pura, which focuses openly on spreading polarising narratives and debunked conspiracy theories about the COVID-19 pandemic?

Rapidly, it appeared that Tierra Pura and the network operating it are connected to the Epoch Times, a well-known actor in the disinformation field¹². As it has been already shown by other organisations, the Epoch Times has ties with the Falun Gong (also named Falun Dafa), a group known to be a victim of oppression, persecution and ill treatments by the Chinese regime.

On the opposite side of this information war, there is the Chinese regime, which is also known for its lack of transparency and extensive propaganda activities. Moreover, the Chinese Communist Party's own effort to shape narratives and control information about the COVID-19 pandemic has been documented by multiple studies or reports³.

We are well aware – as it is the case for every investigation – that our work will be used and recuperated by those who have an interest in seeing it published. For example, there are good odds that the Chinese Communist Party might try to use our report to dodge legitimate questions about its management of the COVID-19 pandemic or to justify some forms of repression against specific groups. If the Chinese regime were to endorse or support this report in any way, we also know that the Epoch Times and its supporters would likely not miss the opportunity to attack our investigation and claim that this is all part of a planned smear campaign against them.

The reality is that our report covers only specific activities around a disinformation website and should not be used to draw definitive conclusions or to shut down legitimate debates on much larger issues.

As we also often like to remind everyone, there is no such thing as good disinformation. We can only hope that this disclaimer will not be obfuscated by the people trying to use these findings to advance their own interests, whatever they may be.

¹ See for example the New York Times' article titled *How the Epoch Times created a giant influence machine*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/technology/epoch-times-influence-falun-gong.html>.

² In December 2019, Facebook took down a vast network of accounts/pages/groups that they attributed to the Epoch Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/business/facebook-ai-generated-profiles.html>.

³ See for example here: <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/how-china-ramped-disinformation-efforts-during-pandemic>.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Tierrapura.org (which means “Pure Land” in Spanish) appeared as a news outlet in Argentina at the end of March 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim of providing “really important information” that was “being hidden (...) due to the manipulation of the communist regime in China,”⁴ as stated on the website. Soon, Tierra Pura became itself a transmitter of health disinformation in Spanish language and some of its articles were flagged as disinformation by several fact-checkers.
- At the beginning, its content combined disinformation related to COVID-19 (dubbed “the Chinese Communist Party Virus”) and attacks to the Chinese Communist Party management of the crisis. However, afterwards Tierra Pura’s agenda evolved to embrace conspiracy theories such as QAnon, anti-vaccines narratives and, more recently, disinformation echoing unproven allegations of election fraud in the United States or around the recent assault on the Capitol building in Washington.
- The outlet is not transparent about its creators and funders. EU DisinfoLab exposes how the website is in fact a partisan and disinformative outlet with links to Falun Gong, a religious group that claims to be inspired by Buddhism, that is persecuted by the Chinese Government and is antagonistic to China’s Communist Party.
- Tierra Pura translates, republishes, and amplifies in Spanish and Portuguese languages reports from The Epoch Times and its media group Epoch Media Group, a well-known actor in the disinformation field⁵.
- Tierra Pura also works as an aggregator of publications from other sources of dubious credibility, such as conspirative, disinformative or alternative media outlets, from the United States, Latin America, Spain or other countries. At the same time, Tierra Pura serves as a source for other media. This fosters a media ecosystem spreading health disinformation about COVID-19 and supporting conspiracy narratives, in particular about the United States.
- Tierra Pura is an example of how the global COVID-19 pandemic has created new international vectors of disinformation that can be used for different purposes and to boost certain narratives. The global dimension of the pandemic is at the same time an opportunity for mis- and disinformation to cross physical and cultural borders in order to reach broader audiences, using translation as a tool and as a weapon.
- Tierra Pura is an example of how disinformation generated in a country can easily reach other countries through a common language: Tierra Pura originated in Argentina,

⁴ <https://archive.is/5THxa>

⁵ See for example the New York Times’ article titled *How the Epoch Times created a giant influence machine*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/technology/epoch-times-influence-falun-gong.html>.

In December 2019, Facebook took down a vast network of accounts/pages/groups that they attributed to the Epoch Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/business/facebook-ai-generated-profiles.html>.



but its content is disseminated in other American countries that share its language and even on other continents, reaching Spain. This transnational movement of disinformation makes it harder to hold the actors accountable as the harmful content they produce is often generated in another country, or even another continent.

2. INTRODUCTION

"If you say no to China, you get cured of coronavirus"⁶: this is the *leitmotiv* that the website tierrapura.org has been transmitting since its first appearance in March 2020 in Argentina, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. This website claims to count on independent investigative reporters⁷ to uncover information being concealed by China⁸ and to spread it in Spanish language (also in Portuguese as of June 2020). Since then, Tierra Pura echoed mis- and disinformation about health and conspiracy theories, that were debunked by international fact-checkers⁹. The narratives related to the virus, which Tierra Pura (the Spanish translation of "Pure Land") calls the "Chinese Communist Party Virus"¹⁰, are a mix of health disinformation, political narratives against China's Communist Party and some Buddhist spiritual-inspired content.

More recently, Tierra Pura has also become a mouthpiece for anti-vaccine disinformation¹¹ and for QAnon conspiracy movement¹² narratives, including the unproven allegations¹³ of election fraud in the United States and conspiracy theories surrounding the recent assault on the Capitol in Washington¹⁴.

Tierra Pura is therefore an example of how a health crisis like COVID-19 can become an opportunity to create new vectors of disinformation that can be exploited in the long term for different narratives and purposes, crossing physical and cultural borders.

Tierra Pura, which refers to a Buddhist school with a strong following in East Asia, is opaque about its creators and funders. Our investigation shows the website is in fact a partisan outlet with links to Falun Gong (also known as Falun Dafa)¹⁵ - a religious movement persecuted by the Chinese government and a declared rival of the Communist Party.

Tierra Pura largely replicates content from The Epoch Media Group, a controversial media company already investigated for its disinformation practices¹⁶. Tierra Pura replicates and disseminates in Spanish and Portuguese¹⁷ publications of The Epoch Media Group and aggregates other sources of dubious credibility, while serving as a source for other

⁶ <https://archive.is/XgmbM>.

⁷ <https://archive.is/rbbkz>.

⁸ <https://archive.is/5THxa>.

⁹ <https://archive.li/UJehf>; fact-checking article: <https://maldita.es/malditobulo/2020/06/19/positivo-coronavirus-cabra-papaya-tanzania-test-defectuosos-presidente-john-magufuli/>.

¹⁰ <https://archive.is/7tlwg>.

¹¹ <https://archive.is/kIGBY>; fact-checking article: <https://maldita.es/malditaciencia/20201230/oms-cambio-definicion-inmunidad-rebano-covid-19-vacunas/>.

<https://archive.is/GbQe3>; fact-checking article: <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20201129/bulo-vacuna-covid-provoca-esterilidad/2058679.shtml>.

¹² <https://perma.cc/GUW6-QWEV>

¹³ <https://archive.is/UQqNi>; fact-checking article: <https://factual.afp.com/el-expresidente-de-eeuu-barack-obama-no-fue-arrestado-por-espionaje>

¹⁴ <https://archive.is/fQdVA>.

<https://archive.is/GF9hU>.

Fact-checking article: <https://maldita.es/malditobulo/20210109/bulos-desinformaciones-movimiento-antifa-asalto-capitolio-eeuu/>

¹⁵ <https://faluninfo.net/why-is-falun-gong-is-persecuted-in-china/>.

¹⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/technology/epoch-times-influence-falun-gong.html>.

<https://graphika.com/reports/operationffs-fake-face-swarm/>.

¹⁷ <https://archive.is/63pDB>.

publications, fostering a media ecosystem that spreads health disinformation about COVID-19, attacks the current Chinese regime with sometimes unproven claims and supports conspiracy theories, in particular in the United States.

3. WHAT IS TIERRAPURA.ORG?

3.1. Website forensics

EU DisinfoLab discovered tierrapura.org in April 2020, during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe. The discovery took place while researching disinformation in Spain but we soon realised that the disinformation was not being generated in this country.

A search for the domain name using the DomainBigData website indicates that the domain name was first purchased years ago, but seems to have gone through multiple owners over time¹⁸. A search on Archive.org also shows that this domain name seems to have previously been used to host the website of an NGO in 2005¹⁹ and a spiritual website in 2011²⁰.

On Archive.org, the first available archived version of the current website TierraPura.org is dated 10 April 2020²¹. Historical Whois data indicates a potential change of ownership for the domain name on 31 March 2020. A few days later, the website began to use Cloudflare, a DDOS protection service that can mask IP addresses, according to data provided by services such as DNSlytics²² or whoishostingthis.com²³.

However, the current email server linked to tierrapura.org suggests that the website is hosted by Hostinger Argentina (hostinger.com.ar), which provides such services for Argentinian websites. Moreover, around the time of its launch (1 April 2020), the current version of the Tierra Pura website was hosted on IP address 181.88.192.135, which is located in Argentina.

Reverse MX lookup for: tierrapura.org

Found the following mail servers and related IP addresses for tierrapura.org.

Mail server	#domains	Monitoring since	Tools
mx1.hostinger.com.ar	29,233	2014-01-25	View domains using this mail server
↳ 145.14.159.241 used by 164 mail servers			View domains using a mail server on this IP
mx2.hostinger.com.ar	21,483	2014-09-15	View domains using this mail server
↳ 145.14.159.241 used by 164 mail servers			View domains using a mail server on this IP

Figure 1: Reverse domain search for tierrapura.org

¹⁸ <https://domainbigdata.com/tierrapura.org>.

