Third Workshop Report

Democratic Innovation:
What Europe can learn from Latin America

Aarau, 19th April, 2010
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SUMMARY

1. Workshop: e-Campaigns & e-Parliaments
The third ZDA-Avina workshop was held 1st March 2010 in Aarau. It was oriented towards the theme of e-platforms helping to reinforce civic engagement and political accountability, especially during election campaigns. Participants from institutions directly involved in the promotion of such initiatives were discussing risks and potentials of e-platforms during electoral campaigns.

2. Avina Projects
As a direct result of the workshop a new project related to the Elections in Brazil was launched. Knowing that a good proportion of the population does not know who the candidates running for office are or what they stand for, it was proposed to development a platform monitoring the Brazilian parliamentary elections in September 2010.
The Uruguay project on Decentralization and Participatory Democracy in Montevideo (Project ZUMO) is well under way and now in the phase of data analysis.

3. Related projects
Furthermore we have additional projects with a geographical focus on Latin America:
• Citizen participation on the local level
• Bridging the Political Gap? The adoption of ICT's for LA Parliaments
• e-Legislatures project – a rating of parliamentary websites in federal systems

4. Dissemination of Knowledge
• A website has been created in order to present our activities, make papers available, and provide project information (www.dd-la.ch).
• The team is promoting and joining various events in order to increase diffusion of the generated knowledge.

5. Networks and Collaboration
C2D started to offer a work space for young researchers from Latin America applying for Swiss government sponsored scholarships. The scholarship allows them to continue their studies or research in a hosting institution in Switzerland. We are pleased to announce that a first scholar will stay at c2d for the next academic year.
1. Third ZDA-Avina Workshop in Aarau

The third ZDA-Avina workshop dealt with the topics of e-campaigning and e-parliaments. The participants discussed the role and use of platforms geared towards the reinforcement of civic engagement. Especially during electoral campaigns these platforms can also take on the function of a monitoring tool enhancing transparency of the process as well as accountability. The workshop took place in Aarau, on 1st of March.

Participants represented targeted civil society and research organisations from Brazil, Europe and Switzerland: Alejandro Salas (Transparency International); Evika Karamagioli, Vasilis Koulolias (Gov2u); Uwe Serdült, Felix Pons, Fernando Mendez, Yanina Welp (C2D); Luca Urech (IT & International Relations, University of Geneva); Daniela Silva, Esfera (Brazil).

Focus

Given the lack of confidence that citizens have in Parliament, reinforced by frequent corruption scandals, the initiative seeks to reinforce accountability and transparency and, at the same time, to recover the role of an institution with such importance as Parliament. A reinforcement of the ideological debate against a mediatic exposition of the main candidates is also expected.

Knowing that a good proportion of the population does not know who their representatives in Parliament are or what they do, the platform seeks to focus the campaign in the candidate's profile, experience and his or her ideas.

Electoral Platforms:

An electoral platform is a web-based portal that allows the electorate to engage in the electoral process in a layered way.1 Designed in a modular fashion, an electoral platform places a strong emphasis on simplicity of use. Whether citizens wish to understand the voting system, find out about the policies of a specific candidate, or even debate with other citizens, the electoral platform will provide an online opportunity to do just that. Underpinned by some of the latest thinking in normative democratic theory, the platform aims to promote a number of fundamental democratic principles such as enhancing transparency, participation, deliberation, and civic education.

1 For an earlier experimentation with electoral platforms see http://www.c2d.ch/holyrood2007/Scotlandnew/index.php
Scholars of democracy have long debated the relative strengths and merits of focusing on each of these dimensions as a means to improve democratic engagement.

What can the political and social sciences learn?

The post-campaign analysis of the data generated by an electoral platform would reveal potential novel insights into the behavior of political parties/candidates, on public opinion and citizens’ preferences, campaign strategy, and more generally on political behavior. Finally, for technology studies it would represent a challenge in terms of developing an open source and fully reproducible platform and as well as integrating mobile technologies.

2. Avina Projects

2.1 Brazilian Elections 2010

During the workshop and in the following days it was started the planning of the initiative. What we propose is to develop a platform for elections that uses the attributes of ICTs to enhance all of the aforementioned dimensions democracy. The initiative will be developed to follow the next Brazilian elections (October 2010). At a further stage elements of the platform could also be used for the upcoming Argentinian elections (2011), with the potential to become a model for future elections in Latin America. The platform, built on Open Source technologies, will be at the disposal of other Latin American organisations interested in developing a similar experience.