¹⁹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20050308003006/http://www.tierrapura.org/>.

²⁰ <https://web.archive.org/web/20110906052536/http://tierrapura.org/>.

²¹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20110906052536/http://tierrapura.org/>.

²² <https://dnslytics.com/domain/tierrapura.org>.

²³ <https://www.whoishostingthis.com/#search=tierrapura.org>.

Reverse IP history lookup for: 181.88.192.135

Found 306 domains hosted in the past on IP address 181.88.192.135.

288 **tierrapura.org** Search Types History Whois

Last seen on IP address 181.88.192.135: 2020-04-01.
 Alexa ranking: 98,210
 Name servers: [dayana.ns.cloudflare.com](#) (used by 14,648 domains) [maxim.ns.cloudflare.com](#) (used by 10,196 domains)
 Mail servers: [mx1.hostinger.com.ar](#) (used by 29,232 domains) [mx2.hostinger.com.ar](#) (used by 21,482 domains)
 IPv4: [104.26.12.133](#) (used by 54 domains) [104.26.13.133](#) (used by 54 domains) [172.67.70.40](#) (used by 54 domains)
 tierrapura (found 12 exact matched domains on different TLDs)

Figure 2: Reverse IP history lookup

IP information 181.88.192.135

IP address	181.88.192.135
Location	Basavilbaso, Entre Rios, Argentina (AR) 
Registry	lacnic

Figure 3: IP information

Finally, Tierra Pura’s Facebook page is managed by two users based in Argentina and Venezuela according to transparency data, confirming the connection with Latin American countries.



Transparence de la Page ×

Informations de la Page pour TierraPura.org ⓘ

 **TierraPura.org**
Société de médias/d'actualités

Organisations qui gèrent cette Page ⓘ

 La personne ou le groupe responsable de cette Page n'a pas encore terminé notre processus de vérification.

Historique de la Page ⓘ

-  A remplacé le nom par TierraPura.org
17 avril 2020
-  Page créée - Tierra Pura
14 avril 2020

Personnes qui gèrent cette Page ⓘ

 Le pays/la région de résidence principale des personnes qui gèrent cette Page inclut :
Argentina (1)
Venezuela (1)

Figure 4: Transparency information about Tierra Pura Facebook page

3.2. Opacity around Tierra Pura’s founders

There is no clear data about the website’s founders. On the website, they claim to be "a group of concerned citizens, from different countries and nationalities, members of society and from different professions, including journalists, economists, designers, teachers, translators, etc."²⁴

However, if you dig deeper, there is a name that allows you to untangle the thread. The most visible face of Tierra Pura, appearing in some videos and media interviews, is Liwei Fu. She is mainly described online as an independent investigative journalist specialised on China²⁵ but in some interviews and webinars, she is sometimes introduced either as a "collaborator"²⁶ or as a "founder" of Tierra Pura²⁷.

²⁴ <https://archive.is/5THxa>.

²⁵ <https://archive.is/rbbkz>.

²⁶ <https://archive.is/rbbkz>.

²⁷ <https://archive.is/eweww>.



Figure 5: Information about Tierra Pura in tierrapura.org²⁸

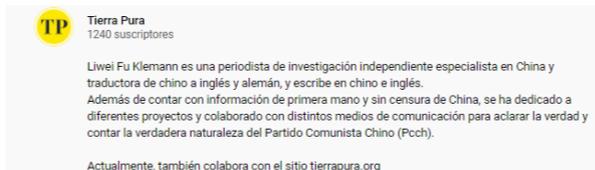


Figure 6: Information about Liwei Fu Klemann on tierrapura.org²⁹



Figure 7: Liwei Fu interviewed by the Spanish outlet Libertad Digital

Liwei Fu is the president of Falun Gong or Falun Dafa in Argentina³⁰. In addition, Liwei Fu Klemann was Director of La Gran Época³¹, the Spanish-language version of The Epoch Times, since its creation in 2005³² and at least until 2017.

Her daughter Meilin Klemann (a relationship documented in this interview with radiocut.fm in Argentina)³³ is also involved in the Tierra Pura project, as stated in her Twitter profile biography: "Spreading the truth on tierrapura.org"³⁴. In an interview for a local Argentinian media called Telpin, she used expressions suggesting that she is part of the founding members of Tierra Pura³⁵. According to her LinkedIn profile, she is a former journalist for the Epoch Times in Germany³⁶ and she is now managing "Communications" for the Asociación Civil Estudio de Falun Dafa (Association Civil for the Study of Falun Dafa).

Going further, we identified two interesting online events organised by Tierra Pura. During the first video conference³⁷, the host, Miguel Diaz, presented himself as a "collaborator for Tierra Pura". According to information available publicly³⁸, he is also a journalist for the information portal BLes Mundo³⁹. As we will see later in this report, BLes is a media outlet that has been tied by investigations from several organisations to the Epoch Times Group. In a second

²⁸ <https://archive.is/5THxa>.

²⁹ <https://archive.is/rbbkz>.

³⁰ <https://archive.is/fHWJq>.

³¹ <https://archive.is/A19in>.

³² <https://archive.is/hVKYr>.

³³ <https://archive.is/JiISf>.

³⁴ <https://archive.is/2VJiT>.

³⁵ <https://archive.vn/DFzSt>.

³⁶ <https://perma.cc/ZF6L-LC7T>.

³⁷ <https://perma.cc/F9XT-7RJ6>.

³⁸ <https://archive.vn/CV4AM>.

³⁹ <https://perma.cc/ZH4M-VPED>.

online event organized by Tierra Pura⁴⁰, the host for the alternative media was Martin Czertok, who is working according to information available online for the “New Tang Dynasty”, an organization openly linked to the Epoch Times⁴¹. Finally, Tierra Pura’s website includes a section called “Colaboradores”⁴² (“Collaborators” in English). In addition to Miguel Diaz, we identified that articles in this section were attributed mainly to three authors: Alvaro Colombres Garmendia⁴³, Andres Vacca⁴⁴ and José Hermosa⁴⁵. Interestingly, these three names also match with three author pages on the BLes Mundo website⁴⁶.

4. NARRATIVES AND DISINFORMATION

4.1 The first publication of Tierra Pura

Scrolling through the site, EU DisinfoLab came up with what seems to be the first publication on the website, an information that is usually significant. According to the source code of the website, the article was first published on 18 March 2020 and is entitled “The Chinese Communist regime is hiding and cheating again, but the Coronavirus has eyes”⁴⁷. We checked whether it was the first publication because there are no previous archives in web archives, and the date is congruent with the source code timestamp⁴⁸.

```
<meta property="og:site_name" content="TierraPura.org" />
<meta property="article:publisher" content="https://www.facebook.com/TierraPura.org/" />
<meta property="article:published_time" content="2020-03-18T15:54:19+00:00" />
<meta property="article:modified_time" content="2020-06-25T19:07:05+00:00" />
<meta property="og:image" content="https://tierrapura.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Captura..4-1.jpg" />
<meta property="og:image:width" content="1200" />
<meta property="og:image:height" content="679" />
<meta property="og:title" content="El régimen comunista chino está ocultando y engañando de nuevo pero el coronavirus tiene ojos" />
```

Figure 8: Timestamp in the source code of the first publication

The text, which denounces the CPP for “conceal[ing] the truth about the epidemic” and compares the situation to the Chinese management of SARS in 2003, making it clear that “this ferocious virus has eyes”, that salvation is faith⁴⁹ and that only those who choose the “straight path” will be worthy of being saved.

At this point, Tierra Pura injects both a spiritual and a political narrative, because, according to them, the right path against the COVID-19 pandemic has two facets:

- The religious faith as salvation (“If humanity chooses the right path and regains the Faith, then it will be worthy of being saved”);

⁴⁰ <https://perma.cc/58XJ-3JBR?type=image>

⁴¹ <https://perma.cc/VK43-TU23>

⁴² <https://perma.cc/87ZP-8TB2?type=image>

⁴³ See here: <https://perma.cc/MCC9-BKVJ> / <https://perma.cc/7JJ6-7UVM>

⁴⁴ See here: <https://perma.cc/MN5L-X9RP/> <https://perma.cc/WS3U-2J74>

⁴⁵ See here: <https://perma.cc/8FRP-K4BX> / <https://perma.cc/PD28-Y5ZN>

⁴⁶ Archived author page for Alvaro Colombres Garmendia: <https://perma.cc/2CTY-XR4Q/> Archived author page for Andres Vacca: <https://perma.cc/7H7W-69LU/> Archived author page for José Hermosa: <https://perma.cc/YAN3-EX38>

⁴⁷ <https://archive.is/BKiKD>.

⁴⁸ view-source:https://tierrapura.org/2020/03/18/el-regimen-comunista-chino-esta-ocultando-y-enganando-de-nuevo-pero-el-coronavirus-tiene-ojos/.

⁴⁹ <https://archive.is/QUMIY>.

- and the political fight against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (“The world has to distinguish between following the perverse CCP or the straight path”).

The hypothesis that those who politically distance themselves from the CCP will be cured, is openly supported. According to Tierra Pura, three politicians of the Spanish far right party VOX - Santiago Abascal, Javier Ortega Smith and Macarena Olona, were cured, “surprisingly” after condemning the CCP⁵⁰. One of the three Spanish politicians even launched an unfounded claim that “he has no doubts that the coronavirus was created in a laboratory of CCP as a bio-weapon⁵¹.”

4.2. From COVID-19-related disinformation to QAnon conspiracy theories: an evolution of Tierra Pura’s disinformative narratives

In its own description, the website claims it was created to inform about the coronavirus and to publish “important information” that is “hidden by the Chinese Communist Party”⁵². This phrase contains and combines a health and a political statement all in one. That is, although the initial intention seems to be to inform about the pandemic, later on they intend to widen that range of topics: “We hope in the future when the pandemic is over, to add contents about traditional, cultural and general interest values for all humanity”⁵³.

And they did. Since their creation, the narratives have also evolved and expanded. In addition to disinformation items denying the existence or seriousness of COVID-19, Tierra Pura has become a mouthpiece for debunked anti-vaccine disinformation⁵⁴, for QAnon conspiracy theories and for disinformation favourable to the former President Trump⁵⁵. It included several false allegations of election frauds in the last US elections⁵⁶ and unproven claims that the “antifa” participated in the recent assault on the Capitol in Washington DC⁵⁷.

This combination of narratives is illustrated by a study of the most viral Tierra Pura articles on Facebook collected through the CrowdTangle platform⁵⁸. Since the creation of the website, the articles with the most interactions tried to spread COVID-19 denialist narratives (the most viral piece assured that the COVID-19 figures are much lower than what is stated by official sources). Other viral articles included attacks against the main rival, the Chinese

⁵⁰ <https://archive.is/XgmbM>.

⁵¹ https://www.lasexta.com/noticias/nacional/ortega-smith-tengo-duda-que-coronavirus-sido-creado-laboratorio-regimen-comunista-chino-como-arma-biologica_202005235ec91192632a6c0001ef01a2.html.

⁵² <https://archive.is/5THxa>.

⁵³ <https://archive.is/5THxa>.

⁵⁴ <https://archive.is/GbQe3>; fact-checking article: <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20201129/bulo-vacuna-covid-provoca-esterilidad/2058679.shtml>.

⁵⁵ <https://archive.is/OXGQa>.

⁵⁶ <https://archive.is/UQqNi> Fact-checking: <https://factual.afp.com/el-expresidente-de-eeuu-barack-obama-no-fue-arrestado-por-espionaje>.

⁵⁷ <https://archive.is/fQdVA>; <https://archive.is/GF9hU>.

Fact-checking: <https://maldita.es/malditobulo/20210109/bulos-desinformaciones-movimiento-antifa-asalto-capitolio-eeuu/>.

⁵⁸ Search conducted on 11th of January 2021:

<https://apps.crowdtangle.com/search/results?includedLanguages=es&platform=facebook&postTypes=&producerTypes=3&q=%22tierrapura.org%22&sortBy=performance&sortOrder=desc&timeframe=1year>.

government, anti-vaccine narratives or conspiracy theories involving public figures such as Bill Gates or Dr. Anthony Fauci.

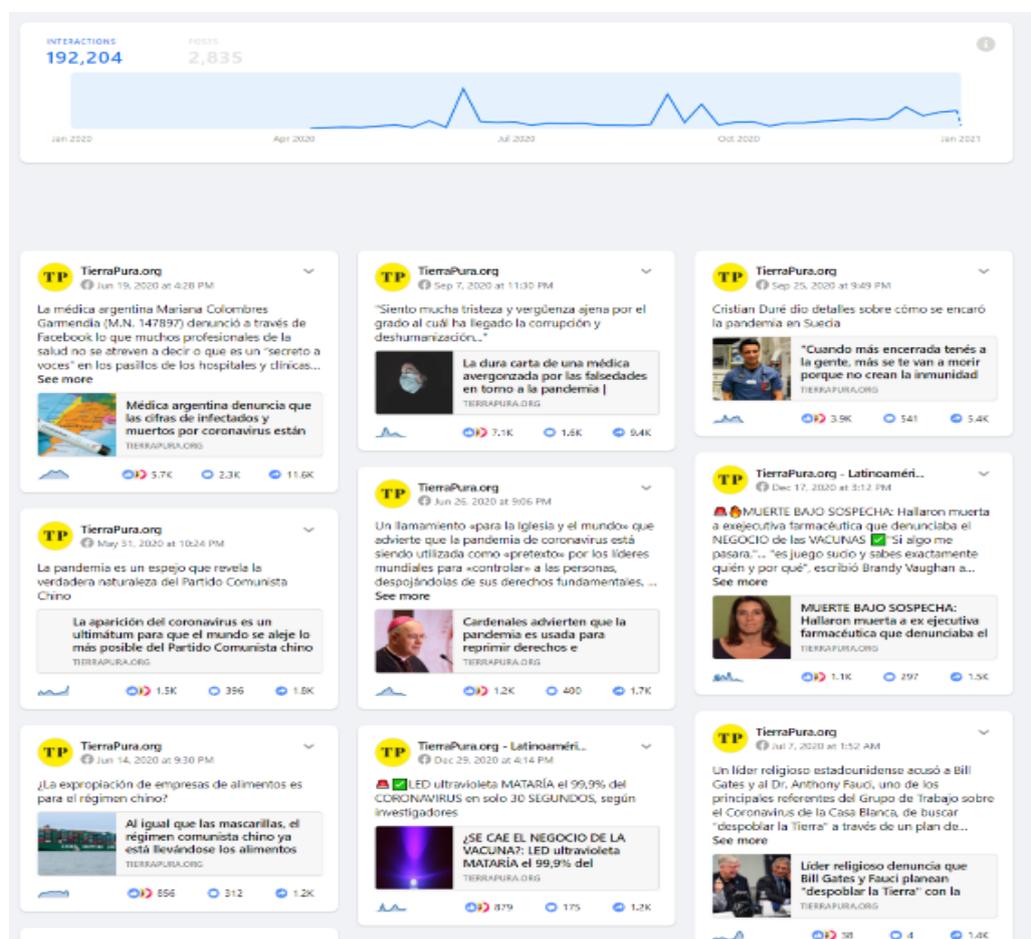


Figure 9: most viral Tierra Pura publications on Facebook since the creation of the website. Collected by the CrowdTangle tool

However, if we study the most viral publications from 4 to 11 January 2021 using the same tool⁵⁹, it is no longer articles related to COVID-19 that are the most viral, but publications referring to conspiracy theories against Bill Gates ("Bill Gates wants to darken the sun"), narratives from the QAnon sphere ("The West is controlled by a gang of Satanic paedophiles: Putin, the leader who dared to speak openly") or the disinformation around the victory of Trump during the US presidential election ("The second term: Intelligence sources assure that Trump will continue 4 more years").

⁵⁹ Search conducted on 11th of January 2021: <https://apps.crowdtangle.com/search/results?includedLanguages=es&platform=facebook&postTypes=&producerTypes=3&q=%22tierrapura.org%22&sortBy=performance&sortOrder=desc&timeframe=7days>.

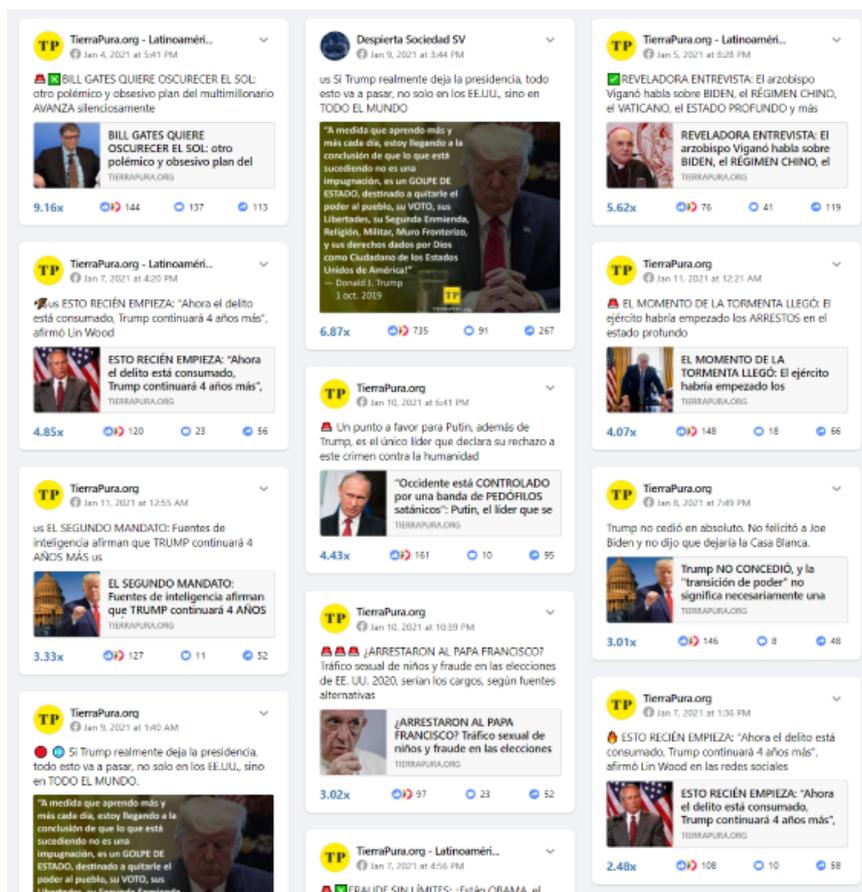


Figure 10: most viral Tierra Pura publications on Facebook from 4th to 11th of January 2021). Collected by the CrowdTangle tool

4.2.1 Tierra Pura’s COVID-19 content debunked by fact-checkers

Since its creation in March 2020, the web has continued to spread the above-mentioned mixture of narratives about the COVID-19 pandemic that have been debunked by international fact-checkers. Most of the fact-checked content spread by Tierra Pura lacks evidence and scientific rigour. Some articles are even based on conspiracy theories.