Goals

The goals of the project are: to provide information on the candidates competing for seats in Parliament; to promote a debate based on the main ideological positions of the candidates on issues identified as the most relevant for citizenry; and to follow and assess the campaigns in terms of transparency and quality of the information provided.
Key elements

1. An Online platform to follow the Brazilian elections, focusing on the Senate will provide information display in a friendly manner about the electoral system, the functions of the senate, etc. Similar systems have been used in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, the US and elsewhere. In most cases, the n’s were huge (for the 2007 national elections in Switzerland, for example, about 1 Mio recommendations were generated). Most recently, and on a supranational scale, voter profiling tools were implemented for the European Parliament elections of May 2009.

2. A Candidate's Database to provide a list with the candidates and his/her profile information (state, political party, short curriculum vitae,....) It will allows to identify all the candidates.

3. A questionnaire will collect the opinions of the candidates on the issues identified as the most relevant for the Brazilian public opinion (scientific method will be used to identified and formulate the questions). It is a crucial task which has to be well done and transparent to avoid criticisms. At the core of the platform would be a system of vote profiling technologies. Variously referred to as Smartvote, Political Compass, Vote Navigator, the concept of 'voter profiling tools' can be used as a generic term for any kind of voter-candidate/party congruence profiling system. The mechanism is simple: prior to an election, candidates and/or parties fill in an online questionnaire containing an extensive set of policy proposals. In some cases, especially for parties, the form is filled in by academic coders.

4. Preference Matcher: Once the candidates have filled in the online questionnaire, any citizen can do the same. Citizens can also choose between a full version of the questionnaire or a shorter one that takes up less time. Citizens are provided with the same answer categories as the candidates and are also able to rank their preferences. They can choose to answer all questions or just a certain set of questions relating to the policy fields they are particularly interested in. The system then matches all candidates’/parties’ data with the data provided by the citizen. It produces a virtually filled out ballot that ranks all candidates/parties according to the percentage of overlap with the citizens’ preferences. The idea is to allow citizens to better define their own subjective, political profile and then match the latter with the political profiles of the candidates. Of course, the more questions are answered by the citizens in the questionnaire, the more detailed and therefore accurate their profile will be.

5. News. A news service configured with key words to look through all the important newspapers and journals with an internet edition will allow to follow the campaign in general and in states selected by the users in particular. A 'Get informed' section would inform the prospective voters, while a forum could be incorporated to help promote deliberation among visitors. The platform will be fully indexed according to the most relevant policy issues that dominate the federal elections by tracking the media.

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2 For a recent experiment on the EU level see: www.euprofiler.eu
candidate profiling module would provide each candidate with an equal media space while enhancing political transparency. An interactive voter profiling module will aim to promote political engagement as well as adding a ‘fun’ dimension through social networking functions (see below).

6. An **index to assess the electoral campaign transparency and quality** will be built in order to evaluate the campaign establishing criteria to compare with other countries in the region and future elections in the country.

7. **Diffusion.** Mass media, social networks, links with other projects, etc. will be developed to promote the initiative.

**Partners**


**Risks**

Many obstacles will have to be surmounted for the project to become successful. To mention a few:

- **Media:** for the project to attract voters and candidates/parties, it is crucial to have media partners. One incentive for the media would be for them to be able to integrate the platform directly into their websites for free (through an API).
- **Technology:** For the Brazilian context, presumably we would need to develop a fully open source platform. This would mean reconfiguring our existing platforms (designed for Scottish and Swiss elections).
- **Finance:** Some seed money would be need for the technology aspects. Fund-raising strategies are yet to be fully explored, but coordination costs (e.g. for the conceptual platform design aspect) can be reduced and internalised through the academic partnership and many organisational and data gathering costs would be borne by the NGO partners.
2.2 Decentralization and Citizen Participation in Montevideo

In 1990 a process of decentralization and administrative devolution was launched in the city of Montevideo (a territory of 500 km² that is home to approximately a million and a half inhabitants). The city was divided functionally and administratively into 18 zones that include the 64 districts of the urban and suburban areas of the city, as well as a rural area.