For example, Tierra Pura has given a voice to those who defended hydroxychloroquine as a preventive cure for COVID-19⁶⁰, despite the fact that the efficiency of this drug has never been proved and that the treatment is not recommended by the World Health Organisation⁶¹ 62.

⁶⁰ <https://archive.is/6tI13>.

⁶¹ <https://www.newtral.es/la-oms-frena-el-furor-de-la-hidroxicloroquina-util-para-prevenir-covid-19/20200526/>.

⁶² (A recommended read at this regard is the article by EU DisinfoLab “Hydroxychloroquine and Facebook: The Challenge of Moderating Scientifically Debatable Claims”). <https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/hydroxychloroquine-and-facebook%3A-the-challenge-of-moderating-scientifically-debatable-claims>.



Figure 11: Tierrapura.org: "Hydroxychloroquine could save many lives but is the victim of a propaganda war, says epidemiologist"

Some disinformation items spread by Tierra Pura (e.g. unsubstantiated claims that the novel coronavirus was engineered in a Chinese laboratory)⁶³ were debunked indirectly at a very early stage of the pandemic by some Spanish factcheckers⁶⁴.

Still, the website remained under the radar for several months. It was only on 19 June 2020 that a publication of the website was directly mentioned by a Spanish fact-checker Maldita.es as a source of disinformation⁶⁵. Tierra Pura's article was about the Tanzanian President John Magufuli⁶⁶, who claimed that coronavirus test kits imported into his country were defective. To prove the allegation, he asserted that a goat and a papaya were tested positive for COVID-19. In other articles, Magufuli is celebrated by Tierra Pura as a reference in Africa for cancelling a Chinese loan of 10 billion dollars from CCP⁶⁷.



Figure 12: Tierrapura.org: "Goat and papaya samples test positive for coronavirus in Tanzania"

Figure 13: Maldita.es: "What do we know about the alleged positive coronavirus result of a goat and a papaya in Tanzania due to allegedly defective tests?"

Figure 14: Tierrapura.org: "Only a drunkard would accept these terms, says the Tanzanian president about the CCP loan and was shocked by the positive coronavirus tests on a goat and a pawpaw"

⁶³ <https://perma.cc/X8TP-UWSZ>

⁶⁴ <https://maldita.es/malditaciencia/20200406/que-sabemos-rumores-conspiracion-origen-coronavirus-uso-arma-biologica/>

⁶⁵ <https://maldita.es/malditabulo/2020/06/19/positivo-coronavirus-cabra-papaya-tanzania-test-defectuosos-presidente-john-magufuli>

⁶⁶ <https://archive.li/UEhFF>

⁶⁷ <https://archive.is/pr1bY>

It was not the last time that Tierra Pura would be fact-checked. For example, Argentinian fact-checker Chequeado debunked an article from Tierra Pura that falsely claimed that the US Center for Disease Control recognized that only 6% of the deaths it attributed to COVID-19 were in reality really connected to the virus⁶⁸. Maldita fact-checked another article from Tierra Pura asserting falsely that the WHO changed its definition of “herd immunity to impose vaccination to all”⁶⁹ and AFP factual used a piece from Tierra Pura to illustrate their fact-checking article about Spanish-speaking content recirculating conspiracy theories about former US President Barack Obama being arrested for spying⁷⁰.

4.2.2 A continuous spread of COVID-19 disinformation: Anti-lockdown, anti-vaccines and other conspiracy narratives

Tierra Pura regularly echoed disinformation items attacking the measures taken to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. The alternative media positioned itself as part of what several reports identified as the global anti-lockdown movement which embraces disinformation; and also recirculated some known COVID-19 conspiracy theories.

- Tierra Pura has questioned lockdown⁷¹ with an entire section called: "Is lockdown useful?"⁷²;



Figure 17: Tierrapura.org: “Quarantine, does it work or not?”; “Without quarantine and without a mask, cases of coronavirus in Sweden drop rapidly”; “Mayor of Peru declares his district in rebellion and says he will not comply with the quarantine”

- While accusing China of being behind the design of the virus, Tierra Pura has also downplayed the seriousness of the COVID-19⁷³ and aligned itself with COVID-19 denialist narratives⁷⁴.

⁶⁸ <https://chequeado.com/verificacionfb/es-falso-afirmar-que-en-estados-unidos-admitieron-que-solo-un-6-de-las-muertes-informadas-fueron-realmente-por-coronavirus/>.

⁶⁹ <https://archive.is/kIGBY> ; fact-checking article: <https://maldita.es/malditaciencia/20201230/oms-cambio-definicion-inmunidad-rebano-covid-19-vacunas/>.

⁷⁰ <https://factual.afp.com/el-expresidente-de-eeuu-barack-obama-no-fue-arrestado-por-espionaje> links to Tierra Pura article: <https://perma.cc/9UE9-H9L7>.

⁷¹ <https://archive.is/1lw91>.

⁷² <https://archive.is/wfHy2>.

⁷³ <https://archive.is/Uzpmr>.

⁷⁴ <https://archive.is/umBa5>.



Figure 18: Tierrapura.org: "The coronavirus is far less deadly than we thought: German virologist explains revealing study"

- Tierra Pura has also re-used the conspiratorial denomination "plandemic" (Plandemia) to talk about COVID-19. It refers to the famous conspiracy video featuring the doctor Judy Mikovits, whose positions have been debunked by international fact-checkers and institutions⁷⁵. Some of the content spread by Tierra Pura also mentioned conspiracy theories targeting Bill Gates⁷⁶, insisting that the tech mogul has dark links to the vaccine or claiming to expose his alleged secret agenda to control the world.



Figure 19: Tierrapura.org: "Plandemia made in China: Following the money (part 2)"



Figure 20: Tierrapura.org: "WHAT IS BILL GATES HIDING? The real intentions"⁷⁷

⁷⁵ <https://maldita.es/malditaciencia/2020/08/20/afirmaciones-falsas-video-viral-plandemic-judy-mikovits-pandemia-coronavirus-vacuna/>

⁷⁶ <https://archive.is/8wsNi>.

⁷⁷ <https://archive.is/8wsNi>.

- In an online seminar organized by the publication⁷⁸, Tierra Pura invited the economist Javier Milei and the health professional Mariana Colombres Garmendia who contested COVID-19 official figures⁷⁹ and the seriousness of the pandemic⁸⁰. Another interview given by Colombres to Tierra Pura, which was mentioned by the Argentinian media TLV1 and included similar false claims, was also debunked by the Argentinian fact-checker Chequeado⁸¹.



Figure 21: Online seminar organized by Tierra Pura with the economist Javier Milei and Mariana Colombres

- Tierra Pura has also circulated anti-vaccine narratives⁸², giving voice to well-known anti-vaccines figures such as Robert Kennedy Jr (see example below). Many of these narratives about COVID-19 vaccines have been debunked by factcheckers⁸³.



Figure 22: Tierrapura.org: "Kennedy Jr. warns parents about the danger of using untested COVID-19 vaccines in children"

⁷⁸ <https://archive.is/WKeGJ>

⁷⁹ <https://archive.is/L5QmS>; fact-checking article: <https://factual.afp.com/los-cdc-no-anunciaron-que-el-covid-19-causo-solo-el-6-de-las-muertes-atribuidas-esta-enfermedad>.

⁸⁰ <https://archive.is/WKeGJ>

⁸¹ <https://chequeado.com/el-explicador/coronavirus-no-hay-pruebas-para-decir-que-se-estan-inflando-los-contagiados-y-muertos-como-dice-este-video-viral/>.

⁸² <https://archive.is/iLJNg>;

<https://archive.is/mAZK9>;

<https://archive.is/wQ9HK>;

<https://archive.is/LP5Nf>;

<https://archive.is/GbQe3>.

⁸³ <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20201129/bulo-vacuna-covid-provoca-esterilidad/2058679.shtml>;

<https://maldita.es/malditaciencia/20210123/35-bulos-mitos-vacunas-nos-están-intentando-colar/>;

https://www.abc.es/ciencia/abci-guia-para-desmentir-24-bulos-sobre-vacuna-covid-19-202101052207_noticia.html;

<https://www.newtral.es/bulo-vacuna-coronavirus-arn-genetico/20201127/>;

<https://verificado.com.mx/las-nuevas-vacunas-ni-modifican-el-adn-ni-esterilizan/>.

- Tierra Pura has also spread conspiracy theories against the WHO. According to one Tierra Pura's article, the WHO conspired with China to plan a global genocide together thanks to COVID-19⁸⁴.

4.2.3 Attacking the Chinese Communist Party with disinformation

As shown by its first article, Tierra Pura regularly attacked the Chinese regime and in particular its management of the COVID-19 pandemic. If questioning the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic by the Chinese Communist Party has some legitimacy, the Argentinian-based website also did not hesitate to use unproven facts and disinformation to target its rival such as:

- The "CCP virus" was genetically created in a lab⁸⁵ (debunked by fact-checkers for being an unproven fact)⁸⁶;
- China's responsibility for the spread of COVID-19 is "proved" by the fact that the virus initially struck especially countries with "close and lucrative relationships with (...) Beijing", such as Spain and Italy, its European allies in the One Road, One Belt project (a project meant to expand Chinese business and commercial connections with the rest of the world⁸⁷).



Figure 16: Tierrapura.org: "Wherever relations with communist China are close, the virus continues to spread"

4.2.4 QAnon and disinformation around US elections narratives

Tierra Pura has also given a voice to Rafael Palacios (aka Rafapal), a prominent virus denialist⁸⁸ and conspiracy theorist in Spain. In an interview published on 26 October 2020⁸⁹, both Rafael Palacios (a Spaniard) and interviewer Liwei Fu claimed to be followers of Q, the

⁸⁴ <https://archive.is/GSkpN>.

⁸⁵ <https://archive.is/xM6nU>.

⁸⁶ <https://www.newtral.es/las-teorias-no-verificadas-sobre-el-supuesto-papel-del-laboratorio-biotecnologico-de-wuhan-en-la-irrupcion-del-virus/20200223/>.

⁸⁷ <https://archive.is/1qPzi>.

⁸⁸ <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vivo/lifestyle/20200824/482915473079/negacionistas-coronavirus-antimascarillas-conspiracion.html>.

⁸⁹ <https://archive.is/3Xzmi>.

alleged leader of the QAnon conspiracy movement. Through the conversation they defended theories such as how Joe Biden sexually abuses Chinese children or that he would withdraw from the election before it takes place, as well as that Satan has come to the throne of Christ (in reference to Pope Francis' defence of homosexual marriage).

Tierra Pura's support of the QAnon conspiracy movement has been more clearly exemplified by the Argentinian website with the recent creation of a section dedicated entirely to "The revelations of Q: the 16-year plan to destroy America". Tierra Pura examined and demonstrated that it supports the theories that guide the movement with a series of special articles signed by Liwei Fu⁹⁰.



Figure 23: Tierrapura.org: "The revelations of "Q": Q's revelations are heavily censored, but his predictions and warnings are being fulfilled in the US and touch everyone"

Following the same patterns of QAnon, Tierra Pura also spread narratives claiming that the elections in the United States were fraudulent - in the framework of an international operation⁹¹ in which countries like Spain⁹² or Italy⁹³ are involved - and that Donald Trump won the last elections. Even after Joe Biden's victory had been certified, Tierra Pura kept claiming that there will be a second term of office for the former US President⁹⁴.

Related to the recent assault on the Capitol by Trump's followers - among whom were QAnon followers - Tierra Pura supported disinformation narratives that claimed that the assault was planned by the Democrats⁹⁵ to make believe that Trump's supporters were violent or accusing the anti-fascist movement of being behind the riots⁹⁶, contradicting the initial conclusions of the authorities⁹⁷.

⁹⁰ <https://archive.is/zx8Ls>.

⁹¹ <https://archive.is/McyHp>.

⁹² <https://archive.is/NGqz5>.

⁹³ <https://archive.is/rU089>.

⁹⁴ <https://archive.is/OXGQa>.

⁹⁵ <https://archive.is/fQdVA>.

⁹⁶ <https://archive.is/GF9hU>.

⁹⁷ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tommybeer/2021/01/08/fbi-no-evidence-antifa-involved-in-capitol-chaos/>.

5. AMPLIFICATION & DISSEMINATION: TIERRA PURA IS PART OF A LARGER ECOSYSTEM

Tierra Pura is part of a larger ecosystem. In order to appear constantly active and disseminate content, the outlet also works as a news aggregator, reproducing content from other sources such as media outlets, but also conspiracy and alternative media. At the same time, Tierra Pura is quoted as a source in some of those same media and in other conservative Argentinian media. This generates an ecosystem of continuous mentions and republications. We will explain below how this dissemination works and how the content spreads into this larger ecosystem.

5.1. Republishing and translating from other sources

Tierra Pura produces only a reduced share of the information it disseminates. Most of the time, it amplifies content from other sources, republishing and translating information from various websites. Unsurprisingly, a large part of the syndicated content comes from assets connected to the Epoch Times galaxy. These are some of its main sources.

5.1.1. Epoch Media Group: The Epoch Times, La Gran Época and NTD

One of the main sources of Tierra Pura is **The Epoch Times** (Epoch Media Group) and also its Spanish version **La Gran Época**, as well as the broadcaster of the group **NTD**⁹⁸. By using Google Dorks searches, we can estimate that The Epoch Times was mentioned around 134 times in Tierra Pura's articles during the period ranging from the creation of the website in March 2020 until the 2nd of February 2021⁹⁹. Specifically, The Epoch Times is quoted clearly as a source at least 39 times¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁸ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/epoch-media-group>.

⁹⁹ Google Dorks allowed us to obtain rough estimations for mentions. To avoid duplicate results, we used the result figure on the last search page for every Google query. We also tried to double-check manually as much as possible Google results.

¹⁰⁰ See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/98CF-3XNT>.

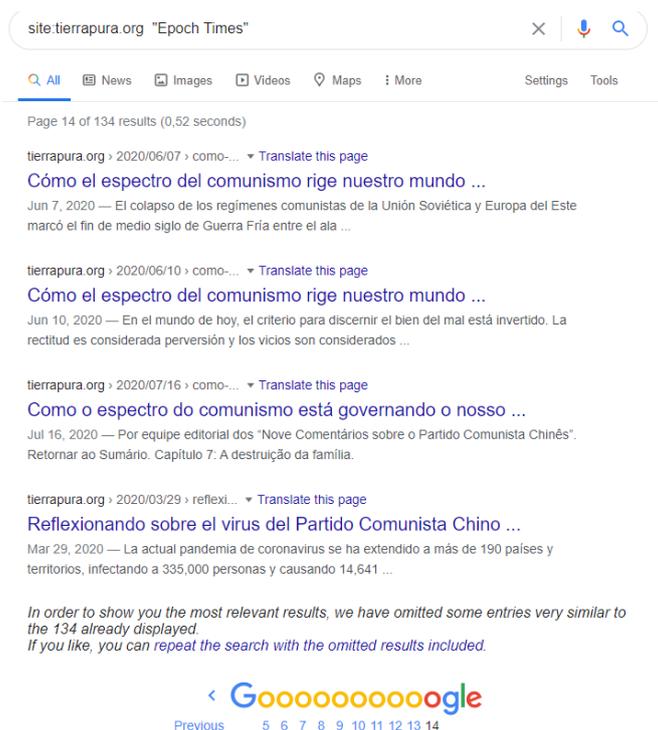


Figure 24: Screenshot showing that the Google query for mentions of “Epoch Times” on tierrapura.org returned around 134 unique results on February 2nd.

Mentions of La Gran Época (the Spanish version of The Epoch Times previously run by Liwei Fu) are a bit marginal compared to the ones of The Epoch Times (only 11 mentions)¹⁰¹. The signification of this distinction should be nuanced by the fact that articles presented by Tierra Pura as sourced from The Epoch Times are often also present on La Gran Época, as both Epoch Times’ publications regularly translate each other.

Interestingly, Tierra Pura calls the COVID-19 virus the “CCP virus”, a terminology that is similar to the denomination used by The Epoch Times since the publication of an op-ed from its editorial board on March 18th, 2020¹⁰². In this op-ed titled “The virus that is causing the global pandemic must be given the right name: The CCP virus”, the editorial board of The Epoch Times suggested to rename the COVID-19 as the “CCP virus”. The text says: “The Epoch Times suggests that a more accurate name is the CCP virus, and calls on others to adopt this name. The name holds the CCP responsible for its disregard for human life and the consequent emergence of a pandemic that has endangered a large number of countries around the world, while creating widespread fear and devastating the economies of nations trying to cope with the disease”.

¹⁰¹ See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/6S92-ZFXX>.

¹⁰² <https://archive.is/9DZo5>.



Figure 25: La Gran Época: "The virus that is causing the global pandemic must be given the right name: the CCP virus"

The fact that Tierra Pura follows such a specific decision taken by another media (to come up with a new acronym for the virus) reinforces the idea of a likely alignment between the two publications.

Created in 2000 in New York, The Epoch Times (Epoch Media Group) has been flagged in the past and more recently as a disinformation outlet. According to BuzzFeed News¹⁰³ and NBC News¹⁰⁴, the news outlet has in recent years transformed into a misinformation-laden, right-wing and Pro-Trump mouthpiece.

Facebook banned The Epoch Times from buying ads the summer of 2019¹⁰⁵. Later on, in December 2019, Facebook took action against a network of over 900 pages, groups, and accounts on its own platform and on Instagram that were associated with "The Beauty of Life" (TheBL), "reportedly an offshoot" of the Epoch Media Group (EMG). The investigation from Graphika and the DFR Lab also highlighted the generalised use of AI-Generate profiles pictures by the network to create fake accounts¹⁰⁶.

Moreover, the Global Disinformation Index (GDI) has identified The Epoch Times as a major disinformation source in one of its latest reports¹⁰⁷, where it is mentioned that the traffic of the main Epoch Times website is estimated at 7.9M visitors per month. The New York Times recently published an article about the Epoch Times shedding a light on the ability of the controversial media company to serve as a powerful influence tool for the Falun Gong¹⁰⁸.

On its YouTube Channel, Tierra Pura also publishes content from the New Tang Dynasty Television (NTD)¹⁰⁹, a US broadcaster from the Epoch Media Group, according to the LinkedIn profile of the group¹¹⁰, that was founded by Falun Gong practitioners¹¹¹.