In each one of the 18 zones, a municipal service was established under the name Centro Comunal Zonal (CCZ). The aim of these municipal services was progressively to develop a bond with social organizations and neighborhood associations of the zone. Each CCZ offers municipal services as well as other responsibilities. The most innovative creation of this structure are the Consejos Vecinales (neighborhood councils). These are consultative organs, recognized by the Municipal Law, with powers of advising, monitoring, legislative initiative and, in some cases, co-determination.

In spite of the advances of this initiative, the results have not been as successful as had been expected. The Ombudsman indicates that during 2006 neighborhood councils were one of the main sources of complaints of the inhabitants of Montevideo. The Ombudsman, valuing positively many aspects of the process, has indicated the importance of a study to identify the good and bad practices of this model in order to use the positive outcomes to reinforce the experience.

People Involved

Paula Ferla, Javier Marsiglia and Alejandra Marzuca (UCU); Uwe Serdült and Yanina Welp (C2D); Alicia Veneziano Esperón (UdelaR); Alejandro Casas and Fernando Rodríguez Herrera, (Defensoría del Vecino de Montevideo) ; Camilo Alvarez (Plan Cuenca Carrasco)

Partners & Sponsors:

IDEL Instituto de Desarrollo Local, Universidad Católica de Uruguay ; C2D Centre for Research on Direct Democracy, University of Zurich, Switzerland; Universidad de la Republica (UdelaR), Instituto de Ciencia Política, Defensoría del Vecino de Montevideo
3. Related Projects

3.1 Citizen participation on the local level

En los últimos 20 años se han multiplicado los gobiernos municipales que han puesto en marcha mecanismos, canales o experiencias de participación ciudadana a ambos lados del Atlántico. Sin embargo, pese al creciente interés por el tema, se echa en falta una sistematización de las formas que esta participación adquiere, mientras permanece abierto el debate sobre las variables que explicarían el origen de las políticas que la promueven. La ponencia propone una clasificación de los tipos y características de la participación ciudadana institucional y de las variables que explican que estos mecanismos de participación institucionalizados y/o ofertados por los propios gobiernos sean creados. Consideramos que las causas de esta apuesta por la innovación democrática diferencian según atendamos al comportamiento de una variable fundamental: el contexto político-institucional, por el que entendemos al conjunto de dimensiones o factores del entorno político que ofrece incentivos para que una determinada acción política ocurra o se despliegue.

Mediante el análisis comparado de Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Barcelona, Zurich exploraremos el peso explicativo de dimensiones tales como el color político del gobierno local; su grado de acceso al gobierno central (mediante recursos y correspondencia de color político); y la institucionalización del sistema de partidos políticos. A partir del análisis de los casos esperamos dar una respuesta a las siguientes preguntas: ¿Es la orientación política del partido gobernante un factor que influye en la definición y desarrollo de la participación en el ámbito local? ¿En qué medida el grado de acceso al gobierno central y el grado de conflicto o fragmentación política incide en la forma y dinámica que adquiere? ¿Sistemas de partidos altamente institucionalizados dificultan la apertura de espacios de participación ciudadana? En definitiva, ¿Explica el contexto político la forma que adquiere la participación ciudadana institucional?

People involved: Cecilia Schneider y Yanina Welp

Partners & Sponsors: Cecilia Schneider has a CONICET grant (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas), Argentina. C2d is also a partner.
3.2 ICT's for Latin American Parliaments

Given the lack of transparency and the extent to which corruption is endemic to most Latin American countries, it is not surprising to find a high level of citizen distrust in political institutions. Parliaments and political parties are the institutions most affected by this crisis of representative democracy, and receive the lowest levels of public confidence. In recent years, many initiatives including those based on information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been developed with the aim of revitalising democracy, increasing transparency in public management and opening up new spaces for political participation. However, the consequences of such initiatives are still unknown while the potential benefits of e-democracy remain controversial.

Should Latin American parliaments concentrate their efforts on improving efficiency, transparency and accountability or should they also aim to increase the participation of citizens in decision-making? The answer to this question leads to a more general question of what type of democracy is desirable and possible. On the one side of the spectrum, practitioners and scholars argue for a more direct democratic system. For them, ICTs allow citizens a share in policy making. At the other end of the spectrum is the classic model of representative democracy, in which the articulation of citizen demands takes place through party-based parliamentary rule and functions through elected representatives.