¹⁰³ <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/amptml/hayesbrown/epoch-times-trump-administration-falun-gong>.

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/trump-qanon-impending-judgment-day-behind-facebook-fueled-rise-epoch-n1044121>.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/trump-qanon-impending-judgment-day-behind-facebook-fueled-rise-epoch-n1044121>.

¹⁰⁶ <https://graphika.com/reports/operationffs-fake-face-swarm/>.

¹⁰⁷ https://disinformationindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/GDI_Election-2020-Primer_Digital.pdf.

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/technology/epoch-times-influence-falun-gong.html>.

¹⁰⁹ <https://archive.is/npGI9>.

¹¹⁰ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/epoch-media-group/>.

¹¹¹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20180105011654/https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB108190438992282143>.

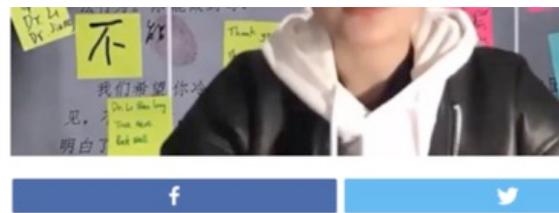
5.1.2. Other Media linked to The Epoch Times group

Apart from The Epoch Times and La Gran Época, Tierra Pura regularly publishes articles from **Bles** (at least 22 times until the 2nd of February 2021)¹¹². Tierra Pura has recirculated for example articles by Miguel Díaz¹¹³ from Bles. Miguel Diaz, who has a prolific author page on BLes.com¹¹⁴, also acted as moderator for the webinar organised by Tierra Pura that we previously mentioned¹¹⁵.

Bles is another website allegedly tied to the Epoch Media Group. These links between The Beauty of Life (thebl.com, the English version of BLes website¹¹⁶) and the Epoch Times were first revealed by an extensive investigation from US fact-checker Snopes¹¹⁷. Similarly, Facebook's statement about the takedown of the BL assets in December 2019 also asserted unequivocally that the two organisations are tied: "Although the people behind this network attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation linked this activity to Epoch Media Group, a US-based media organization, and individuals in Vietnam working on its behalf"¹¹⁸.

Replying to Snopes investigation, it should be mentioned that both The Epoch Times and The BL denied having any connection.

Tierra Pura also syndicated content from another websites with connections to The Epoch Media Group named **Dajiyuan.com** whose links to the Epoch Media Group were mentioned by Tierra Pura itself¹¹⁹.



Traducido por Tierra Pura de [Dajiyuan](#), Epoch Media Group.

Figure 26: Article translated by Tierra Pura from Dajiyuan, Epoch Media Group

5.1.3. Other media aligned with the Falun Gong network

In addition to The Epoch Times, there are other links connecting Tierra Pura and other media close to Falun Gong spiritual group.

For example, a source very often quoted by Tierra Pura (128 results for a Google query done on the 2nd of February 2021)¹²⁰ is **Minghui.org**, "a website monitoring the persecution of Falun Gong in China", according to a description made by The Epoch Times¹²¹.

¹¹² See the results for the Google query here: <https://perma.cc/8Q48-S54F>.

¹¹³ Initial article written by Miguel Diaz for BLes: <https://archive.is/gpYyq>, the republication of this article by Tierra Pura: <https://archive.is/peeY3>.

¹¹⁴ <https://perma.cc/29HY-3H56>.

¹¹⁵ <https://archive.is/WKeGJ>.

¹¹⁶ On bles.com, if you switch to the English version of the website, the URL becomes "thebl.com".

¹¹⁷ <https://www.snopes.com/news/2019/10/11/pro-trump-outlet-linked-epoch-times/>.

¹¹⁸ https://public-assets.graphika.com/reports/graphika_report_operation_ffs_fake_face_storm.pdf.

¹¹⁹ <https://archive.is/GbMLp>.

¹²⁰ See the results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/KM5E-FS4P>.

¹²¹ <https://archive.is/peWi4>.



Figure 27: Falun Dafa is related to Minghui.org

Another source quoted by TierraPura.org is the **ChinaWatchInstitute.org** (18 results on the 2nd of February 2021)¹²², which is another outlet that focuses on China in a critical tone, republishing certain articles¹²³ from The Epoch Times, and denouncing the persecution of Falun Dafa or Falun Gong¹²⁴. The website of the China Watch Institute does not disclose openly the identity of any staff or management team.

Still, we managed to identify on the China Watch Institute's website an author page under the name of Sandra Flores¹²⁵, who wrote 46 articles for the organisation and is by far its main identifiable contributor. The name and profile picture of the first account which followed the China Watch Institute on Twitter¹²⁶ also matches with a Falun Gong practitioner named Sandra Flores¹²⁷, who was described in an article from El Mundo as the spokesperson for the Association of Falun Dafa Studies in Spain¹²⁸. At least 14 articles on BLes.com were also attributed to an author named Sandra Flores¹²⁹.



Figure 28: China Watch Institute republishing content from The Epoch Times

Interestingly, among the small number of Twitter accounts followed by Tierra Pura (33), you can find the China Watch Institute and Hablemos de China¹³⁰.

Hablemos de China. Both Tierra Pura's website¹³¹ and its YouTube channel frequently publish videos produced by Hablemos de China (Let's talk about China). It is a Spanish YouTube channel that focuses on denouncing Spain's relations with China. The channel accuses China of "working from the shadows (...) to destroy the rights and crucial systems of our free existence"¹³².

¹²²See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/9GR3-V2F3>.

¹²³<https://archive.is/igiZ7>.

¹²⁴<https://archive.is/HbXHM>

¹²⁵<https://archive.vn/ASPXc>.

¹²⁶<https://twitter.com/WatchInstitute/followers> / <https://archive.vn/XLvlp>.

¹²⁷<https://archive.vn/UrWvY>.

¹²⁸<https://archive.vn/eZ051>.

¹²⁹<https://archive.vn/Tm5sl>.

¹³⁰<https://archive.vn/Js0yk>.

¹³¹Hablemos de China has been mentioned at least 20 times in articles from Tierra Pura, see results for the Google query realized on February, 2nd 2021:

<https://perma.cc/G2VT-539E>.

¹³²<https://archive.is/J3HJP>



Figure 29: Let's talk about China: "Description: What if a supposedly friendly country was at war with us undercover? What if this country had been working in the shadows for decades to destroy the rights and systems crucial to our existence in freedom? Welcome. This is Talk of China. World experts say this is exactly what the Chinese Communist Party is doing in the United States and the rest of the world"



Figure 30: Hablemos de China and Tierra Pura videos appear together. "How have we come to the point where the most influential supranational organisation in the world puts the wolf to look after the sheep? We invite you to watch the analysis in the following video: China 'infects the UN'"

Hablemos de China was created on 14th of March 2020, at the peak of the pandemic, and its content consists of videos that combine conspiracy theories around the COVID-19 and attacks on the Chinese Communist Party (for example, with the videos *Plandemia* "made in China")¹³³, in a similar way to Tierra Pura. It especially criticised the current Spanish government's relations with China and went as far as to share a petition from the Change.org platform¹³⁴ asking Spain to suspend relations with the Asian country. The petition was an initiative of the ultraconservative¹³⁵ organisation HazteOir.org¹³⁶.

¹³³ <https://archive.is/OYhIW>

¹³⁴ <https://archive.is/dPUiR>

¹³⁵ The organisation has been controversial, for example in 2017 by holding a webinar with Richard Cohen, who argues that homosexuality can be healed.

¹³⁶ https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/homosexualidad-hazte-oir-hombres-heterosexuales_1_3618491.html

¹³⁶ <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20170301/42427436098/que-es-y-que-defiende-hazteoir.html>

Hablemos de China seems deeply aligned with the China Watch Institute website. Using the Truthnest tool, we identified that outside of YouTube videos, Hablemos de China Twitter account regularly shares links to articles from the China Watch Institute (66 articles since the creation of the Twitter account) and other websites connected to the Epoch Times ecosystem.

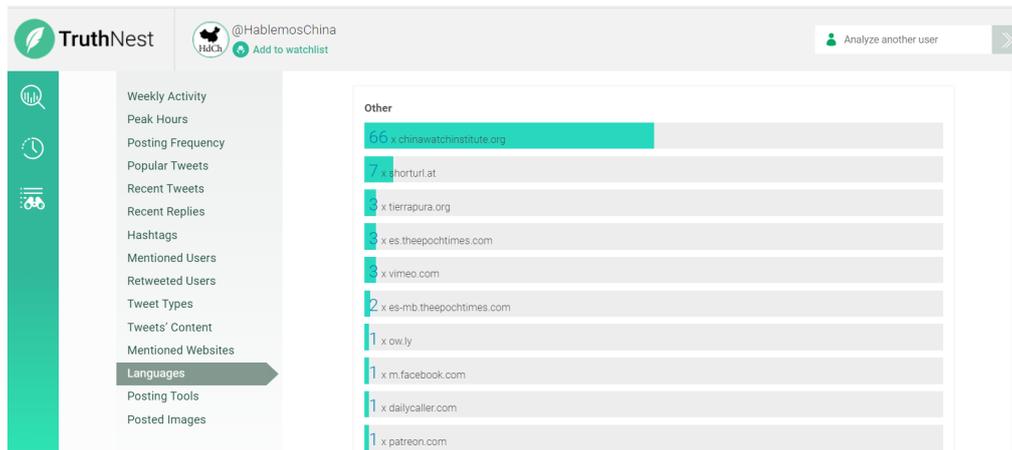


Figure 31: Hablemos de China Twitter account activity. Data collected by TruthNest tool

Similarly, the videos section on the China Watch Institute website contains a majority of videos from Hablemos de China's Youtube Channel, underlining the reciprocity of how the content is shared by the two organisations¹³⁷.

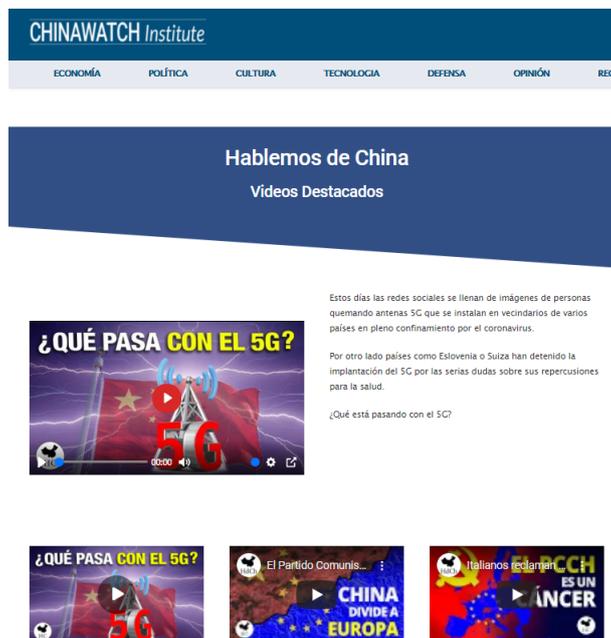


Figure 32: The China Watch Institute website publishes Hablemos de China video content.

¹³⁷ <https://archive.vn/azPne/>
<https://archive.vn/JinOt>

5.1.4. Conspiratorial, alternative or disinformative news outlets in English

Tierra Pura does only depend for content on media and organisations orbiting Falun Dafa and Epoch Media Group. The website also translates and republishes reports from conspiratorial or alternative media outlets, that have been identified as spreading disinformation by several organisations and can be considered as “junk sites” if you follow the criteria established by the Oxford University for one of its studies about “junk news” during the last EU Parliamentary elections¹³⁸. Some examples:

- **Breitbart.com** (around 125 mentions in Tierra Pura website until the 2nd February 2021)¹³⁹ is an American outlet aligned with the alt-right that was under the management of Steve Bannon until 2018. “The site has published false and misleading claims, including about COVID-19”¹⁴⁰, according to News Guard¹⁴¹, a site that provides news site ratings, giving context around a media outlet’s credibility and its history of disinformation.
- **The Gateway Pundit** (around 98 mentions on Tierra Pura website until the 2nd of February 2021)¹⁴² is “a far-right political website that publishes false and misleading content. The Gateway Pundit regularly distorts information and occasionally spreads conspiracy theories”, according to News Guard assessment¹⁴³.
- **Neonnettle.com** (around 117 mentions in Tierra Pura until the 2nd of February 2021)¹⁴⁴ is another outlet that was given a very low score by Medias Bias/Fact Check - another institution that evaluates the bias and transparency of media outlets¹⁴⁵. According to Factcheck.org, Neon Nettle is “a British website that posts inflammatory political stories, many with misinformation, about the US and UK and it has a ‘conspiracy’ section in its ‘news’ category^{146 147}.”
- **Natural news** (around 84 mentions in Tierra Pura until the 2nd of February 2021)¹⁴⁸: Natural News is considered one of the main health disinformation networks in the world, according to a report by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) published last June¹⁴⁹. ISD identified a collection of 496 active and inactive domain names which appear to be linked to Natural News and its founder and that “are used to host violent and extremist material, as well as health disinformation and conspiracy theories”. Various fact-checking organisations have repeatedly flagged Natural News

¹³⁸ See page 3 of the document here: <https://comprop.oi.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/93/2019/05/EU-Parliamentary-Elections-Supplement.pdf>.

¹³⁹ See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/335G-AU7Q>.

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.newsguardtech.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/breitbart.pdf>.

¹⁴¹ <https://www.newsguardtech.com/>.

¹⁴² See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/SS9F-2PK9>.

¹⁴³ <https://www.newsguardtech.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-Gateway-Pundit-NewsGuard-Nutrition-Label.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/AXQ6-8QJQ>.

¹⁴⁵ <https://archive.is/1HSij>.

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.factcheck.org/2017/07/websites-post-fake-satirical-stories/>.

¹⁴⁷ “FactCheck.org is one of several organizations working with Facebook to debunk misinformation shared on the social media network”, according to its own description. <https://www.factcheck.org/2017/07/websites-post-fake-satirical-stories/>.

¹⁴⁸ See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/3WL3-RFX8>.

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/20200620-ISDG-NaturalNews-Briefing-V4.pdf>

content as false¹⁵⁰, while Facebook has been trying to ban them from the platform but only with moderate success¹⁵¹.

5.1.5. Alternative or disinformative news outlets in Spanish

Tierra Pura also republishes information from alternative, disinformative or partisan news outlets in Spanish language. Some examples:

- **Panam Post** (around 104 mentions in Tierra Pura until the 2nd of February 2021)¹⁵². Panam Post is a partisan media outlet founded in 2013¹⁵³ with an editorial line that its owner, Luis Henrique Ball, defines as “against socialism”¹⁵⁴. Some articles from the Panam Post were flagged by international fact-checkers (AFP factual, Snopes) as a source of misinformation¹⁵⁵.
- **Altmedia.com.ar** (around 18 mentions until the 2nd of February 2021)¹⁵⁶ is an Argentinian media outlet that defines itself as an alternative to traditional journalism. It has published some disinformation items such as the allegations made by the Tanzanian president on animals and fruits tested positive for COVID-19 (false information also spread by Tierra Pura)¹⁵⁷ or false claims asserting that the Democratic Party in California decided to vote the reduction of sentences for people condemned for paedophilia¹⁵⁸, debunked by fact-checkers¹⁵⁹.
- **Eldiestro.es** (around 32 mentions until the 2nd of February 2021)¹⁶⁰ is a Spanish website that poses as a media outlet, but which does not meet journalistic standards and spreads misinformation. This has been identified as a disinformative outlet by Spanish fact-checkers¹⁶¹ and Spanish media¹⁶². For example, an article from Eldiestro claiming that the UK COVID-19 variant originated from the Pfizer vaccine was recently debunked by Maldita¹⁶³. EU DisinfoLab also includes it on its list of “junk sources”, based in a definition elaborated by the Oxford University for their study about junk news around the EU Parliamentary Elections in 2019¹⁶⁴.

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.factcheck.org/2016/02/gmos-didnt-cause-zika-outbreak/>.

¹⁵¹ <https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/6/25/21293246/facebook-misinformation-natural-news-conspiracy-theory>.

¹⁵² See results for the Google Query: <https://perma.cc/HEE8-63NL>.

¹⁵³ <https://web.archive.org/web/20130611093124/http://panampost.com/>.

¹⁵⁴ <https://archive.is/hHPHh>.

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/china-cellphones-coronavirus/> See the first link included after the sentence “La misma afirmación también se publicó en medios digitales” at the beginning of the article: <https://factual.afp.com/la-justicia-no-ha-presentado-cargos-contrahillary-clinton-por-el-caso-de-los-e-mails/> (link to the misleading article: <https://archive.is/LbqNy>)

¹⁵⁶ See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/7GQ4-SFMP/>.

¹⁵⁷ <https://web.archive.org/web/20200919180632/https://altmedia.com.ar/el-presidente-de-tanzania-expone-a-la-oms-por-supuesto-fraude/>

¹⁵⁸ <https://altmedia.com.ar/pedofilia-los-democratas-reducen-las-penas-a-los-pedofilos-que-mantengan-sexo-anal-y-oral-con-menores/>.

¹⁵⁹ <https://apnews.com/article/afs:Content:9435964908>.

¹⁶⁰ See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/9HJY-M2PK>.

¹⁶¹ <https://www.apmadrid.es/ante-la-desinformacion-hay-que-crear-comunidades-antibulos/>.

¹⁶² https://www.elconfidencial.com/tecnologia/2020-05-08/webs-desinformacion-trafico-bulos-extrema_2582735/.

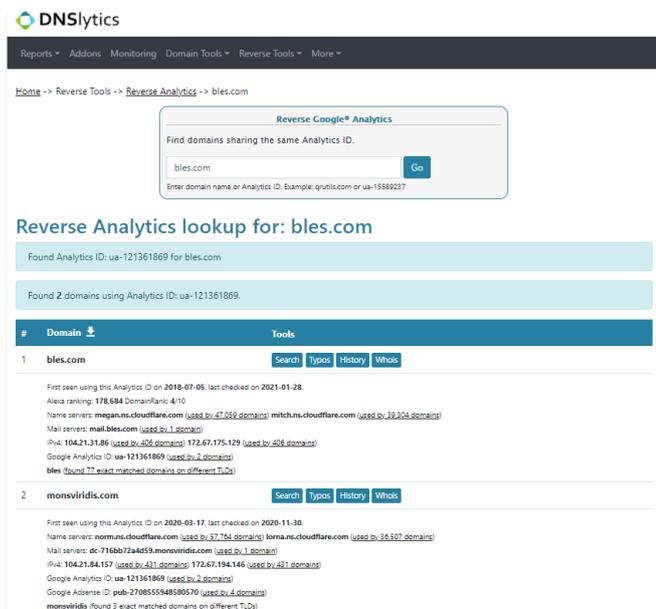
¹⁶³ <https://maldita.es/malditaciencia/20210116/bulos-desinformaciones-datos-contexto-vacunas-arn-contrala-covid-19/>.