In strict representative democracies, the control and limitation of powers allows civil society to exercise its role of controlling governments and grants legitimacy to the system through the established procedures for the election of representatives. The ways in which citizens access information and the extent to which they are subjugated by the pressures of opinion makers define the scope and limitations of substantive democracy. From this point of view, competence and multiplicity of sources of information are a guarantee of an autonomous public opinion. In representative democracies, where a strong civil society demands information and exercises public control, new technologies help ensure access to such information and force governments and parliaments to open up.

People Involved: Yanina Welp & Jonathan Wheatley

Partners & Sponsors: C2D in house project

3.3 eLegislatures

This project focuses on how ICT is deployed within existing institutions of representation -namely legislatures- in federal systems. The project draws on the comparative framework developed by previous e-DC studies for the European Parliament. It is animated by the following research questions: Does type of federalism impact on e-legislature scores? Does income and/or levels of ICT development matter? And how do federal states vary at the subnational level?
4. Dissemination

4.1 Website

With the intention to disseminate C2D activities as an academic bridge-builder between Switzerland, Europe and Latin America we provide and maintain a website in Spanish. See: [www.dd-la.ch](http://www.dd-la.ch)

4.2 Agenda 2010

**Latin American Studies Association, LASA 2010**
De Crisis, Respuesta y Recuperación; 6-9 de octubre de 2010, Toronto, Canadá.

C2D organizes a panel on Governments, Parties and Citizens: who has Power in Participatory Democracy?

Since the 1980s, Latin America has set the scene in developing innovative institutions and practices of direct and participatory democracy such as citizen’s initiatives, participatory budgeting and communal councils. The aim of this panel is to explore to what extent these mechanisms have reinforced democracies and in particular, under what conditions such institutions are empowering civil society, political parties or executive bodies.

**ALACIP. V Congreso de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Ciencia Política**
INTEGRACIÓN, DIVERSIDAD Y DEMOCRACIA EN TIEMPOS DEL BICENTENARIO, Buenos Aires, Julio de 2010.

**Las instituciones de la democracia participativa y el contexto político: tipología y análisis**
Pese a que las variadas instituciones de la democracia participativa han ganado terreno en la arena política y han despertado el interés de los investigadores, han predominado los estudios de caso o de instituciones determinadas, como los presupuestos participativos. La ponencia sistematiza y analiza las diferentes instituciones de participación ciudadana institucional (PCI) en el ámbito local según sean instrumentos activos (permitan hacer propuestas) o reactivos (permitan sólo...
pronunciarse frente a propuestas del gobierno); la ciudadanía pueda o no tomar decisiones y estas sean vinculantes o consultivas; y según la intervención de la ciudadanía sea directa (cogestión de servicios) o de control y auditoría. Luego se plantean hipótesis vinculando los diseños institucionales de la participación con diferentes contextos políticos, considerando variables como la institucionalización de los partidos políticos, la orientación política del gobierno y el acceso al gobierno central.

Autores: Cecilia Schneider y Yanina Welp

**VI Congreso del CEISAL 2010**
Independencias- Dependencias – Interdependencias, Toulouse, 30 junio - 3 de julio

El proceso de recuperación de la democracia, la descentralización política y administrativa y la consolidación de una ciudadanía con capacidad de acción y reacción han cambiado radicalmente la arena política latinoamericana. Estos cambios se han producido tanto por la apertura del sistema (a menudo conflictiva) a actores tradicionalmente excluidos como por la puesta en marcha de nuevos mecanismos de toma de decisiones. Así, desde el decenio de 1980, América Latina se ha convertido en un escenario destacado por la generación de prácticas democráticas innovadoras. La democracia se ha consolidado en la región, pero en el marco de una gran inestabilidad producida tanto por las sucesivas crisis económicas como por las crisis políticas (cabe recordar que en menos de quince años, trece presidentes no terminaron su mandato en nueve países debido a protestas populares; en los noventa dos presidentes clausuraron el congreso y más recientemente hubo un golpe de estado). En este escenario, la difusión de prácticas de democracia directa y participativa, su evolución y consecuencias, la medida en que han contribuido y contribuyen a incrementar la legitimidad y la capacidad de respuesta del sistema político son cuestiones centrales para el futuro de las democracias latinoamericanas.