¹⁶⁴ <https://comprop.oi.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/93/2019/05/EU-Parliamentary-Elections-Supplement.pdf>.

5.2. Tierra Pura as a source of content for conservative media

To a lesser extent, some conservative media outlets from Latin America also use Tierra Pura as a source of syndicated content. So far, we identified that Tierra Pura's stories have been republished by alternative and right-wing media in Argentina and Latin America such as:

- **Patriademarti.com**¹⁶⁵ (around 25 mentions until the 2nd of February 2021)¹⁶⁶, a partisan outlet that supports the theory of electoral fraud in the United States or links Joe Biden to communism¹⁶⁷.
- **Altmedia.com.ar** (around 6 mentions until the 2nd of February 2021)¹⁶⁸, an alternative right-wing media that has spread some disinformative content, as seen above.
- Or **Monsviridis.com** According to DNSlytics, this media outlet shares a unique Google Analytics code with Bles.com, making it very likely that the website is also part of the Epoch Times ecosystem¹⁶⁹. Monsviridis has mentioned and used content from tierrapura.org six times for the last months¹⁷⁰.



The screenshot shows the DNSlytics 'Reverse Analytics' tool interface. It displays a search for 'bles.com' and lists two domains sharing the same Analytics ID: 'bles.com' and 'monsviridis.com'. For each domain, it provides details such as the first seen date, Alexa ranking, name servers, mail servers, IPv4 addresses, and Google Analytics ID.

#	Domain	Tools
1	bles.com	Search Typos History Whois
2	monsviridis.com	Search Typos History Whois

Figure 33: Shared Google Analytics code by Bles and Monsviridis.

5.3. Mutual replications

The content republication works both ways with **Bles Mundo**¹⁷¹, (around 36 mentions until 2nd of February 2021)¹⁷², and **Panam Post**, which republished Tierra Pura content highlighting that the Argentinian outlet gave them the permission to do that. This points towards a possible direct collaboration between the two websites¹⁷³:

¹⁶⁵ <https://archive.is/WVndM>

¹⁶⁶ See results for the Google Query: <https://perma.cc/M5BR-TW9A>

¹⁶⁷ <https://archive.is/dcG63>

¹⁶⁸ See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/AQ83-GLZN>

¹⁶⁹ As previously mentioned, see the investigation from Snopes which uncovered the ties between the BL and the The Epoch Times Group: <https://www.snopes.com/news/2019/10/11/pro-trump-outlet-linked-epoch-times/>

¹⁷⁰ See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/7JHZ-8T8M>

¹⁷¹ Connected to the Epoch Times group according to a Snopes investigation <https://www.snopes.com/news/2019/10/11/pro-trump-outlet-linked-epoch-times/>

¹⁷² See results for the Google query: <https://perma.cc/RK7J-9S6G>

¹⁷³ <https://archive.is/Msvjc>

panampost.com › editor › 2020/05/15 › mascarillas-def... ▼

El atroz secreto de las mascarillas defectuosas y el trabajo ...

15 may. 2020 — Este artículo se republica con el permiso de **Tierra Pura**. Artículo Anterior.

Colombia: Corte Constitucional pospone fallo sobre tutela de ...

Figure 34: Panam Post republic content from Tierra Pura (with its permission)

6. TIERRA PURA ON SOCIAL MEDIA

6.1. Looking for amplification on social media platforms

Tierra Pura also created multiple social media accounts to amplify its website content. The presence on several platforms has contributed to increase the audience of Tierra Pura's articles since March 2020. Here is some data that sheds a light about the potential reach of Tierra Pura's content and the constant growth of its numbers of followers (data collected on 13th and 27th January 2021 for comparison):

SOCIAL NETWORK	USER HANDLE	URL	CREATION DATE	EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS (from 13 th to 27 th of January 2021)
Twitter	@TierrapuraORG	https://mobile.twitter.com/tierrapuraorg?lang=en	April 2020	3362 – 4026 ¹⁷⁴
Facebook	TierraPura.org Media/news company	https://www.facebook.com/TierraPura.org/	14 th April 2020	5569- 6349
Instagram	@TierraPuraorg	https://www.instagram.com/tierrapuraorg/	28 th May 2020	1385- 1816
Telegram	@tierrapura	https://t.me/tierrapura	7 th May 2020	11867 – 17496 ¹⁷⁵
YouTube	Tierra Pura	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6vc1VP0ce3E3n5jLMDmptQ	25 March 2020	4650 – 6480 ¹⁷⁶
Safechat	TierraPura.org	https://bit.ly/3qDUxQW	12 th September 2020	389 – 609 ¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ <https://archive.is/Somdj>

¹⁷⁵ <https://archive.is/5lvdC>

¹⁷⁶ <https://archive.is/z1Tpl>

¹⁷⁷ <https://archive.is/NrOK6>

Parler	TierraPuraorg	http://parler.com/profile/TierraPuraorg/	No data available at the moment of this publication	No data available at the moment of this publication
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The first three platforms where Tierra Pura had a presence were YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, coinciding approximately with the creation of the website. Months later, they created Instagram and Telegram accounts. This last channel – which Tierra Pura advertises as a way to avoid censorship – has experienced an exponential increase in followers, with almost 17.5K (data collected on the 27th of January 2021). It is in fact the most successful channel of the publication. In September 2020, however, Tierra Pura opened up new channels of communication, such as Safechat. It is also present in Parler, the website where many users have been taking refuge to avoid the moderation of content from other platforms. Parler has been the subject of scandal and deactivation following its role in the assault on the Capitol in Washington. It has however recently become operational again with the help of the Russian company DdoS-Guard¹⁷⁸.

It should be noted that Tierra Pura considers Safechat, Telegram and Parler - in addition to its website - as “uncensored” channels. That’s the reason why Tierra Pura called its followers to move to those platforms on the 10th of December, one day after YouTube announced they would begin “removing content that falsely alleges widespread fraud or errors surrounding the 2020 US presidential election”¹⁷⁹.

Comunicado respecto a la CENSURA que está ap gigantes tecnológicos

10 diciembre 2020



Hola, hoy queremos invitarlos a seguirnos en nuestro sitio web y en las redes sociales que NO censuran:

TierraPura.org

Safechat: [TierraPura.org](https://www.safechat.com/)

Telegram: [TierraPura.org/COVID-19-Información sin censura](https://t.me/TierraPura.org/COVID-19-Información-sin-censura)

Figure 35: Tierrapura.org: “We would like to invite you to follow our website on sites that do not censor”

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/19/technology/parler-russian-company.html>

¹⁷⁹ <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/12/09/youtube-to-crack-down-on-election-misinformation-over-a-month-later.html>

6.2. Looking for monetisation on Patreon

Recently, we have also observed the creation by Tierra Pura of an account on the Patreon crowdfunding website, in an attempt to seek funding. At the moment, it does not have any patrons or funders¹⁸⁰. EU DisinfoLab recently published a study analysing how disinformation actors are using this platform in their search for funding¹⁸¹ and a concrete case study about Spain.

¹⁸⁰ <https://archive.is/9Us0f>

¹⁸¹ <https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/how-covid-19-conspiracists-and-extremists-use-crowdfunding-platforms-to-fund-their-activities/>

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Having been launched at the peak of the infodemic in March 2020, Tierra Pura is a very good illustration of the extremely conflictual global information landscape around the COVID-19 pandemic. The current context is seen by many actors as a perfect opportunity to expand their information wars to a new polarising battleground.
- Tierra Pura case also illustrates how, in response to disinformation from authoritarian regimes, it becomes tempting for some to also follow the path of disinformation. This type of escalation is always dangerous as it jeopardises facts, threatens good journalism and undermines civil society. Moreover, it contributes to a less authentic online conversation.
- As we demonstrated in previous investigations, the regular use of “alternative media” is often a way for disinformation actors to seek both legitimacy (often formulated as “real” journalism avoiding “censorship”) while avoiding transparency (no clear editor nor legal mentions). It also shows that fighting disinformation is a broad challenge that should not be reduced to a question of content moderation on social media platforms.
- Our investigation illustrates how some domain extensions can be hijacked and be used to provide false credibility to some malicious actors. The “.org” of Tierra Pura could suggest to online readers that they are dealing with a non-profit or charitable organisation, misleading them as to the real nature of the website as an online disinformation outlet.
- One interesting characteristic around Tierra Pura was to see how articles circulate rapidly between multiple websites, creating complex disinformation ecosystems that are bigger than they seem. It is also a good reminder that malicious actors, including some states, regularly use fake alternative media outlets, which are designed to remain under the radar, as assets to inject narratives in some broader information landscape.
- Finally, Tierra Pura’s case raises the question of cross-continent disinformation. Narratives always circulate quite smoothly between regions using the same language (e.g., Spain and Latin America). Can the Argentinian website Tierra Pura be considered as an attempt of foreign influence as some of its messages were spread in Spain and interfered with Spanish politics? Who should be held accountable for this disinformation campaign and how could EU member states defend themselves



against significant disinformation campaigns that sometimes originate from global non-State actors?