**Workshop on e-Government Development and Knowledge Management**
Barcelona, 23-26 de junio de 2010

This workshop will explore policies and strategies; best practices, and tools to promote e-government and knowledge management in government, with a particular focus on the achievement of the MDGs. The goal of the Workshop is to enhance knowledge and build a shared understanding among governance actors of what policies and strategies, practices and tools Member States can adopt to enhance e-government development and knowledge management in government with a view to promoting greater social and economic development. The Workshop will provide ample time for group discussion on innovative approaches, methodologies, and technologies in these critical areas. Key lessons learned will be reflected in a set of recommendations, which will be presented at the concluding plenary session.

Keynote on Latin American e-government, Yanina Welp
Segundo Congreso Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Ciencias Sociales
México, 26-28 de Mayo de 2010

Participación en la mesa sobre democracia y voto electrónico
Speaker: Yanina Welp

Congreso Internacional Rosario 2010
“Profundizando la Democracia como forma de Vida”
13-16 de mayo de 2010, Rosario, Argentina.

Título de la ponencia: ¿Vino Nuevo en Odres Viejos? Análisis de la participación ciudadana institucional en Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Barcelona y Zurich

La democracia participativa fue impulsada por gobiernos de izquierda o centro izquierda en el contexto de la restauración de la democracia. Confluieron bajo este paraguas tanto un deseo de renovar la democracia originado en la sociedad civil, como un intento de los gobiernos de incrementar la eficiencia y/o la legitimidad de sus actuaciones incluyendo a la ciudadanía en la definición de políticas públicas. Estas experiencias se expandieron dejando de ser patrimonio de la izquierda para ser vistas —incluso por instituciones como el Banco Mundial— como un complemento “necesario” de los procesos de descentralización y un instrumento para limitar la corrupción. Sin embargo, después de más de dos décadas de expansión de iniciativas innovadoras y del desarrollo de un extenso número de estudios sobre el tema, se echa en falta una sistematización de las formas que las instituciones participativas adquieren (los sujetos participantes, el origen de la convocatoria, sus consecuencias) y de los factores que condicionan su emergencia. Buscamos contribuir al análisis de ambos aspectos basándonos en el concepto de estructura de oportunidades políticas, que configura el contexto político-institucional ofreciendo incentivos para que una determinada acción política ocurre o se despliegue (Eisinger 1973). La acción política objeto de nuestro estudio es la participación ciudadana institucional, definida como la intervención ciudadana en la toma de decisiones públicas y en la gestión de los asuntos colectivos producida a través de canales institucionalizados y/o ofertados por los propios gobiernos. Mediante el análisis comparado de Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Barcelona y Zurich, exploraremos el peso explicativo de dimensiones tales como la voluntad política y la demanda ciudadana de instituciones participativas; la orientación ideológica del gobierno local; la polarización y dispersión del sistema de partidos políticos y el grado de acceso al gobierno central. El título de la ponencia, ¿Vino nuevo en odres viejos?, llama a reflexionar sobre la interrelación entre estas nuevas instituciones y su contexto de origen, y sobre las formas en que este último condiciona las formas y las posibilidades de éxito de las nuevas instituciones participativas.

Autoras: Cecilia Schneider y Yanina Welp
5. Building networks

Until now, students from Latin America had difficulties to develop research in Switzerland given that most of them are not familiar with the German or French language. After our visits to the Argentinian, Chilean and Uruguayan Swiss embassies, we agreed to offer working spaces in our centre to develop research for Spanish speakers from Latin America with a good level of English.

The first call was launched last year. We are pleased to host Alejandra Marzuca, an Uruguayan researcher who wants to follow her research on democratic innovation and participatory democracy. She was selected by the ESKAS to receive a grant during the academic year 2010-2011.

6. Next steps

For the coming months we will be involved in the following activities:

- Brazilian platform: - Formal collaboration agreement between Academic partner institutions and Foundations.
- To continue with the collection and analyses of data.
- Explore options to continue building a bridge between Switzerland and Latin American research and exchange of knowledge on democratic innovation with DEZA (through a contact suggested by Pedro Tarak).